

Socialist Worker Review

Incorporating THE WORKER

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1

BLOODY SUNDAY



SIX YEARS AFTER

WAGES ■ PRISONS ■ STUDENTS ■ WOMEN ■ JOBS ■ ET



A RISING TIDE ... ?

IF THE government spokesmen are to be believed then 1978 is to be the year of plenty for all. The dole queues are to be cut. Prices are to fall -- or at least 'stabilise'. And workers are to have more 'real money' in their pockets than ever before. All of this is said to be closely linked to the rise in profits, which as Fianna Fail spokesmen love to put it 'are like a rising tide which lifts all boats'

Yet the condition for the delivery of all this milk and honey is that we put up with another year of wage restraint. Mind you, the 5% limit on pay increases appeared as part of the small print in the election manifesto -- now it appears as the catch - all clause. So the position is simply this: When the economy is in a slump, we are told to show moderation in order to 'protect our native industries'. But when the economy picks up, we are still told to make do with less in order to make industry 'more competitive'.

And this expresses a very simple truth about capitalism today. It can no longer offer us any hope of even marginal improvements or reforms. Its great dreams of the sixties are over. The plans for educational equality and development, for free and expanded health services, for improved housing have all gone out the window. Even when it hits upon a temporary boom, it still needs to attack living standards.

Whatever small grain of truth there may once have been in Sean Lemeass's statement about the rising tide of profits, is now totally gone. In their desperate bid to become more efficient and competitive, Irish capitalism is now more likely to invest in machinery rather than jobs. As a result their only solution to unemployment now is to tamper with the figures -- to re-adjust the statistics for what is a 'normal' level of unemployment.

Many are quickly seeing through the con. Trade union militancy has increased last year -- so much so that now the trade union bureaucracy need some more leeway from any new National Wage Agreement if they are to cope with it. Young people have grown increasingly cynical of the values of a system which can offer them the dole queue or low paid jobs. And amongst the unemployed themselves, a seething bitterness exists.

But this militancy and disillusionment needs to be harnessed if it is to be turned against capitalism. For that

we need an organisation that can pull the various strands together, which can link up the struggles and as a result increase the confidence of all those involved. That means having a socialist party which has members in all the main factories who can argue with their fellow workers on the need for direct action and against the lies of the bosses. Up to now the Irish Left has failed to provide such a party which had real roots in the working class movement.

The formation of the Socialist Labour Party, though, has changed the picture somewhat. Though essentially a development from the 26 county Irish Labour Party, it has acted as a pole of attraction for all sorts of different strands on the left. It has, in fact, taken on a much more left-wing and radical character, than many of its original founders originally conceived.

Yet the SLP is not as yet a revolutionary party. It needs to match the many fine aspirations that are contained in its constitution with deeds. It needs to sort out many of the theoretical issues on how socialism is to be achieved in Ireland. Many comrades in the party still place considerable emphasis on the role of the parliament. Others do not see the validity or legitimacy of working in the trade unions to oppose the sell-outs of the bureaucracy.

The SLP is a party which is developing. It can still go in two different directions. It can return to the electoral traditions of the Labour Party or it can seek to build itself as a revolutionary party which fights for direct working class action in the here and now.

The purpose of this magazine is to stimulate the debate on revolutionary ideas inside the SLP -- and indeed in the working class movement generally. For too long the ideas of the revolutionary left in this country have been shrouded in a jargon that was inaccessible to many others. It was as if the language of politics was to be completely different to the language we use in every day life. This magazine will aim to put forward the ideas -- and experience -- of Marxism in a readable and understandable format. It will aim to apply those ideas to the everyday problems we face.

Contents



BLOODY SUNDAY: six years after. On January 30th 1972 the British Army, after consultations with politicians in London and Stormont, set out to entice the IRA out of the Bog-side in order to wipe them out. The plan didn't work. Fourteen people died when the army opened up on any man of "military" age who came into their sights.

The months following Bloody Sunday saw some of the most intense mass activity to take place in the North. Today, such activity is at its lowest ebb ever. On pages 12 and 13 Joan Kelly looks at the reasons for the decline in mass activity six years after Bloody Sunday.

Notes of the month 4, 5 & 6

S.L.P. AND THE LEFT. Defining the slp in relation to the other left groups. The argument is for a definite break with the old Labour Party-type reformism.....7

News 9 & 10

Oh, What A Wonderful System 14

NATIONAL WAGE AGREEMENTS. Des Derwin looks at NWAs and argues that they don't just hold down our wages. 15

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS. Peter Browne details the conditions in prisons and argues for trade union representation on any enquiry17

SOCIALIST WORKERS MOVEMENT. John Goodwillie details the origins and political traditions of the tendency which contributes to Socialist Worker Review 19

REVIEWS. Books on the Grunwick dispute, women's liberation and Chile 21

COVER PHOTO Part of the demonstration on Bloody Sunday arriving in the centre of Derry to hear the speeches from the platform.

Socialist Worker Review

Socialist Worker Review is produced by a group of members of the Socialist Labour Party. The magazine is published monthly and will argue for the following points:

Opposition to National Wage Agreements or wage restraint in any form and argue for the building of a rank and file movement in the unions to fight for union democracy and militant policies.

Support for the struggles of the unemployed and oppose redundancies and productivity deals.

Opposition to state repression and argue for trade union action to oppose repression.

Support for the women's struggle in all areas, economic and social.

A socialist answer to the national question based on the unity of the working class.

The supporters of the magazine will constitute the Socialist Workers Tendency.

Readers are invited to write articles, letters or comments and contribute to the development of a revolutionary tendency in the SLP.

Those who are in general sympathy with the magazine are invited to a conference to be held in the near future to work out in detail the policies of the Tendency.

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NOTES OF THE MONTH

THE PRESS has never been slow to use any opportunity to blaze headlines attacking union power. But in the last few months the anti-union stories have found their way on to the front pages in even greater frequency than usual. The front page of the Irish Independent of 28 December 1977 is a good example. The headline screamed "Strikes and Delays hit I.D.A. Drive for Jobs".

This attack on the unions has been well organised. It started in September. And after Ferenka it was only a matter of time before salt was poured into the wounds. Sure enough, it came in the form of a so-called impartial opinion poll on attitudes to trade unions published by Business and Finance on 8 December 1977. One doesn't need a degree in sociology to see the in-built bias in the question "Thinking about the trade unions and the amount of power over industrial relations which they have . . . Do you think that they have too much power, too little power, or just the right amount of power?"

Attacking the unions and weakening their morale and the support for them is of advantage to capitalism at any time. But there are three major reasons why the unions are being attacked at this particular time.

Firstly, 1977 was a militant year—the year in which the rank and file got fed up with the lack of official backing for disputes and went out on the streets anyway. The workers often used alternative tactics such as sit-ins and marches. And the strikes were frequently over manning levels, conditions and union representation. If this continues for even a few months of 1978 then any national wage agreement concluded between the employers and the ICTU won't be worth the paper it's written on, because it won't hold down the rank and file.

Secondly, what voters had in their minds when they elected Fianna Fail will soon be forgotten. What are not so easily forgotten are the inflated promises of the Fianna Fail party manifesto. Those promises could only succeed by making the working class pay for the economic recovery. That means continuing the cuts in the standard of living while increasing productivity. The resulting increased surplus goes to capitalists, both Irish and foreign, in the form of increased profits, leading to more investment, but capital-intensive investment.

If the working class refuse to accept this package the Fianna Fail programme will fail. In that event someone has to be blamed. The obvious target is the unions. So the attack on the unions may weaken morale, or may lay the foundation for a future attempt to force the package through by dictatorial legislation. Thus Gene Fitzgerald, Minister for Labour, flies kites to sound out the feasibility of a commission on industrial relations. This may eventually lead to outlawing unofficial strikes and/or a statutory pay policy.

Thirdly, the union bureaucracy is in a

Media and the unions



quandary over their strategy as regards another National Wage Agreement. They know that they cannot restrain their members as they have done for the past five years. Thus they held out for the deletion of the "no-strike clause". Because of the growing rank and file resentment, the bureaucracy need more room to manoeuvre in their dealings with their own membership.

On the other hand, the bureaucracy fears more than anything else the militancy of their own membership. The newer full-time officials have had absolutely no experience of launching and fighting for wage claims. Their life has centred around the Labour Court. The experience of the wage agreements has strengthened the conservatism of the bureaucracy.

The Fianna Fail government has con-

sciously set out to increase the pressure on the bureaucracy. Statement after statement have been issued by ministers to build up the pressure on the bureaucracy. The newspapers have set about the necessary task of depriving the unions of public support. The newspaper bosses are giving every help to cajole and force the bureaucracy into accepting the 5% by scaring them with loss of public support.

The attack on the unions has to be countered. And this will not be done by hoping for the government to lose its nerve, or relying on some union leaders as against others. It can only be done by the activity of militants and socialists among the rank and file and in the union branches. This must start with the lodging of claims now by all those whose Wage Agreements have run out.

Sadat's 'peace'

PRESIDENT Sadat's trip to Israel last November raised the expectations of many people for peace in the Middle East. It was seen as the big break-through. It was supposed to be the event that would break down the barriers of the last thirty years. Commentators in the media talked of Sadat's great courage.

The reality, however, is somewhat different. Egypt's economy is coming under increasing difficulties. One third of the G.N.P. is in the form of outside aid. Last year Egypt received £2,300 million from abroad. (This includes £520 million of food and project aid from the

U.S.) Early last year there were riots in several Egyptian cities protesting against a proposed reduction in food subsidies. On top of all its other problems Egypt has also had the massive cost of maintaining a large army. In the interest of some form of political and economic stability, a peace solution with Israel has to be found.

Late in December Sadat rejected Israel's proposal for limited self-rule for the Palestinians on the West Bank of the Jordan and in the Gaza Strip. Two or three weeks later he was accepting it as long as it was a transitional



(Above:) Whizz-kids O'Donoghue and O'Malley

ON THE CREST OF THE SLUMP

By all accounts the Irish economy expanded significantly and profitably in 1977 and it is set to do the same in 1978. This view is shared by all the authorities which make forecasts and projections -- the ESRI, the Central Bank, State Bodies such as Coras Tractala and by the government, whose White paper is predicated on such an expansion continuing over the next few years. Further, it is an opinion that seems to be shared internationally for the latest report of the OECD says that the Irish economy has the prospect of the most rapid growth among the 17 member - States of that organisation in 1978. In anticipation of the good pickings to come the 30,000 odd shareholders on the Dublin Stock Exchange enjoyed a splurge at the beginning of the year. Dublin was reported to be the most buoyant Exchange in the world.

In spite of the euphoria, however, some 160,000 unemployed workers have little reason to share in this enthusiasm. For it is clear that the 'normal' course of expansion in the economy will make little impact on the extent of unemployment and that the latest plans that

Fianna Fail have produced to halve this figure have not a chance of succeeding. In order to reach 5% unemployment in 1986 assuming no resumption of emigration, some 25,000 jobs per year will have to be provided. This compares with an average of about 3000 created in the 1960s and 6,500 in the boom year of 1973. In the meantime the cost per job to the I.D.A. has soared and all the indications are that capital intensity is still rising. Thus whatever the immediate prospects for growth there is virtually no likelihood that capitalism can utilise the 'surplus' human resources existing at the moment. A switch to more emphasis on state involvement would make some difference but would eventually be subject to the same constraints.

