

WOMENS VIEW

Spring/Summer 1989

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CURRENT AFFAIRS
PERIODICAL



OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM:

Eroding or reinforcing poverty

Nuclear Dumping is BIG Business

A CARING CRISIS

THE POLITICS OF POVERTY

Less options for Birth Control

Starting school

Learning with TACT



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items of
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and events and
information
relating to
women's
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TO: NATIONAL WOMEN'S COMMITTEE, THE
WORKERS' PARTY, 30 GARDINER PLACE, DUBLIN 1,
IRELAND. PHONE 740716



Leixlip Town Commissioner CATHERINE MURPHY and Party colleague Michael Enright, Wexford, have been selected as European Election Candidates for the Workers' Party Leinster Constituency.



PATRICIA O'DONOVAN has been appointed Assistant General Secretary to the Irish Congress of Trade Unions with particular responsibility for matters relating to the European Community and the lead-up to 1992.



Hundreds of friends and colleagues from theatre and political circles mourned the loss of actor and activist MIL FLEMING last Christmas Eve. Her untimely death has left the world a poorer place.



A group of women in Dublin's Blanchardstown area have launched the Support and Advice for Women group (SAW). Facilities include health, welfare and education information, support and information services and a creche and drop-in facility. They can be contacted via Chairperson DOLORES CLINCH (centre) at 68 Fortlawn Drive, Blanchardstown.



MARY RYAN has been elected President of the Postal and Telecommunications Workers' Union. She calls for greater trade union commitment and support for positive politics from postal workers.

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**WOMENS
VIEW**

**WORKERS' PARTY
PERIODICAL**

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Price 80p

Greater but Equal!

ONE OF THE country's longest and most bizarre legal battles for equal pay neared its conclusion with a recent Labour Court ruling that a group of women employed by Telecom Eireann have been discriminated against on the basis of sex.

The court's determination says that the claimants are entitled to equal pay dating back to June 19th, 1979.

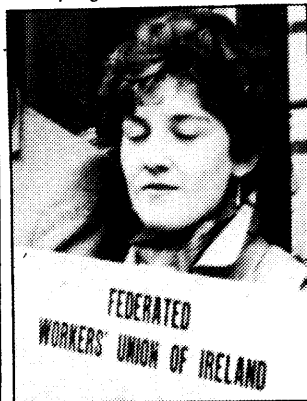
The ruling is seen as having important implications for other groups of women workers.

The case, involving 29 women employed at the telephone maintenance depot in St John's Road, Dublin, was first rejected by the Labour Court in 1984. It was the referred to the High Court in 1986 and the European Court of Justice before being referred back to the Labour Court — which gave the recent final ruling.

At the time that the case was brought — initially by the Irish Women Workers' Union, which then merged with the Federated Workers' Union of Ireland — the women were earning about £90 a week for dismantling, cleaning and oiling telephones.

This was about £25 per week less than a male store

● FWUI backing progress for women



labourer whose job was to clean, collect and deliver components.

Under the Anti-Discrimination (Pay) Act 1974, the women's claim was referred for investigation by an equality officer.

In December 1983, the Labour Court equality officer said that the women were not entitled to equal pay because their work was of "greater value" than that of the male to whom they were compared.

The IWWU appealed the case, but the equality officer's view was upheld in May, 1984.

In February of this year, the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg ruled that the "greater value" argument should not prevent them claiming the same wages under equal pay legislation.

Acting for Ms Mary Murphy and 28 other women employed by Telecom Eireann, Mrs Mary Robinson SC, had argued that the women's pay claim had been rejected due to an over-literal interpretation of national legislation, which would allow the perpetuation of blatant injustice and discrimination based on sex.

Once the "greater value" principle had been determined, the case still had to be referred back to the High Court, which referred it to the Labour Court.

In its determination, the Labour Court says that this "does not constitute grounds other than sex". The women, therefore, should have been entitled to equal remuneration dating from June 19th, 1979.

The determination has important implications for any large concern where women are employed to do "women-only" work, and is regarded as "a very significant victory in a very long battle which could not have been fought without the backing of the FWUI.

EC helps with Positive Action prog.

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION has published a "good conduct guide" to the nitty-gritty of implementing what are known as "positive action programmes".

It is designed to help trade unions and employers produce a good equal opportunity policy, and is based on experiments carried out in EC member states.

It also outlines the reasons why positive action makes good sense and how it can benefit employers and employees, both men and women.

Steps are suggested for an organisation to take on setting up and running such a programme.

The guide is called "Positive Action — Equal Opportunities for Women in Employment" and it's available from the Government Publications Sales Office in Molesworth Street, Dublin, priced £2.70.

● No opportunities for equality in Gardai

Garda Ban on women?

THE Joint Committee on Women's Affairs called for half of the new jobs in the gardai to go to women.

The committee claims that the force has been positively discriminatory and no progress has been made in recruiting women as promotional prospects have been low.

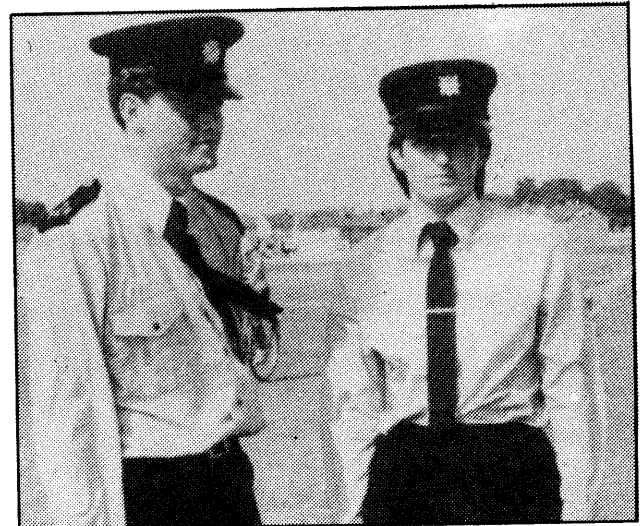
They called on the Justice Minister Gerry Collins to ensure that 50% of the 1,000 posts to be filled in the next three years go to women.