Workers in employment are continually being warned not to press too hard for their interests by all the authorities which most readily spell out the evidence for economic expansion. This is odd because they also make it clear that it is the workers who have been largely responsible for the favourable position of the economy relative to most other OECD countries.

A key reason for the 35.4% growth in exports last year was the effect of wage 'moderation' on competitive performance in international markets, along with the decline of the value of Sterling and a jump in the productivity of Irish workers of some 5-6% last year, 9.2% in 1976 and an anticipated 5% rise in 1978.

Irish capital has used the recession as a breathing space in which to rationalise and re-equip at the expense of jobs further advantage it enjoys internationally is that its plant is comparatively up

measure. In the long term, Sadat is prepared to accept Israel's proposals for some sort of limited home rule for the Palestinians. But he has been forced, however, by the lack of any genuine concessions by the Begin government, to stall on the 'peace' talks in order to save his own political skin.

But the Israeli proposals attempt to create a docile homeland for the Palestinians along the same lines as the South African government is establishing for its Black population. The Israeli army and police would still remain in the areas. Paragraph 19 of the proposals states: A committee will be established of representatives of Israel, Jordan and the administrative council to examine legis-



lation in the Judea, Samaria and the Gaza district and to determine which legislation will continue in force, which will be abolished and what will be the competence of the administrative council to promulgate regulations. The rulings of the committee will be adopted by unanimous decisions.

In other words, the Israeli government

will retain a veto not only on all laws for the area, but even on regulations which the elected Arab council may want to pass.

Israel was established in 1948 only by denying the Palestinians -- who were a two to one majority -- the right to have any say in the future of their country. In the process 650,000 were driven from their homeland by terrorist attacks. Any peace solution which does not recognise the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, is bound for failure. The only solution to the Middle East problem is the destruction of the present Zionist State of Israel and the establishment of an independent secular State of Palestine in which both Jews and Arabs can live in peace.

NOTES OF THE MONTH

to date compared with its competitors.

This should be seen against a background of the wage 'moderation' referred to earlier -- a fall in real wages of up to 30% for those workers on an average wage and above, over the whole span of wage agreements since 1970. The fall last year should be borne in mind now that the wage agreement is once again up for re-negotiation. This was of some 5-6% of a fall -- although many managed to build on top of the national increases, so that wage drift of up to 10% has shown up in recent figures. All the calculations are made using the consumer price index as a base and this is unreliable as a guide to the effect of inflation on lower incomes.

While workers have seen their real incomes fall, profits and agricultural

incomes increased by 30% and 30% and 34% respectively last year and are expected to grow by 18.5% and 12% this year. It will be interesting to see how the Fianna Fail budget will deal with this situation in the light of these figures -- it will be hard for them to withhold tax concessions from wage earners given that most of the tax measures already announced are of much more direct benefit to the middle classes. It will also be seen that the 15-17% claim placed on the employers by the ICTU negotiators is a very modest one in the circumstances of 9-10% inflation.

The OECD expects world trade to grow by less than 5% in 1978 but it places Ireland first in the list of growth rates with an anticipated rise of 13% in overall trade and 6-7% in GNP. What

basis is there for such a performance? That is so far ahead of the trend in World trade. Certainly Fianna Fail and even Coras Tractala seem to take the gathering signs that the international capitalist system is heading for another downturn with great equanimity, in so far as they are aware of it at all. While it is true that the Irish economy has a good deal going for it in the short term and it is insulated from the immediate effects of the sluggish growth in world trade, this cannot last.

There are no signs that the Western capitalist economies can resume the steady growth of the 1950s and 1960s. The OECD expects world trade to slow down in the latter half of this year, reflecting the general failure of the imperialist powers to co-ordinate the economic pump-priming and the absence of growth spilling over from one sector to another. The US, West Germany and Japan have been at loggerheads for the last year over which one should take most decisive action to promote internal growth and therefore regenerate world trade. Each has a reluctance to take the initiative for fear of simply jacking up the rate of inflation again. This is bound to be a consequence of anything other than very timid measures given the failure of the key factor, namely capital investment to recover in the capitalist heartlands. Investment is running at only half of what it did during five similar recoveries from recessions since the second World War. Amongst the effects of these developments has been the accumulation of a huge balance of payments deficit by the U.S. and surplus by West Germany and Japan which in turn has put pressure on the international monetary system.

There are many signs of an incipient set of trade wars as countries try to offload their surplus capacity e.g. Japanese steel and colour TVs. There are also signs that a wave of protectionism may be on the way in spite of the economic interdependence.

Thus we are witnessing the development of another recession in the next couple of years and it is unlikely that the Irish economy will be insulated from it. Economies such as Brazil, Taiwan, South Korea and Iran, which are relatively similar to Ireland in their recent but dependent industrialisation, have enjoyed similar levels of growth to the Irish one, but almost by definition they are knocked back with the great imperialist economies when the downturn comes.

Far from the economy coming onto the crest of a wave, as Lynch and his cronies nervously predict, it is riding on the temporary crest of the slump.

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FIGHT WAGE RESTRAINT!

SUPPORT THE STRUGGLES OF THE UNEMPLOYED!

OPPOSE REDUNDANCIES!

FIGHT REPRESSION!

To contact your nearest branch write to the Secretary,
Roger Cole 30 Chelmsford Road, Dublin 6

THE SLP AND THE REST OF THE LEFT



THE MEMBERS of the Socialist Labour Party come from a number of different political backgrounds. That being so, it would be amazing if they had all reached precisely the same political conclusions. The process of building the party must include an element of differing ideas existing side by side but also an element of all members being forced to re-examine the assumptions they have been making for a long time.

The building of the party must include a growing cohesiveness. And one of the ways in which that cohesiveness will grow is by defining the S.L.P.'s difference from the other parties of the left.

For the largest group of S.L.P. members, those who were members of the Labour party last year, the S.L.P.'s distinctiveness from the Labour Party must be the first concern.

The Labour Party's expulsion of Noel Browne and Matt Merrigan was only the culmination of that party's abandonment of any pretence to socialist politics. The division over coalition is not, however, important enough by itself to justify splitting the Labour Party.

The significance of the coalition divide was that it left on one side most of those who wanted the Labour Party to mould itself into a modern

West European social democratic party which wanted a few reforms to make improvements in the capitalist system without breaking that system, and which was willing to hold the working class in check at a time of recession. And it left on the other side most of those who were determined that a socialist party must be a different animal to a capitalist party, must be seen as an opposition to the injustice and the impoverishment, physical and mental, of capitalism, rather than as an alternative set of bright politicians with bright ideas.

So the split over coalition will make sense only if the members of the Socialist

Labour Party remember that a step has been taken to the left of the Labour Party and not simply outside it. And the reality of that step to the left will become apparent with the change in political methods which the new situation requires.

The leisurely methods of the Labour Party branch acting as a support group for a T.D. or councillor will not work for a Party that has only one T.D. and perhaps three councillors in the whole country. The "resolutionary socialism", as it has been called, of the Labour Party branch trying to influence a powerful Party leadership is not going to produce a tide of

working-class support. The overlapping circles of Labour Party branch and trade union officers (full-time and lay) will no longer gell together.

The clinic, for example, as a method of building support puts the S.L.P. on the same level as a host of other political parties, all pretending that they can pull strings on behalf of people. Socialism can never be built on behalf of the working class, it can only be built by the working class. And therefore the S.L.P.'s answer to people with problems must always be to **help** them to organise themselves, in tenants' associations, in the trade union movement, in the building of a women's movement which can appeal to working-class women. The S.L.P.'s support in the trade unions will be built in opposition to the existing trade union leadership, in opposition to bureaucracy and in fighting alongside militants who are trying to democratise the movement.

This is not, of course, to dismiss the Labour Party as irrelevant. It is still a workers' party: a workers' party with capitalist policies. And any united front in which the S.L.P. participates should be

open to Labour Party participation.

Those workers who have remained inside the Labour Party in the hope of changing it will only be convinced by the building of a socialist alternative. But if they are willing to work with S.L.P. members towards the building of a rank and file movement within the unions, or towards the building of an active unemployed movement, their co-operation must be welcomed. And the rank and file movement must be built as the type of movement which can be joined by militants of any political affiliations or of none: the trade union movement is divided enough without making loyalty to the S.L.P. another factor to split workers from workers when the task is to split workers from bureaucrats.

In emerging on the left, therefore, the S.L.P. moves into a world of direct action, of demonstrations, of occupations, of being unrespectable. Into a world where the bourgeois newspapers and the state broadcasting service omit or distort the Party's point of view when they think they can get away with it. The production of a Party

newspaper which circulates as widely as possible among the working class therefore is vital as the one way open of spreading the Party's policies, and support for them, more effectively than on a word-of-mouth basis.

The field of action on which the S.L.P. arrives is, however, already partly occupied by others, notably Sinn Féin the Workers' Party and the Communist Party of Ireland, but also the Socialist Party of Ireland and smaller groups. One of the principal problems in front of the S.L.P. will be to distinguish itself from the Stickies and the Communist Party. To say that it is necessary to be different does not preclude the joint platform, such as the Liaison Committee of the Left were previously involved in in the "Left Alternative". Clearly there is some common ground. Clearly there is a need to fight together on issues such as repression. (And on that issue the range of allies may be slightly different.)

But the Left Alternative concentrated on the benefits which could be poured out by a beneficent government. It did not provide a method of mobilising workers who

need to fight redundancies today and not wait for the arrival of socialism. And it did not face up to the difference between state control and workers' control. State capitalism in Ireland has many achievements—the E.S.B., Aer Lingus, Nitrigin Eireann. But socialism does not just consist of spreading state enterprise and state planning to other areas of the economy. It also means workers' control of those firms, of the mechanisms of state planning, of the state itself.

It is here that the S.L.P. must present an alternative to the authoritarian nature of those parties, to their defence of the authoritarian systems of Eastern Europe, to their confusion between the state and the workers. Socialism is about workers' democracy or it is not really socialism. There is always a division between those who would impose socialism from above, and those who would gain it from below. Whether through the armed takeover without mass support or the more modern winning of the cabinet table through elections, Sinn Féin and the Communist Party think in terms of capturing the top of the state. The S.L.P. must think in terms of convincing the bottom, the working class. On that base the rest will follow.

JOHN GOODWILLIE



Look who's on the picket line! O'Brien and Keating were well able to make radical gestures and statements in their day. Just as able as other parliamentary socialists today.

USI: apathy or bureaucracy?

THE 20th Annual Congress of the Union of Students in Ireland took place in January. It was attended by delegates from almost every college in Ireland, North and South. The leadership of the union set the tone of the conference from the very outset as one of of self-congratulation at the "successes" won during the year. They pointed to the increases won on the grants, the organisation of a 'disciplined' grants campaign and the awarding of degree powers to the National Council for Educational Awards.