Debating a co-ordinated report on the Development of Equal Opportunities March '87 to September '88, chairwoman Monica Barnes said "the gardai had shown a total lack of awareness of the need of affirmative action in the area of equal opportunities".

The report reveals that there were 10,504 men in the force with only 379 women.

"It is quite obvious that the gardai are acting in a discriminatory manner by only allocating 100 of the 1,000 proposed jobs for women. It should be at least 50%.

"Women seeking recruitment should not be discriminated against by pre-set targets in the ratios of men to women, and we'll be asking the Minister for Justice to look at this carefully."



Babies to cost more!

NEW VHI restrictions on maternity cover will cost affected members about £200 per birth on average.

At present, a woman having a baby in one of the larger maternity hospitals would face average bills of about £500 for accommodation and tests.

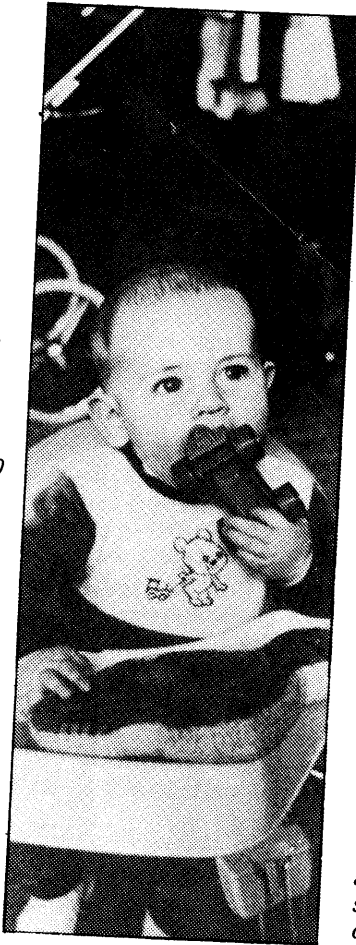
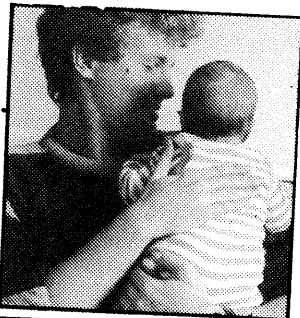
Currently this would be covered by the VHI but under the new restrictions the cover will be restricted to £300, except where there are complications surrounding the birth, in which case the present level of cover will continue.

This will mean that the average mother's VHI cover will fall short of her hospital bill by about £200.

This restriction applies only to the bill for hospital accommodation and tests. There are no new restrictions on the cover provided for the gynaecologist's fees.

The restrictions on maternity cover will come into effect for each member on her first subscription renewal date after the end of February.

Therefore a person with a renewal date in July, and having a baby between now and then, will be covered under the present, more favourable system.



Getting it right

MOTHERS AND FATHERS can look forward to 18 months of paid parental leave after the birth of a child in Sweden, following their recent budget.

The 1989/90 budget proposed a gradual expansion in the support available to married and unmarried parents.

Parental leave, with the State compensating 90 per cent of lost income, would be extended from nine to 12 months in July, to 15 months next year, and to 18 months in July 1991.

More Irish in Europe

IRISHWOMEN are giving birth to fewer babies with the birth rate now at its lowest level in nearly 60 years.

The number of babies born in 1987 — the latest year for which full figures are available — dropped 4.2 per cent on the previous year to 58,864.

This was a drop of 21 per cent on the peak 1980 birth rate of 74,064. The 1987 figure was the lowest recorded by the Central Statistics Office since the 1930s.

Preliminary figures for 1988 indicate a further fall in the birth rate. In the first nine months of 1988 a total of 42,193 births were registered, indicating an annual rate of about 55,200 — which would mean a drop of 4.4 per cent on the 1987 level.

The falling birth rate wasn't a purely Irish phenomenon. Births had been declining in recent years throughout Europe and the United States to such an extent that some countries, including Germany and France, were very worried that not enough babies were being born to keep the population level.

However, the Irish birth rate is still one of the highest in Europe, and our overall population is still increasing.

The rocky road

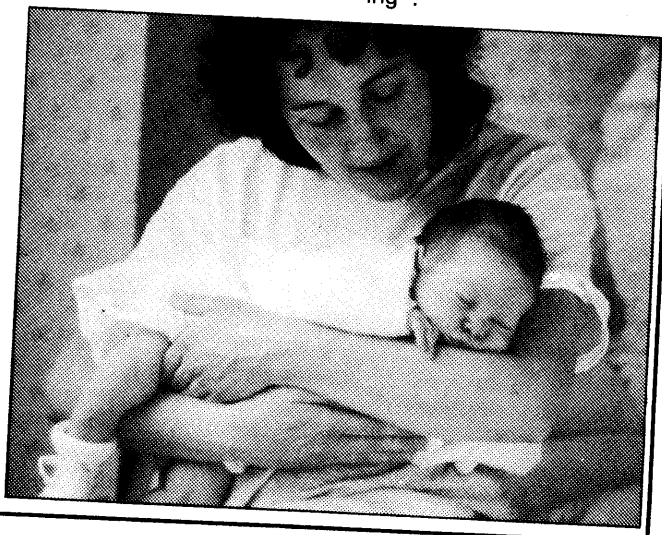
THIRTEEN women have given birth to babies while being rushed to hospital in Limerick following the recent 'axing' of the obstetrics and gynaecology unit in Ennis General Hospital in Co. Clare.

With the recent closure of another maternity service, provided privately at St John of God Nursing Home in Ennis, County Clare has been left without any maternity service.

Residents of Co. Clare are now expected to travel to Limerick Regional Maternity Hospital to have their babies. As the recent cases have shown, not all women are able to delay birth until they can make the up to 90 mile journey to Limerick.

"If a woman in West Clare is in labour, she has to travel 60 miles to Ennis. Depending on the condition of the roads, this can take an hour and a half at least. Then it is a further 30 miles to Limerick," says Ennis GP Dr Ivor Greene.

"The services in Limerick are also cut back, and unable to cope with Ennis patients," adds an Ennis GP who described the situation in Ennis as "disgraceful and disturbing".



Learning with TACT

Tallaght Adult and Community Training (TACT) is a community based group which organises daytime adult education in conjunction with the local Adult Education Officer of the County Dublin VEC, and has been promoting and developing adult education in the Tallaght area for the past five years.

Enrolments generally number about 200 and participants are mostly women. The early emphasis in the programme was on traditional subjects, i.e. English, Maths, Art and flower arranging etc.

Over the years however it came to include a variety of personal and social studies including personal development, Psychology, Women's Studies and Writers workshops. Each September there is an active campaign to recruit new participants.

Although for many it is a once off experience which they try for a year, there is a strong core who return each year.

For many women their participation in adult education is a springboard for becoming either actively involved in the community, going on to further education, or returning to the workforce either directly or indirectly because of their involvement in the daytime programme.

Many women who attended social studies type classes feel there's "no going back" and their new found awareness leads them to challenge the existing social structure. Education therefore is about empowering people, about giving them the tools to change the system if they so wish.

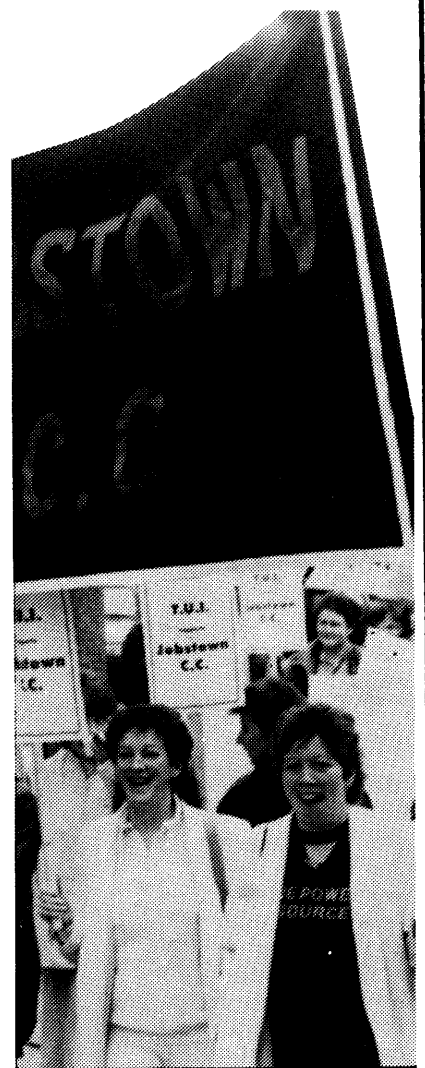
'For many women their participation in adult education is a springboard for becoming involved in their community'

Despite the fact that adult education allows people to contribute more fully to society there is no state involvement or support.

There has been no direct funding from the government for the day-time programme.

From 1984-'87, however, the government allocated £900,000 for adult literacy and community education and through this some money became available which helped subsidise courses in basic English and Maths at a fee of £5. Officially all other courses must be self-financing.

Until there is proper and adequate funding for the day-time programme those who would most benefit from it will continue to be excluded because they cannot afford it.



At the moment the success of day-time adult education is dependant largely on voluntary committees trying to fill in where there is no funding, e.g. the provision of a creche, which is important if women are to have easy access to education, must be maintained by constant fund-raising.

TACT reject the cuts in government spending on education and demand that proper financial support be made available for the provision of day-time adult education.

The struggle to become educated is not an easy one and one of the remarkable features of the Tallaght programme is the determination of women to liberate themselves through education without any direct support or encouragement from the state.



MAUREEN McCLELLAND (centre) with Annette Halpin and Rose Cullen at the opening of the Tallaght Women's Contact Centre.

"Hopefully a 'practical politics' course will be available soon in Tallaght. I have

been looking forward to a course of this type for a long time as I feel that there is a great need to heighten awareness not only at an adult education level, but also in our children's schools.

I offered to write this piece not least because I passionately believe that there is an alternative to the type of conservative gombeen politics that Ireland has been governed with for so long.

Some years ago politics would not have been something which particularly interested me. It was a word which conjured up images of men in positions of power, Dáil Éireann and television debates about the national debt.

In writing this I wondered what happened over the last few years to alter my feelings about politics. I suppose I could attribute it to a number of things, but mostly anger.

Anger at things like the inadequate provision of childcare facilities to enable me to participate in the workforce, anger at never being able to make ends meet, anger at the inequalities in both income and opportunity in Irish society. I became conscious of living in a society where all the rules are made by men, how the poor and women in particular are not allowed to play a full part in making decisions which affect their lives.

Eventually I began to question the system only to find that many politicians kept me at a distance with arguments and explanations like "cut-backs to balance the budget and get out of debt". To my mind these are politicians with a vested interest in making a mystery out of things in order to deceive people and keep them in the dark.

Most people find arguments like those mentioned above very abstract and I think that this is where a politics course would enable individuals to see how politics affects us all in a very personal way.

For me politics is about the price of food, the quality of my children's education, and whether or not I can afford a cervical smear test.