This shallow optimism was punctuated slightly as delegate after delegate from the floor got up to emphasise the utter inadequacy of the Government's grant rise. Eamon Gilmore and the leadership of the union had welcomed this increase at Christmas, thus starting the slide to the sell-out on the demand for a comprehensive grants system. Delegates from the Regional Technical Colleges spoke of the lack of facilities in their colleges—many of them do not have adequate canteens.

One of the most controversial issues at the Congress was the question of student representation on the governing bodies of universities. The Trinity College delegation opposed a motion calling for such representation on the grounds that students would be participating in undemocratic structures. They argued that it was better to have student observers who would participate fully but would not vote and therefore would not be responsible for the decisions of those bodies. They maintained that democratic participation in education would not be achieved within this society, so there was little point in playing the "numbers game" in the hope of influencing a few liberal lecturers to vote for student demands. The leadership, however, managed to win through on seeking representation on the governing bodies.

A motion on abortion was also hotly contested with speakers from T.C.D., U.C.D. and the New University of Ulster in Coleraine speaking in support of a woman's right to choose. The leadership of the union managed to side-step the issue by passing a motion which simply called for more education on the issue.

As a token of respect for the meagre increase in the grants this

year, the leadership had invited John Wilson, Minister for Education, to speak. He was the first Minister to speak at a U.S.I. Congress in years. Delegates from T.C.D., U.C.D., N.U.U. and the Northern Ireland Polytechnic walked out in protest. Eamon Gilmore argued it was necessary to have Wilson there in order to increase the respectability of the union—in the hope that would help another rise in the grants.

The debate on Northern Ireland was quite instructive. The Congress commitment to the bankrupt Peace, Jobs and Progress campaign was reiterated. But there was also general agreement that the campaign was failing. There was no attempt to analyse why this was so except in terms of bad organisation. The fundamental questions of the presence of the British Army, the behaviour of the security forces or the role of British imperialism were never mentioned—except by one delegate who was denounced as "bigoted".

However, despite the leadership won at the Congress, the picture is not as bleak as it might appear at first reading. U.S.I. is still dominated by a clique of Official Sinn Féin and Communist Party bureaucrats, and this domination will continue into next year.

But this year we had the spectacle of T.C.D., U.C.D., N.U.U. and Northern Ireland Poly voting together on almost every issue. Underneath the surface there is a rising discontent with U.S.I. There is an awareness of this among the U.S.I. bureaucracy itself. But they explain the gap between students and their union by the 'apathy' of ordinary students or the result of exam pressure.

Yet the real issue is the bankruptcy of the U.S.I. approach to education generally. They do nothing to encourage and often oppose militant student action and mobilisations when it goes beyond the annual march or disciplined campaign. They concentrate on winning respectability and influence in the hope that they will be accepted as a bureaucracy which the state and university authorities must recognise. The obstacles are great but with hard work and determination U.S.I. can be made into a fighting democratic organisation that is responsive to the needs of students.



The trial of four IRSP members opened in the Special Criminal Court on the 19th of January on charges of robbing a mail train. The basis of the state's evidence is a series of 'confessions' which later led to an Amnesty investigation on torture. The trial is a frame up to cover over the torture allegations against the Gardai.

TRIBUNAL

IN THE SAME WEEK that the Press is filled with the verdict of Britain's torture trial in Strasbourg, Jane Fonda hits the headlines for sponsoring a new international tribunal on Britain's involvement in Northern Ireland.

Apart from the fact that such celebrities as Fonda are backing it, this new tribunal is totally different in composition to the proceedings in Strasbourg. The whole range of Britain's activities in the Six Counties are being put in the dock.

A jury of leading trade union representatives will have the evidence brought before them. Ex-internees will tell of their experience in the camp. Berbard O'Connor, a schoolteacher from Enniskillen, who was subjected to the type of treatment Britain denied in Strasbourg, will tell of his six days of torture at R.U.C. hands. John McGuffin, ex-internee and author of *The Guinea Pigs*, has also been invited.

Apart from the submission by those who have personally experienced this vicious repression, organisations such as N.C.C.L. and I.C.R.A. will be presenting their case. Evidence

will also be supplied by film slides and photographs.

The light is being shone on every aspect of their repressive apparatus. The charges of torture at Castlereagh to extract confessions, the inhuman conditions under which political prisoners are forced to live, discrimination against the Catholic minority are just some of the elements of imperialist domination to be put under the microscope.

Although based in Britain, the Committee for the international tribunal is gaining support from the U.S., Australia, Germany, Holland and France. Support is being sought throughout many trade union branches and trades councils in Britain.

Support from this side of the water comes from Phil Flynn, deputy general secretary L.G.P.S.U., Matt Merrihan and David Thornley, S.L.P., Seamus Sorahan and many more.

It takes place in spring of this year. Contributions to the tribunal, or requests for more information, should be sent to:
International Tribunal on
Britain's Presence in Ireland,
182 Upper Street,
London N1,
England.

NEWS

P.O. STRIKES

THE SERIES of one-day stoppages by the Dublin Post Office technicians (no. 2 branch of the Irish Post Office Engineering Union) is the fourth wave of action since last summer in a long battle with the Department.

The Department of Posts and Telegraphs has an unbelievably Victorian regime of bureaucratic procedures and disciplinary regulations under which its workers have long been burdened. Its industrial relations are "high-handed" and its attitudes are "bull-headed" (as Gerry Francis, IPOEU Deputy General Secretary, expressed it a few weeks ago). For some time the Department has been using this regime—

through the medium of suspensions—to shove rationalisation, productivity, new machinery and private contracting down the throats of the engineers and technicians, without compensation, or even consultation with the IPOEU.

The present series of disputes with the technicians began with the issue around which it now centres—the parking of vans in Russell Street depot. Around Christmas 1976, 39 technicians were suspended. Then in August 1977 13 IPOEU members were suspended around the country in a collection of disputes leading to an official strike by the Union. The kernel of the matter was the attempt to ram rationalisation in

and the dispute had been building up all year.

The union had lodged a re-organisational and productivity claim to cover the changes. Nevertheless the Department went ahead introducing the changes in work practices without negotiating on the claim. A new Autrax computer was installed in Marlborough St. telephone exchange, again without consultation. The union agreed to allow it on a trial basis only. When the Department insisted the computer be kept on, the operators blacked it. Their objection was that the computer had the ability to act as a "mechanical foreman". If a technician were given faults to clear on a telex line, for instance, the inspector could tell from the computer what time the fault was reported at, what time it was fixed and who was on duty.

This phase of disputes was ended when the Employer-Lab-

our Conference produced a "settlement" formula. A few weeks later a hundred IPOEU members were under suspension for similar reasons as before.

For instance, forty members were suspended in Cork for refusing to park vehicles in a "rat-infested" depot. Members were suspended in Dublin, Wexford and Portlaoise for not handling new equipment. The Marlborough St. engineers refused to hand over the computer print-out.

But this time the IPOEU executive did not call an official strike, despite the fact that eight times as many were suspended as before. Why? Part of the answer to this question lies with the top brass of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions who are part of the Employer-Labour Conference which worked out the settlement package in August. Congress would stick by this—now obviously inadequate settlement—and, therefore, the IPOEU were doubtful of getting the "all-out picket" from them, a powerful weapon in the August strike. Consequently, no strike this time.

On November 7 another inadequate deal was fashioned. The IPOEU Executive accepted proposals which arose from a meeting between the ICTU and the Minister, under which all members would return to work under protest, and then discussions would take place. Twenty-two members of Dublin No. 2 Branch at the Distillery Road depot, held out courageously and refused to use Russell St depot and have been under suspension for over three months.

The officers of the No2 and No4 branches issued a leaflet which attacked the executive for overturning its previous instruction not to use Russell St. The Leaflet states: "Both branches did not adhere to the 'Back to Work' direction as they felt they would lose completely. The attitude of the present Executive is one of complete incompetence, as they continue to change support to opposition. Subsequently the No2 Branch passed a vote of no confidence in the executive and later the entire union did the same. A work to rule began in Dublin on the 4th January.

It was later decided to escalate this campaign to a series of one day lightening stoppages at single depots. The union general secretary said they were 'bending over backwards not to get involved'!

The post office unions need to become independent with democratically elected officers, paid from within the union, with strike funds and with no say in the internal affairs by the Minister. Meanwhile the case of the 22 suspended men must be pursued to victory, with collections and support from the rest of the country and other Post Office unions.

COALISLAND CONFERENCE

OVER 500 people gathered in Coalisland at the end of January for a conference against repression. The conference took an exiting and an important step toward developing a new stage of resistance to the presence of British Imperialism in Ireland. The conference brought together activists from throughout the six counties as well as from the south.

They were from the Relatives Action Committee, Provisional Sinn Féin, all the left groups, the SLP and the IIP. As well members of the Association for Legal Justice, the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association and the Republican Clubs spoke at the conference. Paddy Duffy and Austin Curry from the SDLP stepped in for a while, but left hurriedly and had nothing to say. The feeling at the conference was highly emotional and exuberant as enthusiastic speakers addressed the packed hall. The conference organised by the Coalisland RAC, was a major contribution towards helping to end the isolation of the past few years and brought new hope that the recent successes of the British government can be ended.

Many decisions were taken at the conference. They laid the basis for developing new work on the issue of repression. The conference supported the turn

to activity in the working class proposed by the SWM. In particular it called on the trade union movement to organise a trade union inquiry into the practice of torture by the British Army and the RUC in the North and urged trade unionists to organise and support independent protests by workers against the arrests, harassment and brutality of the British Army.

March 1 was named as Prisoners Day and the conference called demonstrations in support of the prisoners on that day. This will give all in the North and South a chance to work together in a co-ordinated and, therefore,



Frank McManus
Irish Independence Party

stronger way to support the prisoners in their demand for political status. It was also agreed to organise a delegated conference of all groups who are active in support of the prisoners to organise further joint activities. The organisation of this conference is to be undertaken by the Belfast Central RAC.

The conference was important because it brought confidence and a new determination among all present to go home to their own areas and organise support for the fight against repression, for the prisoners, and to get the troops out now. But, most essential for the development of a new movement, the conference provided an opportunity for activists to discuss and debate the lessons of the past and the way forward.

Yet it is also true that the proposals put forward at the conference show that little has been learnt. There was a general feeling of euphoria at the conference over the ideas put forward that we were here to re-build the mass movement along the same lines as it was done before. There was also overwhelming support for the Provos who argued that we don't need marches at all and that we really need to support the armed struggle.

As well, though several speakers spoke from the South, they relegated the South to a supportive role for the struggle in the North. The confusing and often contradictory discussion has opened up a necessary debate on the way forward for the building of the anti-imperialist struggle in Ireland.

Bloody Sunday

six years after

THE MONTHS following the Bloody Sunday murders saw some of the most intense mass activity to take place in the North. Today such activity is at its lowest ebb ever. We look at the reasons for the decline in mass activity six years after Bloody Sunday.