I think it is crucial for individuals in our community to have access to information about: who their local politicians are and what their policies are at both local and national level; who their local councillors are, how they were elected and what their responsibilities involve.

I would also see "understanding our political processes" as an important feature of a politics course.

A political education course that would offer this kind of information and give individuals the opportunity to learn about the people and power structures which dominate their lives is long overdue."

Maureen McClelland

New women's centre for Tallaght

A Tallaght Women's Contact Centre has opened through the efforts of a local women's group operating since 1984, with the aim of creating a greater awareness of issues affecting women in society. Situated on Tallaght's Main St, it provides information, education, support and pressure on behalf of women.

A series of meetings and workshops on issues such as women and the law, mental health and the media are planned. An 'outreach' programme to tackle problems like poverty and unemployment which affect women in a very particular way is planned.

The new centre is funded entirely through the group's own efforts, but financial assistance from St Vincent De Paul and the Abra-kebabra restaurant will cover the first year's rent. They also run fund-raising through clothes sales and coffee mornings.

But the prime function is to provide a place where women and women's groups can meet, discuss ideas, provide support, counselling and comprehensive referral services, and highlight issues such as poor public transport, bad planning and lack of local facilities, they point out. They can be contacted each morning, 10-12.30, at 2 College View, Tallaght Main St. Tel. (01) 524883.

The link between the education system and inequality has been demonstrated in a number of surveys and reports on Irish education, i.e. unequal access to education and subsequently to job choice, potential income levels and even employment of any kind. There is a clear and direct link between the education system and people's chances of being poor as adults.

The first major report on modern Irish education was the **Investment in Education** Report published in 1966. **Investment in Education** revealed a close association between socio-economic groupings and participation in full-time education.

It showed that 15 to 19 year olds from categories A, B and C (i.e. farmers, professional, senior employees, etc.) were four to five times more likely to participate in post-primary education than those from D, E and F (skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers).

There was considerable drop-out at the point of transition from primary to post-primary. The **Investment in Education** team was set up in 1962 and was particularly concerned at potential shortages of sufficiently educated workers with technical skills.

In 1979 Clancy and Benson carried out a survey for the Higher Education Authority on higher education in Dublin. The report was commissioned because of concern about the inadequacy of third level provision in the Dublin region, given the growth in population. The survey found that the class differences in participation revealed in the **Investment in Education** report in 1966 continued.

The survey also produced an interesting "education map" of Dublin showing the percentage of one age group attending third level institutions from each postal district ranging from 44% in the Stillorgan/Mount Merrion area to 1% in Dublin 1.

Specific recommendations made by Clancy and Benson included:

- 1 We recommend that four new colleges be built in the Greater Dublin Region. The first two of these should be in Tallaght and in the Dun Laoghaire/Shankill/Bray area. They should be built by 1985. The third college should be built in the Blanchardstown area.

- We propose that the western colleges and that in the southside offer sub-degree level courses in areas of the social sciences and humanities and that credit and

DEIRDRE O'CONNELL

examines the links between Top of the Class and Social Class

transfer arrangements be sought with the Universities and other appropriate degree awarding institutions for these and other courses.

- We propose that the third-level provisions of the Dublin Institute of Technology be expanded and we also suggest that there be a study to examine the desirability of separating craft training from the DIT's other functions.

- We recommend that Dun Laoghaire School of Art becomes part of the new college proposed for the southside.

- It is recommended that these new colleges specialise in re-current education and particularly in the provision of "second chance" education (e.g. the NCEA Foundation Certificate), and in community-oriented education generally. Although all colleges should offer such courses, there will still be a need to research and develop this whole area.

In 1982 Clancy completed a similar survey for the HEA but national in scope this time. It came up with much the same results as the 1979 Dublin survey. A follow-up survey is to be published very soon. Apparently it shows that very little change has taken place since 1982. It should be noted that working class girls have *even less chance* than working class boys of participating in third level education.

- *Dr Kathleen Lynch calling for re-definition of educational achievement*



Some months later Rottman and others published a report for the Economic and Social Research Institute entitled **The distribution of income in the Republic of Ireland**. This study linked income to education, locating class differences in transfer to post-primary education, in participation in post-primary and most strikingly, in third level education:

"Third level education is attained by nearly three-quarters of the children of higher professional backgrounds. At best, 8% of those from manual worker backgrounds enrol in third level education; for children of unskilled manual workers or of agricultural labourers, the rate amounts to about 4%."

THE REPORT GOES ON TO POINT OUT THAT:

"The expansion in employment opportunities has been in white collar and skilled manual

positions. The associated requirements of educational and training credentials place the children of the marginal working class and small-farm families at a considerable disadvantage."

In a 1984 ESRI report **Education and the labour market: work and unemployment among recent cohorts of Irish school leavers**, the study stresses the regressive allocation of public funds involved in the Irish education system, i.e. *the differences in allocation per head between primary, post-primary and third level.*

In the same year Greaney and Kelleghan published **Equality of opportunity in Irish schools**. They surveyed a group of five hundred 11 year olds attending primary school in 1967 and monitored their subsequent educational and early vocational careers. The study confirmed previous findings. As already mentioned, a new study by Patrick Clancy to be published shortly indicates that there is little change to date.

Dr Kathleen Lynch in a paper in the *Economic and Social Review* in 1987 criticises the ideology contained in the writings of Irish educationalists over the last 30 years, including some of the papers described here.

The significance of this is that our policies on education have been shaped by these educationalists and therefore an analysis of their ideology is necessary to an understanding of our education system. For instance in these writings intelligence is usually seen as something given and fixed and also as intellectual. Manual competence is not seen as intelligence.

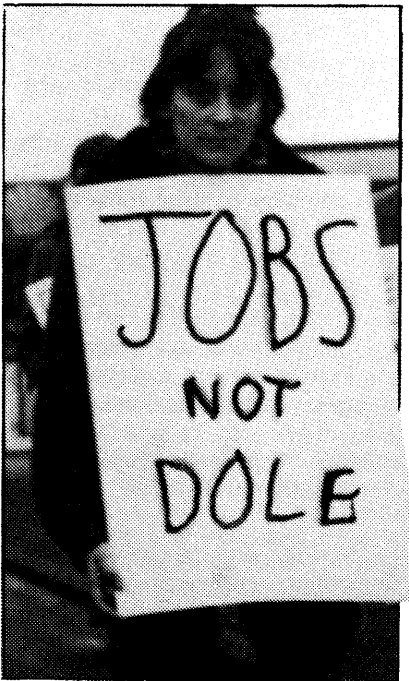
Following on from this, Irish educationalists (including practising teachers) tend "to regard educational development as having definite limits with certain kinds of people". *This is important given that our different types of post-primary schools recruit from different social groupings.*

Lynch also discusses the meritocratic approach to educational achievement and points out that many government reports and other writings discuss equality in terms of the bright child having access to opportunity no matter what its social background. Indeed the very concept of social mobility implies inequality even though it is frequently used as a measurement of equality.

Why do we have such an unequal system? There has been some movement away from explanations in individual terms (home, family,



The Class characteristics of the Irish education system particularly affect the futures of working class girls.



income, etc.) towards examining the class characteristics of the education system itself. Virtually all our children attend state primary schools; there are of course differences between such schools — regional, size, etc. — but it is the post-primary sector that is highly differentiated.

We have fee-paying and non-fee-paying secondary schools, comprehensive/community schools, vocational schools. The social class composition of these schools differs as does the educational and occupational attainment of their students. Subject choice also differs quite considerably between these schools.

Given the unequal nature of education, the development of adult or recurrent education seems of great importance and valuable proposals have been made by Aontas and by the NCEA. I have already mentioned that the 1979 Clancy report included recurrent education in its recommendations. There is an ever increasing demand for adult education (especially from women) but unfortunately the sector has been poorly financed and has now been badly hit by cutbacks.

Adult education is still seen by too many as a hobby, whereas there is a need for real education leading to qualifications organised for those who for numerous reasons cannot attend existing courses. Many of these people have suffered from the existing unequal education system.

At the most basic level there is a need for an extension of literacy education also now suffering from cutbacks.

The connection between poverty and the education system is clear; we must decide what type of education system we need in the knowledge that the demands of capital today require the balance be shifted in favour of training at the expense of independent enquiry and critical skills:

"The effect will be to transform education from one that enhances our understanding of the world around us, by means of independent inquiry and critical skills, into one that concentrates on learning routinised skills and dispenses information. Only those subjects, courses and skills absolutely essential to the central process of production will be offered." (Ellen Hazelkorn).

If this happens, and there are indications that it is happening all over the world, the working class will become even more impoverished and not only in the material sense. As a party we need to discuss what we should be doing in the short term as well as working on a longer term policy for education.

Obviously we must continue to fight the cuts which are affecting the poor more harshly than anyone else. We should stress the connection between poverty and the education system in our campaigns; we should maybe also pick one or two issues and build campaigns — adult education is one that springs to mind); for Dublin the need for the proposed RTCs is another potential campaign. I think we can do this and at the same time challenge the whole nature of our education system and the course it is now taking.



Where to send the under-5s?

Since I had been reared in a semi-Irish background myself — my father being a native Irish speaker, I was always familiar and had a love for my native tongue. I received my primary education through English as there was no all-Irish primary school within a reasonable distance to my home.

My secondary education, however, was through the medium of Irish which I found to be a wonderful opportunity. Since my husband is also a native Irish speaker it was a natural progression.

When I decided on my children's education, I really had no choice to make. A Gaelscoil was established in our area five years previously and before our eldest child was born. I now have two children attending the Gaelscoil and they enjoy it immensely.

My reasons for sending them to a Gaelscoil are varied. Firstly, it is an advantage for any child to learn two languages fluently. Secondly, if they learn two languages naturally at a young age, they will have no difficulty learning a third or fourth language as they progress through the school system or even in later life.

Research has shown that this is the case and all the language experts agree on this point. It is a natural way for them to become fluent in Irish. They obtain fluency without any pressure or strain, while many children in other primary schools spend years struggling with Irish and never even master it.

From an educational point of view, Gaelscoils offer a wonderful opportunity. Class numbers are usually smaller than in other primary schools. A smaller class offers an immediate major advantage, as any teacher would agree the smaller the class the more individual attention the pupils receive.

The fact that most Gaelscoils are established by the perception of a need by parents for a Gaelscoil in their area makes them more determined to work for that ideal. Since, in most cases, they are often faced with years of difficulties such as temporary accommodation, high rental charges, transport costs — if they have to travel certain distance from their home-base — and other costs.

This requires a tremendous dedication and work from all parents and especially from teachers who sometimes have to endure deplorable class accommodation conditions.

Finally, Gaelscoils in my opinion transcend class divisions — they are established in poorer as well as in better off areas in both rural and urban Ireland. This is a healthy sign which shows that our first national language is above class-politics.

The growth and upsurge of Gaelscoils in recent years also demonstrates a disenchantment among some parents in particular with the existing primary schools system.

SIOBHAN UÍ CHADHAIN

Our little boy Mike goes to the North Dublin National School Project in Glasnevin. It was a conscious decision on our part to send him there and we are very happy with that decision.

What is different about this school? Well, the school evolved from a wish by parents on the north side of Dublin to send their children to a school in which children of both sexes and all religions and none would be educated together.