Bloody Sunday: six years after

RECENTLY a meeting in the Ardoyne area of Belfast brought out over 200 people to support the prisoners in H block who are protesting against the removal of political status. Local people thought the meeting was the best turnout in years. This is incredible if one remembers the thousands who used to come to local meetings and the tens of thousands who marched and rioted six years ago when the Paras killed 14 people in Derry on Bloody Sunday. In 1972 masses of people took to the streets. In Dublin they burned the British Embassy. Bloody Sunday built on the already massive response to internment. That response took the form of militant action on the streets, hundreds joining the IRA, general support for the military campaign, and the rent and rates strike throughout the North.

In comparison the scene in 1978 is quite depressing. The long awaited Stras-

bourg decision was finally announced, absolving the British government of committing anything more than inhuman treatment, while the RUC produces more torture victims every week. Almost ten years since the first civil rights march, the Fair Employment Agency finally found there was discrimination against Catholics.

Every day young men and women are sentenced to join the many hundreds in Her Majesty's prisons. The Provisional IRA is losing support in the areas but insists on increasing its military campaign. There has been a decline in the resistance. It is hard to get people to fight back against the constant repression.

And the repression is getting worse. We can take Ardoyne as an example. Personal checks are constant. Soldiers are likely to stop men on the street at any time, asking for name, address, and lots of seemingly useless information like the colour of your wife's handbag.

The hated RUC is coming in more often, even without the army to protect them. Remember when they couldn't come near a Catholic area? Just last week they came on their own into an Ardoyne drinking club—and stole the club's Tri-colour. British Army patrols move through the local clubs in an evening with no protest from the crowd. House raids are increasing. There is more harassment of young people coming from school. All of this army activity has given the army a complete record of the movement of most of the residents and has deterred political activity in the area.

In spite of the Strasbourg report and the British government's promise never to do it again, torture continues. There are weekly reports of the beatings in Castle-reagh and the signed confessions that result in immediate convictions. The SDLP claims it's just a few rotten apples, that the RUC is a reformed police force. Most people understand it is a policy of the British government to keep the conviction rate up, no matter how. The question for us is, how do we fight them?

It is clear that the British government is winning this round. In 1971-72 people thought "we're going to win this one." "We're going to drive the Brits out at last." Most now recognise that's not going to happen this time. The Provos are losing the war. Though they can still mount impressive short-term bombing and incendiary campaigns, the defeat has been coming these past few years. The mounting number of prisoners, the decline in volunteers, the dwindling financial resources are both indications and results of the defeat.

Most important of all is the loss of

support for the Provos in the local areas. Many people in the areas know the military campaign has been defeated and are ready to go back to the way things were before. They have forgotten about the discrimination and the RUC. Or at least think it can't be as bad as the repression and the war is now. The young people never knew what it was like before. Most just don't want to know about it now. It's hard to convince them to care about prisoners or join marches or protests when it doesn't seem like we'll get anything out of it.

The defeat of the mass resistance and the Provos is not just a military defeat, but a political one as well. The movement was at its peak in 1972. That was the time to move forward politically as well as militarily—to move to a class struggle against imperialism.

But there was no movement to win people to a struggle against all the forms of imperialism and to win workers in the So to a fight against capitalism. It was only by extending the struggle from a nationalist one, with workers and capitalists on the same side, to a struggle for a workers' republic that the movement could be built on the massive strength it had in 1972 to organise a real defeat of British imperialism.

Instead the aims were limited and the methods limited. Marches and demos were used to support the Provos' military struggle. The people were told: "We'll do the job for you." As a result the SDLP—darlings of British imperialism—were able to win the support of most Catholics. That gave the British the opportunity to open a political offensive against the anti-imperialist movement.

The sell-out of the rent and rates strike, the constant capitulations to the Loyalists' threats and the ending of internment led to the present British policy of criminalisation through which Britain hopes to finally isolate and politically defeat the IRA.

The criminalisation policy means the ending of political status which was won by anti-imperialist prisoners who went on hunger strike and mass support on the streets. By labelling all political prisoners as "criminals" or "terrorists", the British government hopes to isolate the IRA from their supporters in the areas. It is a blatant and dishonest attempt to deny that a political struggle exists.

And this struggle does still go on in spite of the setbacks. The attempt to end political status launched a new grouping which has been the core of resistance for the past two years. The Relatives' Action Committee was formed at Easter 1975 by relatives of prisoners and left-wing activists. About 20 local RAC groups were



organised in Belfast, another in Derry. More recently they have been formed in Coalisland, Downpatrick and Strabane.

The protests took on a new meaning when the first men were sentenced under the new policy. The first prisoner, Kieran Nugent, started his own protest in H block by refusing to wear prison clothes. He has been joined "on the blankets" by almost 200 others and many women in Armagh jail. These men are living in horrendous conditions and are continuously punished for their protest.

The protest can only get larger and more dangerous to the prisoners as the cell blocks fill up. Many of the prisoners are sick, some mentally affected by the conditions. Many are asking when will the first man die in H block?

For almost two years now the membership of the RAC have protested. They've worn blankets in protests in Belfast, Dublin, London and in Europe. They've also been at the centre of other anti-repression activities such as Turf Lodge and the anti-Jubilee protests.

But in spite of their zeal, they have not won wider support in the community. The issue itself has limited the support to Provo supporters, relatives and friends of prisoners, and the left groups who see the retention of political status as an important defence of the anti-imperialist campaign.

Support has not been generalised because it is not easy to convince people that political status means anything to the uninvolved. And to the involved, the supporters of the struggle, it appears to be a lost issue. The Provos themselves treated the issue as a loser before the protest began. Since the RAC started they have given it limited support. Occasionally encouraging, at other times dominating it, or neglecting it entirely, they treated it as an unimportant appendage to their military campaign. A Provo supporter told an RAC meeting recently: "Keep up your work, but don't worry, we'll have it all taken care of by summer."

The movement needs to grow, it needs to look for new support, needs to expand its aims and its areas. The torture in Castle reagh, the repression faced by everyone in Catholic areas, the growing unemployment, the continuing discrimination are all areas which socialists in the North must relate to.

There is growing reaction to the repression. The torture of Peter McGrath resulted in the formation of the Coalisland RAC. The Coalisland RAC took the initiative in organising a conference against repression, held on January 22.

The Coalisland Conference was a tremendous opportunity to bring activists

together to make plans to organise a new fight against repression. For the past few years the activists have been isolated from each other, limiting the struggle to local areas. The voice of protest has been further weakened as a result. The conference provided the opportunity to discuss the mistakes of the past and to make new plans for joint work in the North.

Much of the left is saying rebuild the mass movement, implying the same way it was done before. They want the SDLP and other capitalist politicians to lead the people. But we should learn from the mistakes of the past. The mass movement dependent on SDLP leadership failed. The mass movement that supported the Provo military campaign failed.

So we need to look to a movement which is under working-class leadership. The campaign needs to be on a number of issues which will provide a broader political base. If the SDLP is prepared to support the demands of workers, let them throw in their support. But they can't be depended on. So we can't afford to allow them to lead.

Surely one of the lessons of the past is that we don't need a new movement for reforms. A movement demanding reforms or national independence could work with the middle class forces in the SDLP and IIP.

But such a movement is not going to threaten the imperialist domination of Ireland — it holds no interest for workers to join or lead it.

From a working class point of view what is needed is a revolutionary movement which would reject the presence of imperialism in all its forms.

What we should be asking is how to build a movement against imperialism, because until we are able to overthrow the entire system of British imperialism its effects and domination will be with us in one form or another. Reformists cannot lead such a movement — it is not in their interests. It is in the interest of the working class and it is to them that we must look.

We must begin using working class methods, bring the political arguments into the class and look for ways to take up the fight against repression and the fight against capitalism simultaneously. By changing the political methods and content of the struggle we will be able to involve the class that counts — the working class.



OH, WHAT A WONDERFUL SYSTEM . . .

Striker Murdered

A 65 YEAR OLD picketer was shot dead in the first week of January during a nationwide miners strike in the USA.

A member of the United Mine-workers Union, he was taking coffee to four other strikers at a railway crossing in Kentucky when he was murdered.

The killer, a strikebreaking thug employed as a "security guard" by the mining bosses, shot his victim 5 times.

The ruthless violence of the coal companies is only too well known to miners in Kentucky and Virginia where striking can mean facing pick-axe handles or shotguns.

Flying pickets are being used across the USA in the fight for a new contract and union recognition.

Dockers Knock Jones

YOU'VE got to admire the blunt speaking of London dockers. Jack Jones, the darling of the employers, got two nice presents to mark his retirement from the leadership of the TGWU. One was an honour from the Queen, something he had hypocritically spoken against all his life, and the other is a slap-up meal and presentation on February 20th next.

The members of his union in 1/6 (Docks) Branch passes a resolution denouncing the function on February 20th. The reasons given in the resolution are that, "Jack Jones is a traitor to the working class", and that his years as General Secretary of the union "have been a disaster for the registered dockers and other workers."

Which reminds me of the one about the union leader who offered himself as arbitrator during a strike. "No thanks", said the workers, "We don't care what kind of traitor you are, get lost."

"WE OPPOSED the strike resolution with everything we had. We are not in charge of the situation, I am sorry to say. But throughout the strike I kept hoping they'd lose confidence." — Quote from Terry Parry, the British firemen's "leader", about the strike he sold out.

Behind fat Wallets

DOES ANYONE remember Frank Willis? Without him there would have been no "Washington: behind closed doors". We'll get back to Frank in a moment.

That TV show which gave us a glimpse at the nutcases behind Watergate was based on a book by John Erlichman. He made abundance out of his Watergate crimes. Other Watergate criminals who are raking it in are: Bob Haldeman (the guy played by Robert Vaughan). He got 75,000 dollars for one interview. John Dean got 120,000 for a series of lectures. Nixon has made over 6½ million dollars for interviews etc. Howard Hunt got half a million for the rights to a film about himself. Woodward and Bernstein, the two reporters who broke the story, have made over 5 million, and the film of "All the Presidents Men" has made 58 million.

Oh, yes, Frank Willis. He's the security guard who risked his life by arresting the Watergate burglars. Without him walking in and pulling a gun they wouldn't have been caught. Frank is now on the dole.

What was that about crime doesn't pay . . .

A Paper Charlie

"THE ECONOMY is like a group of cowboys out on the plain, surrounded by Indians. The Coalition policy was to wait it out. Fianna Fail's policy is to make a break for it."

That, believe it or not, is a thought from the Fianna Fail whizz-kid himself, Martin O'Donoghue. This is the guy who's going to get us off the dole. He's playing cowboys and Indians.

As if to confirm that our "leaders" see themselves as some kind of John Wayne punchin' n' shootin' their way out of the crisis, Charlie Haughey appeared in the papers a couple of days later wearing a cowboy hat.

Do these people expect us to take them seriously? The figures on unemployment are there and they prove that capital ism just can't work. As long as capitalism lasts the dole queues will grow. Two and two make four, even for a whizz-kid from Trinity College, but the cowboy and indian antics of the managers of capitalism show that they simply haven't got a clue about how to control the economy.