In practice what has evolved is a child centred enthusiastic school with a dedicated staff, highly motivated children, and parents who are very much involved in the running of the school.

The underlying principles of the school to be multi-denominational, co-educational, child-centred and democratic are its life's breath and very much in evidence.

For example, the school follows a core educational curriculum. This curriculum covers basic behaviour such as honesty, courtesy, respect for others and the fact that certain types of behaviour are anti-social — e.g. bullying, vandalism, littering etc.

Older children will study different religious beliefs both as beliefs and within their historical context.

Denominational religious teaching is organised by parents and takes place after the normal school hours.

As well as being co-educational the school actively encourages both sexes to explore their full range of potential.

As a parent I always feel welcome in my son's school, to discuss a problem or to help the many people who work very hard to make this school a success.

MARY LOHAN

Starting your five year old at school — what decision do parents make when they have a choice?

WHEN it came to making up our mind where to send our daughter to school we were lucky enough to have some options in this regard. Within our immediate vicinity we had a choice of the local national school; a small Church of Ireland school and the multi-denominational North Dublin School Project.

Due to an enormous waiting list for the very popular Project school — the only non-denominational junior school on the northside of Dublin — our daughter's name had to be enrolled from the time she was two years old.

As neither of us are of a religious persuasion the Project school seemed as if it would be the obvious choice, but in the months leading up to the start of term we (or to be more precise — I) gave the matter some extra thought!

The local Church of Ireland school seemed to have a lot going for it. Smaller numbers and consequently more individual attention; multi-denominational and no strong emphasis on any particular religion. Factors against it were: teachers having to cope with two classes each and no facilities for extra-curricular activities.

In the end what decided us against both it and the North Dublin Project were the long-term problems of finding a suitable secondary school. While this problem was obviously many years in the future there didn't appear to be any evidence of improved options in this matter being available when our daughter was ready to move on.

The only non-denominational secondary school on the northside is in Clontarf — too far away for easy access by bus. So, not being car-owners and faced with a future choice of either of two secondary

schools run by nuns, we thought it best to send our daughter to the local national school.

With the wisdom of three years hindsight, this was actually a good decision on our part. The school, although large and with classes averaging 38 pupils, has a very good record and so far we have little reason to regret our decision. (The next in line on the Project school waiting-list were delighted too!)

Although a Catholic school with the expected emphasis on religion, the school actually has no teaching sisters with the only nun on the premises being the school manager. Having survived the 'first communion' year we have not found the religious element in the curriculum causing our youngster any pressure.

The general curriculum and the school's approach to it is very well thought out. One teacher is left with a class for two years and there is constant review of each child's ability to cope with the year's course. Within each class the children sit in groups of six, depending on their grades and the individuals comprising each group rotate on a regular basis according to how each child is coping with a particular project.

Tennis, basketball, European languages are all extra-curricular and there is great importance attached to confidence building activities such as drama, gym and dancing within the general curriculum.

Another factor in the school's favour — and one of the deciding ones for me — was the wide social mix comprising the pupil population, reflecting the catchment area for the school. More varied I believe than one would find in either the parochial school or the Project school in particular.

ANN DEERING

When my husband and I decided to send our four year old child to school we enquired about St. Canice's Parochial School in Finglas and found out from other parents that it was a multi-denominational school and the education standard was high.

As it was a very small school there was a personal approach to teaching and the class sizes were less than half that of the state national schools.

The integration of various religions and none was a plus factor which influenced our decision to send him there.

In the eighteen months he's been at the school we have been very pleased with his progress and personal development.

Our other three children all attended state national schools and we found that at the age of five or six there was a greater emphasis on religion than any other subject. When one considers that the greatest minds in humanity's history have failed to answer or explain the fundamental question of life itself and its origins, one doesn't need to be a genius to realise the long-term damaging effect it could have on a five or six year old who is told to have faith and not question it!

We feel there is a need on this island for multi-denominational education with no dominant religious ethos, and by sending our child to this particular school we feel it's a step in the right direction.

The reason our first three children attended state national school is because at the time there was no choice available.

It was awkward for us to answer the questions they brought home from school especially the question of science versus faith/religion and we found it was a constant balancing act to ensure they were not alienated from their school friends which thankfully has proved successful for our family so far.

GERALDINE CLOHESSY

The image of Ireland, and specifically, Northern Ireland, in Europe today is one of macabre scenes of death and mutilation of citizens and a "political" scene more reflective of the 16th and 17th centuries rather than the last years of 20th century.

That is because, in so far as there is any image of Ireland, it is one of headlines: and death and mutilation make for easy news copy. The difficult task of attempting to understand why medieval politics still dominate is rarely undertaken — even by the 'left'. And equally confusing is the fact that groups who, by any definition of politics, declare themselves unashamedly 'Nationalist' and therefore partisan, also claim to be 'left'.

In a society where citizens murder citizens with sickening regularity for reasons of religious identification, what does the prospect of a 'Europe without frontiers' offer?

Certainly not a respite nor an end to the brutalisation of human beings. For far too many, 1992 is an irrelevance; the economic and trade barriers between member states may disappear but it is unlikely that 1992 will, of itself, bring down the 20 ft brick and concrete walls that divide some of the poorest people within Europe.

Where does the struggle for women's equality find its place in a community where sectarian allegiances and tribal political divisions based on the same are the norm?

The Workers' Party, as an anti-sectarian Socialist party, believes that the political struggle to rid our community of sectarian politics, bigotry and prejudice is paramount: that the struggle to rid us of all inequalities, injustices and forms of discrimination can only be meaningful where Left/Right politics replaces the politics of reaction.

For us there is no equality in women being members of paramilitary gangs; there is no equality in women being oppressors of other women. Mrs Thatcher has shown that having a woman in power does nothing for equality; it is the nature of politics that women profess and strive for which creates equality.

Our task then is to win women

At the Milan Conference of Women of the European Left MARY MacMAHON gave the view from Northern Ireland and reiterated that without peace there can be no serious progress for women through Left politics

into the struggle for Socialism. It is to win working class women, who despite suffering the burdens of responsibility for families, still largely on their own; the responsibility for work to provide family income; the continual care and concern for the well-being of their children, into our ranks to engage in political struggle that offers, it must be said, little by way of immediate reward.

Women have a unique contribution to make to that struggle. That is why we welcome and support the proposals in this document for parties to examine and implement programmes for equality, within their own ranks, as an integral part of that process. Because we all have changes to make, continually, to our own structures to ensure that they encourage participation, membership and opportunity for all. It takes us all a long time to rid ourselves, individually and collectively, of the prejudices of the past; to grow out of the value system we were brought up in, particularly in schools.

Much of the oppression of women in Ireland stems from the role and influences of the Churches, and in particular the Roman Catholic Church. The religious images of the H-Block Hunger Strike period; the Constitutional Amendment to prevent legislation on abortion in the Republic; the divorce referendum in the Republic were all recent

indicators of the significant power of the Church and religious thinking on this island today. This should not surprise us when we understand that education is almost totally in the hands of the Churches, the Roman Catholic and, more recently, (in Northern Ireland) the Free Presbyterians, being dominant.

To say this is not to ignore or understate the ability of many of our political parties to hide behind the Church when it suits them, not least the SDLP (in Northern Ireland) and Fianna Fáil (in the Republic).

A second factor in women's oppression is the comparatively recent nature of urbanisation of society, particularly in the Republic. The problems of rural isolation of women, and their problems, still exist — witness the Kerry babies disgrace, the death of Ann Lovett at Granard, the continual problem of infanticide, largely unreported but existing. Not to mention the extent of sexual abuse, rape and incest.

The growth and development of working class women's organisations addressing women's problems is a feature of the seventies and eighties; the attempt to close clinics providing counselling to women with unwanted pregnancies is evidence of the determination of the right-wing reactionary forces to continue to impede and frustrate the development of secular politics in the country.



A third factor, which is not unique to women's oppression but helps explain the comparatively slow development of left politics, is the haemorrhage of young people through emigration. One of the forces that might normally be expected to demand and help new politics to emerge, has continually taken the boat or the plane to far-off fields.

Within Northern Ireland there have been some positive and encouraging signs despite the headlines, the terror and fear. Many women have forged links across the sectarian divide to provide community services and facilities — women's centres, women's education courses, women's health groups, rape and incest centres, women's aid refuges.

These are small, independent groups but making valuable contributions to the well-being of the community. But let us not delude ourselves in believing that these will represent the solution. Those involved in them must understand that community activity, in isolation from mainstream political action, will do nothing to change the system. It will be tolerated by the system just for so long as presents no challenge to the status quo.

What the left has to do is convince those women involved in this work that left politics is different to sectarian politics, that left politics places their issues, campaigns and questions top of the agenda, that the left does not

relegate the women's question to await the resolution of the national question.

We do not subscribe to the infamous De Valera statement of 1918 that 'labour must wait'. For the WP neither labour nor women can wait any longer for their problems to be addressed. We concur with Connolly when he said: "None so fit to break the chains as those who wear them". None better than working class women to secure their own liberation — and their own liberation can and will only come with the liberation of their class.

Peace has been something of a dirty word in Northern Ireland politics, not least because of the experience of the Peace People. The WP recognises that peace will not come from the sky; it has to be worked at; it has a political price. It is a political issue.

Peace is more than just the absence of violence. We all know that. But when we have groups on the left giving conditional support to the murderous activity of paramilitary organisations, then we must ask questions about their ideological basis. Where is the sisterhood in women murdering women? What is Socialist about murdering people, men, women or children as they go about their daily activity?

Murderous paramilitary terror cannot be supported, condoned or excused just because its perpetrators claim to be

"Nationalist". These gangs, Loyalist and Nationalist are anti-democratic, anti-political forces in our community and can have no succour or support from anyone claiming to be a Socialist or Communist.

Peace is about jobs. In a community of 120,000 registered unemployed (out of a population of 1.5 million) and where unemployment figures have been adjusted 20 times in ten years; where emigration is the biggest single factor behind a fall in the figures; where married women don't appear because they don't receive benefit, jobs are a key part of a strategy to secure peace.

Without a serious job creation programme, with all that entails by of training for women and young people in new technology, we can forget about peace being attainable. Unless our dispossessed class can be given a meaningful place in the community, given the right to earn a living, to put a roof over their head, to feed and clothe their family in dignity, then the attraction of "getting your own back" is all too persuasive.

In this context we must point out the limitations of "Enterprise", the ethic so beloved of successive Conservative Governments in Britain and Ireland. Enterprise, by its very definition, cannot create jobs for all; it can be a vehicle for self-sufficiency by a few. And we should critically examine the involvement of parties aligned in Europe to the Left (SDLP) to

'What the Left has to do is convince women that Left politics is different to sectarian politics'

Community groups in Belfast and throughout Northern Ireland make a valuable contribution but community activity in isolation from mainstream political action will do nothing to change the system.

initiatives which seek to delude and deceive.

The Ireland Fund, established as part of the Anglo-Irish Agreement is seen as little more than an SDLP slush fund, pushing Yankee dollars into the hands of private entrepreneurs in the areas they regard as politically important.

Peace is about political institutions which enjoy the support of the community and isolate those gangs seeking to destroy them. To achieve that end requires all democratic and constitutional parties to talk; it equally demands from the British government a willingness to adopt new procedures for securing democracy in Northern Ireland and an absolute commitment spelt out loud and clear in actions as well as words, to have no higher political ideal than the rule of law; and all government forces to be bound absolutely to that rule.