It's uncontrollable. Take this quote from the Economists, the bosses' paper: "The industrial world no longer has any credible chance of staggering back on to the path . . . pegged out by its economic club, the OECD, for a



return to full employment before 1980."

The myth that one country can plan its economy is crumbling. Capitalism is inextricably linked internationally. For instance, the Bank for International Settlements estimates that dollars held in banks outside the USA amount to 350 billion. There's another one billion dollars invested in short-term deposits in the USA and controlled from outside. That money can be, and is, switched from one country to another at great speed.

With that kind of an international system, applying also to yen, marks, etc, the result is chaos. An individual country's economic strategy can be wrecked overnight as investments are switched around in the constant search for higher profits.

Ah, but we always have Martin to tell us about the cowboys and the Indians.

All together, now --- AWWWWWW!

ICI profits down to £105m

By John Phillips and Norman Leitch
ICI's profits have fallen to £105 million, a 10 per cent drop on last year's £116 million. The company's sales were £1,100 million, a 1 per cent increase on last year's £1,080 million. ICI's operating costs were £995 million, a 1 per cent increase on last year's £984 million. The company's net profit was £105 million, a 10 per cent drop on last year's £116 million. The company's net profit was £105 million, a 10 per cent drop on last year's £116 million.

Yes, only £105 million ... A cutting from the London Evening Standard

The Bloodsuckers

THIS ADVERT appeared in a paper in Cleveland, USA. It offers to buy people's blood so that they can afford to pay their heating bills.

You go along, they take two pints of blood and extract one pint of plasma from it. They give you ten dollars. You go twice a week, every week, for a month and you make 100 dollars.

A Red Cross doctor commented that the practice is medically sound, but not the way the advert suggests. "The current guidelines would suggest that no more than 20 double plasma phereses be done a year. They're talking about doing 104."

Of course, it's the poor who have to resort to such means to survive. One worker suggested that the power companies should just take the blood direct, and cut out the middle man.

\$100

It's enough to keep you in hot water.
Pay utility bills with what you can
earn monthly by donating plasma.

plasma alliance

NATIONAL WAGE AGREEMENTS

DES DERWIN argues that National Wage Agreements do more than just hold down our wages. A new society cannot be negotiated across a conference table.

THE PRESSURES upon wage restraint in the last 18 months or so have led to a re-think among many trade unionists about National Wage Agreements. At the Irish Congress of Trade Unions conference in November, every speaker criticised the 1977 Agreement at least. *LIBERTY*, the official paper of the ITGWU opened (or half opened) its pages to a discussion on alternatives to National Wage Agreements (NWA). Leading trade union officials such as Matt Merrigan or even John Carroll have called for a new look or more flexible NWA or for a Social Contract.

Yet despite all this discussion, the trade union bureaucracy have entered into yet another round of negotiations on 'wage restraint' like addicts who need a fix. And despite the threats and the shadow-boxing, the negotiations move relentlessly over all the 'stumbling blocks' onto new compromises. In so doing, they prove the charge that militants have made for years: that one of the greatest dangers of Wage Agreements is that they tend to become self-perpetuating -- that one agreement inevitably leads to another.

In money terms alone, the six National Wage Agreements since 1970 stand condemned as having been against the real interests of workers. Between mid-November 1970 and mid-November 1977 the Consumer Price Index rose by 150.3%. The wage increases (for a man on £20 in 1970) provided by the NWA's amounted to 153.7%. Less tax, social insurance and taking the various wage pauses into account, this represents a loss in real wages. The losses for workers paid more than £20 in 1970 were far greater. Thousands of workers did not receive their full increases when employers made use of the 'inability to pay' clauses. Most of those who suffered from this clause were among the lower paid and badly organised sections.

The collaboration between the trade union leadership and the state did not originate with the Wage Agreements. But the process of collaboration has been speeded up with the creation of new institutions and the strengthening of old ones. The Employer-Labour Conference, the periodic tripartite talks, the greater role bestowed upon the Labour Court and bodies like the National Economic and Social Council, have all served to decrease the independence of the trade union movement from the state. As a result of their own concrete experience in such institutions, the trade union leadership increasingly come to see their role as that of pressurising the state into granting 'social reforms'.

The confidence and militancy of workers have risen enormously in a 1977 that was full of strikes. It has appeared very much as a "struggling and screaming" against restrictions and wage restraint. But 1977 stands in contrast to the previous six years. We often see puzzled head-scratching—genuine or otherwise—from journalists, trade unionists and even socialists, as to why no unemployed protest movement of any description has emerged in recent times—even from the organised trade union movement. A general demoralisation and acquiescence have dominated the response of workers not only to unemployment, but to redundancies, rationalisations, unequal pay and repressive legislation.

Yet the real point is that the removal of bargaining

power from the shop floor, the shop stewards and the union branches—which the National Wage Agreements have done—have enormously weakened workers' strength and self-confidence. And the effects go far beyond the confines of the trade union wage struggle. If workers are unable to defend their own living standards through local militant bargaining, then their own confidence to tackle the more political issues is decreased. Can it be a mere coincidence that the few groups of workers to strike or march against the Emergency legislation last year came from sections (mainly building workers) who were relatively independent of the restrictions of the Wage Agreements?

Those who received the full NWA increases suffered farther hidden losses in real wages due to the underestimation by the Consumer Price Index of inflation for working class families. The different weights given to items in the index are based on the expenditure of average households—not the poorer ones, who spend more on necessities. The inclusion of luxury items in the Index, that rise slower than items such as food, often brings down the true level of price increases.

As a consequence of this decline in living standards, the NWA's have had an insidious effect on the unity of the working class movement. When basic wages are held down and all escape hatches closed, then the only outlet for keeping up with prices is to do more work. Overtime, double-jobbing, job-cutting productivity and flexibility deals have all increased as a result of the implicit and explicit encouragement of the Wage Agreements. This resort to measures which sacrifice the jobs of others has served to increase the distance between the employed and the unemployed.

But the most dangerous effects of the National Wage Agreements have been political. NWA'S were introduced as a way of coming to terms with the growing power of organized workers. They date from the end of the decade in which trade unionists' militancy, organization and wage levels had made great strides. Actions like the maintenance strike, which involved over 30,000 workers, had to be curbed. The ruling class found that when the economic crisis hit hard in '72-'73 they desperately needed an ordered mechanism for imposing wage restraint. They were introduced—and this should be noted by those who argue that NWA's are voluntarily and democratically accepted by trade unionists—with a Fianna Fail threat of a legal wage curbs as an alternative.

Essentially, they represented an agreement not only for wage restraint but also on what kind of a trade union movement was to develop in Ireland. The NWA's have shifted the balance of power in the trade unions decisively in favour of the bureaucracy. The method is simple. The initiative to claim and fight for higher wages is taken away from the rank and file on the job and in union branches and is vested in the trade union leaders working through the Employer-Labour Conference. The process of making claims itself has been wrapped up in strict procedure. Increasingly, the NWA's began to specify that all claims for improved conditions or anomalies had to be referred to the Labour Court or the Employer-Labour Conference. This emphasis on procedure and arbitration has strengthened the control of the bureaucracy over the rank and file. The trade union leaders, and the bulk of full time trade union officials, there-

fore proved themselves amenable to those fetters on the rank and file.

One defence of National Wage Agreements is that the seventies are years of slump, so wages and consciousness would have fallen anyway, and were rescued to some extent by National Wage Agreements. And, conversely, that the sixties were years of boom and the advances won then were not necessarily the product of free collective bargaining. There is a lot of truth in the second statement particularly, but the argument is no real defence of National Wage Agreements. Demoralisation and acceptance of loss are not the automatic responses of workers to economic crisis. All the workers' revolutions have taken place during times of extreme capitalist crisis and collapse. On a smaller scale, a bankrupt firm closing down can lead to unforeseen advances in the consciousness of the workforce if they occupy the factory and demand their jobs back (especially if they win!).

The recession of the seventies might just have easily produced a militant and unified working-class movement. But that would have required a fight-back. Which requires leadership and organisation. And there you have it. Instead the trade union leaders opted for National Wage Agreements and have pushed them or their equivalents ever since. Because they believe in compromise, reform and the "national interest"; because they have no conception, or interest in, an alternative to capitalism (with its symptoms of inflation, redundancies and unemployment) they are forced to recommend and police National Wage Agreements—the embodiment of "the best we can get at the present time." Far from being the protectors of our living standards over the past seven years National Wage Agreements have been the instrument of the bosses' attack on those living standards.

The pressures on the Wage Agreement that emerged during many strikes in 1977 have led many union officials to look for a new sort of agreement. But the most articulate "alternatives" have come from left-wing officials like Des Geraghty of the ITGWU and Matt Merrigan of the ATGWU. The similarities in their approach are astounding.

Basically the "lefts" have criticised the Agreements for what they have left out rather than what they are by nature. Thus they have concentrated their criticisms on the fact that the Agreements do not contain bargaining on wider political, economic and social issues rather than pointing to the manner in which they stifle bargaining, on wages primarily, but as a consequence on wider issues also. "Many of the traditional arguments have contrasted the relative merits of centralised bargaining with localised free collective bargaining, sometimes referred to as the "free for all". I believe this generates a false and misleading debate and places the major emphasis on the method of bargaining rather than on the contents of the bargain," is how Des Geraghty puts it. Matt Merrigan, in a similar vein, advocates "a wage bargain that has an economic, social and political dimension."

Ultimately such a strategy is one which seeks to negotiate a new society across the conference table. It is a gradualist perspective which seeks to trade an agreement on wages by us for the acceptance of a National Plan by the bosses which will give us nationalisation of resources, etc.—all of this with little or no reference to the need for a political struggle for socialism. It is quite obvious that the bosses will not hand over the greater or any part of their profits—no matter how radical a National Plan sounds—in return for wage restraint by trade unionists. After all the whole point of wage restraint is to increase profits. The National Plan can only represent a re-structuring of the present society—one which aims to make capitalism more efficient by encouraging greater state intervention. And it

is this which many of the 'left' union officials are asking for in return for guaranteeing wage restraint.

But many militants on the ground have also taken up the notion that real working-class gains can be made through centralised bargaining. Some talk of the possibility of a democratic National Wage Agreement and see in free collective bargaining a return to anarchy where the strong gain and the weak lose. In *New Liberty*, the paper of the rank and file group in the ITGWU, a debate has opened up on the relative merits of centralised versus free collective bargaining.

However, even if the Irish Congress of Trade Unions was democratically controlled from top to bottom, there is no reason why workers in CIE or in the retail trade, for instance, should be tied to the same Agreement as farm labourers or nurses. If one section or factory sees a way of wresting a little more from their bosses, why should the movement as a whole hold them back? If a strong section of the working class such as the maintenance men or the craft unions can make gains, it can only help to open the way for weaker sections. On the other hand, if the stronger sections forego any attempt to win an additional increase, the only people to gain are their bosses.

In any case, the concept of a 'democratic National Wage Agreement' raises a chicken-and-egg argument. For central bargaining to be democratic the movement would need control over all stages of the negotiations, regular report back meetings, rank and file conferences and general meetings to formulate claims in the first place; and an accountable team of negotiators known for their trustworthiness. But this requires a tremendous overhaul of the union structure, which means a long, hard struggle with the bureaucracy through building a rank and file movement.

Yet as we have argued throughout this article, the National Wage Agreement strengthens the hand of the bureaucracy. In other words, we need democracy to get a so-called "democratic National Wage Agreement"; but we cannot get democracy until the National Wage Agreements are done away with, because central bargaining entrenches and strengthens the full-time officials. Under the present circumstances, therefore, central bargaining is the bureaucracy bargaining and doing the fighting.

All this is not an argument for splitting up the movement or for a notorious 'free-for-all'—whatever that means. Ironically, it is the devastation of the National Wage Agreements on the trade union movement, on solidarity action, on the power of the picket line, that requires us to adopt new tactics to overcome the danger of free collective bargaining leading to a series of splendid but isolated and defeated struggles. The experience of strikes like those at Unidare, Irish Steel and Kilmartins show how solidarity has to be built up all over again, by the rank and file.

The alternative to the Wage Agreements is—and let's say it unashamedly and defiantly—is free collective bargaining. But with a maximum of unity, co-operation and solidarity. Free collective bargaining returns the initiative to make claims and lead struggles to the rank and file. It allows stronger sections to use their muscle to win increases which can act as targets for weaker sections. It restores to workers the right to claim straight money increases on the basis when they think they require them to keep up with prices.

Unity and solidarity need to be re-built and forged through struggle. It cannot be composed artificially through centralised bargaining. It cannot be the unity of a retreat which was imposed by the successive Wage Agreements. Solidarity between different sections can be achieved under collective bargaining, through entering common claims. Through fighting for flat rate increases across the board. In the present circumstances, that means fighting for a £15 a week increase to compensate for the drop in living standards. The demands for a 35 hour week, for a national minimum wage, and for equal pay now can guide and co-ordinate the struggles. Above all, the building of a rank and file movement through solidarity with all local and national struggles, can weld together a militant, fighting unity.

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS



SINCE THEIR RETURN to power in June, Fianna Fail have treated us to their own unique version of the oled trick used by Abbot and Costello to bluff their way into a cinema for nothing: going in backwards through the main door in the hope that everyone would think they were walking forward.

The greatest exponent of this "one step forward, two steps backward" shuffle is undoubtedly the Minister for Justices, Mr. Gerry Collins, and his recent efforts to back-track on the calls he made for a prison enquiry while opposition spokesman on Justice, must surely rank among his outstanding performances.

On 13th December, he blandly informed Noel Browne in the Dail that his previous demands for an inquiry were prompted by his own ignorance at the time

(some spokesman on Justice), an ignorance, of course, which has been dispelled since he came to office.

Unfortunately, while Mr. Collins now enjoys privileged access to all the necessary sources of information, he expects the public to put up with the very ignorance which, he admits, prevented him from seeing the full picture when in opposition.

On no occasion since the founding of the state have the prisons been subjected to proper public surveillance and scrutiny.

The Irish Red Cross was asked to send observers to the Curragh during the Second World War but refused to do so. When the need was somewhat less pressing, however, they made some amends for this by sending a team under Mrs. Tom Barry to look at

the conditions prevailing under internment in 1957-8.

The nearest thing to an official inquiry was when a four-man committee from the Labour Party (which included Jim Larkin Snr.) investigated Portlaoise in 1946. They were so appalled at what they found that the Labour Party was forced to adopt their recommendations as "an official statement of the party attitude to prison conditions". Needless to say, the Labour Party also adhered to its official policy of doing nothing about it, and so it was left at that.

In 1973, the Prison Study Group, backed by the Department of Psychiatry, U.C.D., initiated the most thorough investigation to date in that they covered all the prisons. Their report, however, valuable as it is, suffered from

many drawbacks. In the first place, they limited themselves to ex-prisoners for first-hand accounts of prison life.

In addition to this, the impact of their report was diminished by the fact that they were for the most part an academic group, conducting the study in private rather than in public, and thus were in no position to act on these findings and change the system.

The sworn public inquiry planned by the Prisoners' Rights Organization (PRO) for next autumn will not be hampered by any of these restrictions. It comes in the wake of widespread prison unrest (Portlaoise hunger strike, Mountjoy riot) and repeated calls for an inquiry from bodies such as Dublin Trades Council, the Trade

Union Campaign Against Repression, ICCL, Conradh na Gaeilge, GAA, and a number of County Councils. A further indication of the level of public dissatisfaction with the prisons was to be seen in the collection of 10,000 signatures supporting the inquiry by the PRO during the summer. They marched to the Dail to present these to the Minister in September. True to form, he didn't even turn up to accept them.

Maintenance of Irish prisons should by right be the responsibility of the National Museum rather than the Department of Justice. One look at the buildings should confirm this, but there are many other aspects of the system which should be of some interest to antiquarians.

For instance the rules. Drawn mainly from the Prisons Act of 1826, they prohibit such crimes against humanity as cursing, swearing, blaspheming, singing, whistling, behaving irreverently in church, being absent from church and prayers or (the catch-all) doing anything which "in any other way offends against good order and discipline."

And the punishments certainly fit the crimes, in keeping with the overall punitive ideology of the system. They include loss of remission and privileges (not rights), close or solitary confinement, dietary punishment on bread and water, keeping a prisoner "in irons or any other mechanical restraint." Rule 73 states: "The governor shall enter in his journal . . . the number of strokes or lashes given . . ."

The situation is as bad with regard to prison facilities.

Education: The urgent need for proper education in the prisons is well illustrated by the fact that in St. Patrick's Institution (for 'juvenile offenders'), 90% of inmates between the ages of 17 and 21 have a reading age of 12 or less. Yet the educational programmes provided by the Department of Justice are so pathetic that ASTI have set up a special sub-committee with a view to demanding a complete overhaul of the system. More recently, the TUI have threatened to with-

draw their services entirely unless the minimum amount of co-operation from the Department is forthcoming.

Health: Over the past three years, 5 people have committed suicide in prison, and in the first three months of 1976 alone, there were at least 14 attempted suicides. 10% of inmates are transferred to mental hospitals each year, sometimes by sole order of the Governor. The problems are so acute that the Irish Medical Association have also had to set up a sub-committee to make up for the negligence of the Department in this area.

But while the medical and teachers' unions have been at work on their respective fronts, the same cannot be said for the larger general unions on the questions which concern them: prison labour and unemployment among ex-prisoners.

Up to a few months ago the going rate for a day's work in prison was 10p. (It was recently increased by

200% to 30p—a flagrant breach of the National Wage Agreement!) It is hardly necessary to go into the boring nature of the work: wood-cutting, sewing mailbags, mat-making, laundry work and so on. What is more important to note is that even if the work were of a positive kind, and the prisoner was equipped with the kind of skills which would enable him "to earn his livelihood on release" (as laid down in the Prisons Act 1947), this would still be of no use, as prison training is not recognised as a form of apprenticeship by the trade unions. And still more to the point: even if it were recognised, prisoners on finishing their sentence would still have to face perhaps the greatest problem which confronts any ex-prisoner: Unemployment.

The extent to which unemployment overshadows the whole prisons debate shows beyond all doubt that any attempt to achieve radical

changes in the prison system in isolation from the trade union movement is doomed to failure. There is a tendency to think that prisons issues belong to the area of 'civil rights' and should accordingly be left to the 'do-gooders' and 'concerned people' in general.

But this is a grave mistake. The prisons question touches on the trade union movement, not because of civil rights, but because the penal system is directed at the working class in defence of private property. 96% of people are in prison for crimes against property and the vast majority of these are from the working class, casualties of the poverty inflicted by capitalism on what may truly be called the 'third world' areas of the city.

The stand taken by Swedish unions on the need for proper vocational training inside prison, wages on a par with those outside and adequate opportunities for employment on leaving prison, played a decisive role in dismantling the old penal structures.

Compare this with the sorry record of their Irish counterparts. One of the basic demands of the Prisoners' union set up in Portlaoise jail in 1973 (and written into the constitution of the PRO) was that it be recognised by the ICTU. The demand fell on deaf ears. Last year at Congress, an NUJ motion calling for substantial trade union representation on the farcical Prison Visiting Committees was passed, with the aim of offsetting the preponderance of businessmen well known for the sympathetic hearing they give to those who commit crimes against property. But again the executive refused to act on it.

For these reasons, it is vital that the rank and file in the unions see to it that trade union delegates, empowered to report back to their unions, should have a significant presence on the committee which will conduct the forthcoming inquiry. In this way, the findings will not just collect dust on an academic bookshelf, but will in fact be put in the hands of the most powerful and progressive force in society: the organised working class.

TUCAR

AT A MEETING in December, TUCAR (Trade union campaign against repression) one of many bodies calling for an inquiry into prison conditions discussed with representatives of PRO the nature of an independent inquiry.

At this meeting it was clear that there were some differences between TUCAR and PRO, on the best way to set up an independent inquiry. It was TUCAR's view that the worsening prison conditions must be seen in the context of political repression, that the tribunal of inquiry should include several trade unionists delegated by Executives or Trades Councils. Also TUCAR was anxious that the scope of the inquiry should not be limited to those with a professional interest in prisons, as this would be unlikely to show up the particular problems facing political prisoners.

TUCAR has made these points known to the PRO and hopes at this stage that it will be possible to persuade the organisers to broaden the scope of the inquiry, and lead on to an active campaign in the unions.

More information on, and the latest bulletin of TUCAR may be obtained from the Secretary, 39 LISSADEL DRIVE, DRIMNAGH, DUBLIN 12.

SOCIALIST WORKERS MOVEMENT

1971-77

FOR MANY of those who have been in the Labour Party or in the Republican movement, the members of small left-wing groups have been seen, by definition, to be either mad or incurably sectarian, or both. In looking at the background and development of the Socialist Workers' Movement over the years, this article aims to show that its traditions and politics are neither mad nor sectarian. It also aims to explain the entry into the Socialist Labour Party of S.W.M. members.

The Socialist Workers' Movement was formed in October 1971 by the coming together of several small groups. The core in Dublin consisted of people who had come from the Fintan Lalor branch of the Labour Party and who had moved in a revolutionary direction.

They initially joined the Dublin branch of the People's Democracy which was then seen as the most open, active and dominant group on the revolutionary left. However it soon became obvious that the P.D. had already started its slide from specifically socialist politics towards a concentration on the Republican movement.

It had built itself essentially as a ginger group inside the civil rights movements. As a result, the Protestant section of the working class could see it only as the most extreme element of a Catholic movement, instead of as a socialist movement which could appeal to them on a class basis.

The P.D.'s concentration on the national question implied that its Dublin branch should be basically a support group for the struggle in the North, rather than a movement for intervening in the questions facing Southern workers. It was this perspective which caused the group in Dublin to look for a more working-class orientation.

The Dublin group soon joined together with two other groups. The Waterford Socialist Movement was a small independent group which had previously formed the youth section of the Labour Party in the town. They were soon joined by the Galway branch of the Young Socialists who had become disillusioned by the dogmatic and sterile orthodoxy of the leadership of that organisation.

The background from which the S.W.M. came, therefore, was one of seeking an orientation to the working class. The majority of its members were of the working class and many had an active militant record in the trade unions. It was the perspective of looking to the working class as

JOHN GOODWILLIE details the origins and political traditions of the tendency members who publish Socialist Worker Review

the creators of the socialist revolution which led the S.W.M. to develop links with the political current associated with the International Socialists (now the Socialist Workers' Party) in Britain.

The International Socialists had broken from the Trotskyist movement soon after the War over the characterisation of Russia. Trotsky himself and most of his followers had analysed Russia as a degenerate workers' state. They maintained that despite the growth of a bureaucracy, despite the attacks on workers' rights, Russia remained a 'workers' state' because of its new property relations and its planned economy. The International Socialists, on the other hand, maintained that a planned economy in itself did not necessarily imply socialism; that workers' control over the state, the factories and the economy was the essential requirement. They therefore characterised Russia as a 'state-capitalist' society.

From this rather obscure, and for many irrelevant, debate, a number of important conclusions followed. Most of the orthodox Trotskyist groups went on to characterise Eastern Europe as

'workers' states'. Yet it was also the case that the so-called revolution in most of these countries was organised by the bayonets of the Russian army. The working class simply had not intervened. One therefore had the paradoxical position where a workers' state could be achieved without the active intervention of the working class themselves.

Such a view implied that other social forces could substitute for the working class in opening the road for socialism. Many in fact jumped to the logical conclusion. Some placed their trust in the revolutionary potential of the "Third World" or nationalist movements. Others looked to the 'student and youth' vanguard as the spark which would ignite the flame. Others looked to the mystical power of a leadership with the

'correct' programme. Ultimately such 'substitutionism' has its foundation in a despondency and a despair about the potential of the industrial working class.

The basis of S.W.M. politics has been that it is only the working class who can and must make the revolution for its own class objectives. This has not been some abstract political ideal but rather has informed the Move-

ment's whole method. It has consistently fought for workers' action in the here and now to defend victims of state repression, to cut the dole queues, to achieve women's rights.

The S.W.M. therefore sought to make its appeal directly to workers, not to leech on to other revolutionary groups. It was for that reason that its paper 'The Worker' was launched straight away in January 1972. It did not devote itself to sectarian attacks on other groups, but rather tried to achieve excellence in reporting and analysing strikes and workers' struggles. It sought to use a popular style and language in place of the abstract jargon that had dominated the left-wing press in Ireland.

The process of developing the policies of the new organisation in dept, continued side by side with significant practical activity. The internal discussion in the organisation resulted in the publication of two policy pamphlets: **Industry and the Trade Unions**, published in 1973 argued that the trade union bureaucracy inevitably compromised and sold out when under pressure from the state and the employers. It concluded that militants could not rely on trade union officials, no matter how left wing they sounded, but should build rank and file groups in the unions to fight for union democracy and militant policies.

The Working class and the National question, which was published in 1974 gave an analysis of the development of the Northern Crisis and the strategy of British imperialism. It concluded that the socialist revolution required the participation of the Protestant section of the working class and that the key to breaking open the situation in the North lay with Southern workers opening up a fight with capitalism in the South.

Policy making was seen as contributing to an eventual programme. But the S.W.M. did not set out to write a programme out of thin air. The programme had to reflect the experience of the organisation as well as its first principles. Above all an organisation had to sink roots in the class before developing its full programme.

That it is not easy to unite the practical and the theoretical can be illustrated by part of S.W.M.'s trade union experience. The idea of rank and file groups did not bear much fruit until the recent formation of the New Liberty group in the I.T.G.W.U. Activity had been channelled into several phases of the Dublin Shop Steward's Committee for some years. This committee originated in opposition to the

National Wage Agreement of 1973. An informal group of shop stewards and committee members formed around the S.W.M. joined forces with an initiative from the Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union and quite an effective, if finally unsuccessful campaign was founded.

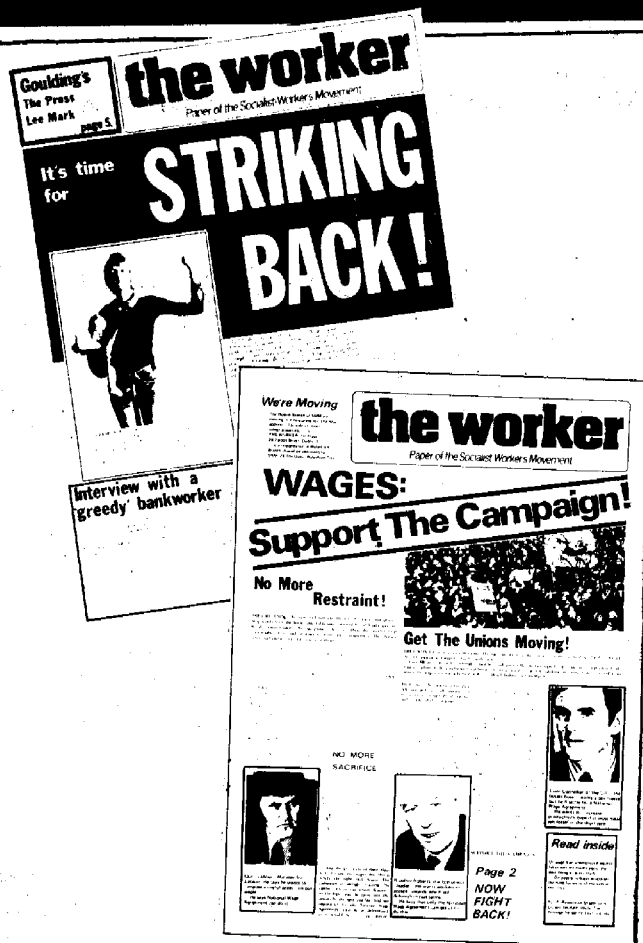
The committee provided a useful forum for linking up the divided opposition to the policies of the trade union leadership. But this soon clashed with the policies of the Communist Party method of gaining positions in the trade unions by quieter methods of making friends and influencing people. Gradually, the Communist Party, Sinn Féin and the Socialist Party of Ireland withdrew their members and this narrowing of the committee's base put it into decline.

The S.W.M. attitude in all of this was that rank and file bodies must be open to workers of all parties and none. They must be wide enough to accommodate all those who are prepared to fight for some limited aims, such as all those who were against the Wage Agreements in the case of the Dublin Shop Stewards' Committee. The S.W.M. continued to insist on this in participating in the formation of the New Liberty group and of the Trade Union Campaign against Repression.

There were at one time or another branches of the S.W.M. in Belfast, Coleraine, Dublin, Galway, Limerick and Waterford, and members elsewhere. But in spite of this geographical spread and the avoidance of an exclusive atmosphere and the esoteric language of other revolutionary groups, the S.W.M. activities did not draw in the numbers required to make a real impact in the wider working class movement generally. As a result a fairly high turnover ensured that the numbers remained constant over the years. The growth of the movement was also held back by the formation of an 'opposition group' within its ranks which later emerged as the Irish Workers group. Their divisive sloganising created a difficult atmosphere which had to be resolved by one expulsion and a number of resignations.

The small size of S.W.M. was a continuing difficulty and a block to recruitment. The S.W.M. deliberately never called itself a party, believing that a party must represent a real force within the working class and that the building of a revolutionary party in Ireland could not be achieved simply by gradual recruitment to S.W.M. Rather it would take the form of a coming together of strands from both the Republican movement and the Labour Movement.

The S.W.M. hoped that the tensions inherent within the Rep-



SWM produced 48 issues of **THE WORKER**, widely agreed to be the best working class paper in Ireland. As well as regular extensive reports on workers' struggles on the shop floor and in the unions, **THE WORKER** carried reports and comment on the struggle in the North and repression in the South.

The Littlejohn story was published in **THE WORKER** four months before any other paper, including the national dailies, caught up with it. In a similar scoop late last year the paper published a confidential document implicating government ministers, directors of the Sugar Company and Ruairi Roberts of the ICTU in a conspiracy to hold down the wages of Sugar Company workers.

SOCIALIST WORKER REVIEW will maintain the traditions of **THE WORKER**, to spread the ideas and organise the fight for socialism.

publican movement would lead to the emergence of a revolutionary grouping from that direction and was therefore hopeful with the emergence of the Irish Republican Socialist Party and after it split, with the Independent Socialist Party. Yet many of those who came from the Republican tradition feared the move towards re-building a party from starting with a small group. As a result they have often tended to act in a sectarian manner.

The apparent exclusive dedication of many left-wingers in the Labour Party to internal battles and election nominations as well as the inactivity of many of its rank and file, meant that S.W.M. gave less attention to the possible emergence of a leftward moving tendency from this

direction. The formation of the Socialist Labour Party ran against our expectations. However it was clear enough from the Browne and Merrigan election campaign that there were many individual left wingers about who had been drawn into the campaign,

It quickly seemed clear that the SLP's formation would make recruitment directly to S.W.M. more difficult. The S.L.P. attracted some of those who were closest to S.W.M. The S.L.P. provided a much bigger vehicle for active socialist initiatives and a much bigger arena for discussions of revolutionary socialist ideas than anything S.W.M. was likely to achieve in the near future.

The Socialist Labour Party is not a homogeneous organisation. It includes people of many differ-

ent political backgrounds and a wide spectrum of political ideas. The S.W.M. welcome the emergence of the Party which for some of its members means a break with the squalid careerism of the Labour Party and for others means an entry or re-entry into active politics. In joining, the members of the S.W.M. welcomed the opportunity to work alongside a large section of the working

class movement, and to build it as a substantial force for intervention in that movement.

Members of S.W.M. in the 26 counties have therefore joined the S.L.P.

The decision to join does not mean abandoning the work which S.W.M. was doing. The essential task of building a rank and file movement, which involves working both in the official trade union movement and in rank and file groupings such as the New Liberty group will continue. The fight to organise the unemployed will continue. The fight against repression will continue.

Many of those with whom members of the S.W.M. have worked in these activities have joined the S.L.P. independently. It will be our aim to draw many other members of the S.L.P. into this type of activity. In this way the building of a socialist party within the working class can go hand in hand with the strengthening of those forces within the Labour movement which fight the inactivity and sell-outs of its leaders.

To co-ordinate the activities within the SLP of those who feel an affinity with the politics that S.W.M. defended in the past, the Socialist Workers Tendency has been formed. The tendency is not a party within a party: it will not force its members to act monolithically without regard to their own views. It simply is a grouping of like-minded people who wish to exercise an influence within the Party for direct action and against the road of parliamentary careerism. The basis of its politics can be summarised in one quotation from Karl Marx:

'The emancipation of the working class, is the task of the workers alone'

As a result it stands for independent rank and file activity to defend jobs, to oppose repression, and to protect living standards.

It seeks to place the working class at the head of the struggle against imperialism. And it opposes any notion that somehow socialism can be handed down from above—from a group of parliamentary representatives who legislate in socialism while the great mass of the working class stand in the background.

BOOK REVIEWS

GRUNWICKS: THE RULES OF THE GAME



Grunwick:

Joe Rogaly. Penguin Special. 80p

FEW TRADE UNIONISTS in Ireland will not have heard of the Grunwick Processing Laboratories in Brent, London, and the dispute which has gone on there since the Summer of '76, but how many will realise the implications that such a dispute has for the trade union movement in this country?

In a very interesting book simply called *Grunwick*, Joe Rogaly, an assistant editor with the *Financial Times*, gives a potted history of events up to last September and spells out 'the lessons' of the affair.

Essentially Rogaly is concerned that the relationship between the trade unions

and the law should be examined—something which everyone is agreeable to. But what is surprising is his belief that the law was unable to do anything about George Ward's victimization of trade unionists because of the "union movement's own reluctance to have anything to do with the law."

Rogaly says: "The absence of any clearly stated code of laws setting out both the rights and the responsibilities of trade unions is the most glaring omission in current British law, weakening the protection that our constitution can offer to trade unions, companies,

These four members of the Grunwick strike committee were suspended by their union "leaders" after this protest outside the TUC. The officials even took away the typewriter used for strike bulletins. Solidarity forever!

individual workers and indeed all citizens and consequently damaging our economy."

He argues that the trade unions have consistently placed themselves above the law and are therefore to blame for the absence of legislation which could 'protect' the weaker parties in industry. But this is of course simply untrue. The classic behaviour of the trade union bureaucracy in this country and in Britain has been precisely to put a 'respect for the rule of law' above the interests of their own union membership. How many times have we seen strikes beaten because



of the failure of the union leadership to challenge and defy court injunctions handed out by upper class judges?

Rogaly's intention throughout the book is to use the Grunwick case to disguise the employer's classic argument in favour of tougher anti-union legislation which is much more aptly expressed in simple terms: Let us tie your hands and then we will tell you the rules of the game.

In the light of the recent Ferenka closure and the various suggestions from Government Ministers that further legislation governing industrial relations could be introduced this year, Irish trade unionists should be well aware of the fallacies of this argument and his review of events at Grunwicks helps to illustrate these.

For the fact that the law had no means of making Grunwick recognise a union has nothing whatever to do with whether or not the trade union movement as a whole is in favour of labour relations being governed by a code of law. After all if the British government wished to make a law similar to the Race Relations Act or the Sex Discrimination Act, they could have done so. The real point is that the whole system of law in our society is based on protecting the rights of property and all the privileges that derive from that ownership of property. Because of that, the ability of trade unionists to use particular 'reform oriented' laws will always be extremely limited.

Picketing is also dealt with at some length by Rogaly and recalling last year's plea by the Federated Union of Employers for the introduction of more stringent laws to deal with pickets in this country, one is as well to be prepared for what is to come by reading some of the new ideas. These include limiting pickets to those directly involved, prescribing how many could be present at any one time, and believe it or not, having all pickets wear armbands! So much for spontaneity.

All in all Rogaly has produced a contentious book which should prove a worthwhile read for anyone interested in knowing what the trade union movement will be up against in the near future.

F. MURPHY

A NEW WORLD FOR WOMEN

A New World for Women: Stella Browne—Socialist Feminist.

Sheila Rowbotham. Pluto Press. £1.50.

IF A FEW of the more conservative bishops and the League of Decency were to be believed, then the campaign for contraception in this country is part of a general Marxist conspiracy designed to undermine church, state and family. And if you ignore the fantasies about the grand conspiracy, there may be a tiny grain of truth in such a view. The only parties which consistently argue for the rights to contraception and divorce are usually those which stand to the left of the Labour Party.

But in fact the left has not always held such a position. The early socialist feminist campaigners for Birth Control in Britain, for example, often found themselves in conflict with the left as much as the right. The divisions on this question did

not always follow the general differences between right and left.

The first propagandists for contraception in Britain were in fact the malthusians who argued that overpopulation would lead to the destruction of society. They claimed that: "The real danger is that the higher racial or national types may be swamped by the lower types and the only way of avoiding that danger is by popularising the knowledge of how to prevent conception." This racist right-wing propaganda saw population control of the poor as a means of containing working-class revolt.

Maria Stopes, the darling of middle class liberals, argued for birth control on the grounds that "overcrowding in towns means we have been breeding revolutionaries." Not surprisingly this created hostility to contraception among socialists. And it was many years before socialists were won to full support for contraception.

THE PRICE OF FAILURE

Chile: the State and Revolution:

Ian Foxborough, Phipip O'Brien & Jackie Roddick. MacMillan Press, 1977.

ONE OF THE EFFECTS of the horror felt by socialists at the brutal regime of the Chilean Junta has been to force POLITICAL debate within the solidarity movement. Thus very little is known in Ireland about the conflicts that were going on within and between the parties of the Popular Unity Government. "Chile: State and Revolution" is therefore useful as a serious critical analysis of what went on and what went wrong in Chile. It fills in the economic and historical background and is intended as a contribution to the debate on socialist strategy. The authors concentrate on the concrete Chilean context and note that "one should always be suspicious of people who drew cut and dried 'lessons' according to their own political formula from the experiences of other countries and other times."

The authors analyse the 'Chilean Road' strategy with its twin assumptions (1) that the Chilean working class could achieve a degree of state power ELECTORALLY and (2) go from there to the transition to socialism within a pluralist, legal, parliamentary and non-violent framework. They argue that this concept dominated the thinking of the Communist Party and the right wing of the Socialist Party (including, importantly, Allende

himself) while inhibiting the left from acting in a consistently revolutionary way. They document the implications of the 'constitutionalism' of the 'Chilean road'—one of the most important being that the internal structure of the armed forces was left untouched. Thus sailors who gave information about the impending coup to left-wing politicians were tortured as 'subversives' before the coup by their officers while Allende looked on.

In pointing to alternative strategies they stress the importance of the independent working class "industriales cordones" which emerged in response to right-wing attacks of the government. The industrial cordones linked together workers from different factories, different unions and different political parties and had begun to assume control over the distribution of food and other essential services. Any move towards socialism needed to be based on such organs rather than on the Parliament as Allende thought.

The authors could be faulted for not relating what was happening in Chile to the Latin American picture generally and for leaving their Marxist political theory of the state implicit. But as a detailed description of what happened in Chile this book is to be recommended.

D. O'Connell

reviews

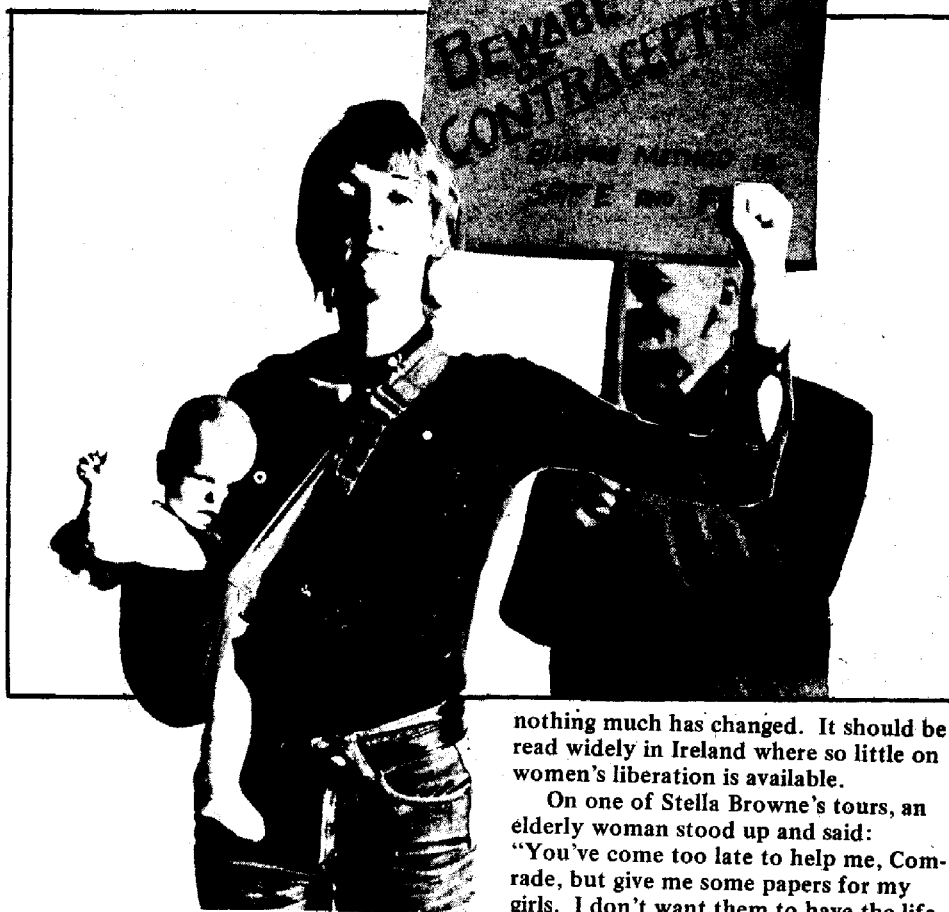
Stella Browne was one of the first women who saw how necessary it was to present the argument for contraception in working class terms. She based her case on the immediate needs of working class women and on a commitment to sex equality. No economic changes would give equality or self-determination to any woman unable to choose or refuse motherhood of her own free will.

Stella Browne was born in Canada in 1882. She became an active worker for socialist feminism in Britain before the

First World War—campaigning for the right to contraception and abortion on demand. She attempted to bind the struggle for sexual liberation with the wider movement for social emancipation. She joined the Communist Party in 1921 but left it in 1923 over its failure to present the case for birth control and abortion in her way, a trait which was to put her at odds with her allies as often as her enemies in years to come.

Stella Browne spoke for a generation of young women who, inspired by the feminist movement before the 1st World War, determined that change for women would not end with the vote. Writing in 1917 Stella Browne connected the demand for birth control and abortion to a whole series of changes in women's position, which included co-operative house-keeping schemes, good housing, a national health service, better maternity provisions, laws on separation and divorce and national education with sex instruction.

Reading the book today in Ireland I



was struck by how little the arguments have changed. The Catholic Church plays a bigger role in opposing women's liberation than in England, but otherwise

nothing much has changed. It should be read widely in Ireland where so little on women's liberation is available.

On one of Stella Browne's tours, an elderly woman stood up and said: "You've come too late to help me, Comrade, but give me some papers for my girls. I don't want them to have the life I've had." That still is too often the life of many women in Ireland. It needs to be changed.

PAUL O'BRIEN

BOOKMARX CLUB

The Bookmarx Club is the only book club supplying paperback books for socialists and trade unionists. In the first year we have brought to members, cheaply, such classics as *The Political Police in Britain*, *The First Shop Stewards Movement*, and *The Suffragettes*, as well as novels such as *Strumpet City*, *The Dispossessed*, *Fontamara* and *Daughter of Earth*.

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— LIST C —

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