Once the notion is entertained that a state gang can confront a terror gang on the latter's terms the arguments for democracy have been lost and the paramilitary has secured a victory.

Peace is about eradicating poverty. We have mentioned the jobs question. Let us not ignore the fact that women are increas-

ingly employed in part-time, low-paid jobs — that sector traditionally denied union representation and protection. It is women's jobs which have been attacked in the sustained assault on the health and education services, launched by Mrs Thatcher.

The lack of pre-school provision is severely restricting women's ability to avail of jobs or seek training.

Community care means care on the cheap for government; it means care by women relatives; it means women forgoing opportunities for personal and community development to care for relatives, whether an elderly parent, a disabled child, a seriously ill relative. Community care, by way of back-up services to the carer, not to mention adequate financial support for the carer, is non-existent. Discrimination can be declared illegal; ridding the member states of sexist attitudes is altogether another thing.

But it is our contention that the struggle for Peace in Ireland, and indeed in Europe, is indistinguishable from the struggle for Socialism. Without peace there can be no serious progress for left-wing politics; without left-wing politics continually asserting the values of communal activity and the need for struggle there can be no peace.



Poverty is a Political issue



ROSHEEN CALLANDER
*examines the
causes of
poverty in
Ireland and details
the short and long term
solutions
which must be
worked towards*

POVERTY has usually been seen as a 'social issue' — even a 'moral' or a justice issue.

Rarely is poverty seen simply for what it is: the result of particular economic and political decisions for which particular economists and politicians are responsible. Poverty is very much a political issue — whether or not politicians, and indeed the poor themselves, choose to recognise this.

We are all aware that poverty, however it is measured, has been increasing in Ireland for many years now. It is tempting to say that we didn't need any elaborate surveys to confirm what we already knew; and I have heard people express that view. But I want to reject that view at the outset and to point out how essential it is to have the sort of detailed information on poverty which has now been provided, for the first time, by the ESRI and the Combat Poverty Agency.

This important work has reinforced the recommendations of the Commission on Social Welfare, which were made two years ago and buried with such indecent haste; and it has once again placed the uncomfortable and inconvenient facts of life in Ireland under the noses of people who usually try to turn away.

There has been general recognition, for some time, that our social welfare system is inadequate to the task of providing an acceptable minimum income to all categories of claimant. The basic rates are too low. And there are too many gaps and anomalies in the system, through which too many people are slipping.

What has not been so widely recognised, perhaps, until now is that it's not only social welfare recipients who are living in poverty (indeed, there are some categories who come marginally above the poverty line).

In the 1987 ESRI/CPA survey, the retired, ill and unemployed (most of whom would be on social welfare) accounted for nearly half of those in poverty, but employees and self-employed people (mainly farmers) accounted for 41.5% — a surprisingly high proportion.

In other words, poverty is very much a low pay issue; and a trade

union issue. It is also, of course, a major issue for women, for two main reasons. First, a very high proportion of those living in poverty are women. Four types of households feature most prominently in the poverty statistics: those with a married couple and three or more children; the one parent families (almost invariably headed by a woman); other households with three or more children; and men aged 35–65 who live alone. Women feature strongly in the three highest-risk categories.

Second, women are to a great extent the 'hidden poor': the low paid workers in jobs at the margins of the economy; or the dependents of social welfare recipients and/or low paid workers, very often with little or no income at all in their own right — the 'dependents of dependents', who are often 'poorer than the poor'. Poverty is an economic and social issue, an employment issue, an equality issue, a trade union issue, and of course a political issue.

The primary issue must continue to be the creation of new, worthwhile, sustainable, well-paid jobs in the production of goods and services that people want, need and can pay for. Questions of redistribution, redefinition and so on, are secondary — which doesn't mean they cannot be pursued simultaneously.

Alternative

The Workers' Party over the years has been pointing to those areas of the economy in which the greatest potential for job creation lies. We've pointed to the mechanisms for realising that potential and we've argued that there is a real and viable alternative to the cuts and their crazy consequences.

We've demonstrated how the cuts are socially unacceptable, financially unrewarding and economically counter-productive; how they serve only to increase unemployment and poverty, reduce tax and other revenue still further, depress GNP, increase the burden on the various social services and widen still further the gap between rich and poor in our society.

The next big myth that's beginning to explode is that all the control of wages, inflation and interest rates, and all the recent growth in output, will lead 'automatically' to higher profits and 'therefore' investment in jobs. Again, we have been saying for years that it won't: that higher profits would either be sent abroad, or be pocketed at home; and not just go into productive investment and job creation unless specifically channelled there through active state intervention.

Unfortunately, also, as people become aware of the inadequacies of present policies, they rarely take a global view of the causes or solutions and they don't automatically blame the perpetrators of those policies. There is now widespread awareness of the extent of poverty in our society, widespread anger about emigration and the lack of jobs, widespread cynicism about all the phoney employment schemes of recent years, the education and training that never leads to a job (except abroad), the underhand methods used to decrease the unemployment figures by means other than job creation (like tightening up the rules, scaring people off with Jobsearch, lengthening qualifying periods, refusing to update the means test, and so on).

Yet none of the anger and frustration is being taken out on the government. Quite the contrary. If opinion polls are to be believed, the popularity of Charles J Haughey and Fianna Fáil has never been greater.

It seems, therefore, as if the majority of people see no connection between the economic policies of successive conservative governments including Fianna Fáil, and the growth of chronic unemployment and poverty in our society.

The 'anti-politics' and 'anti-politician' tendency, while understandable, must be shown to be a blind alley as far as securing real change and progress is concerned; and that only policies and politicians who serve the interests of ordinary workers will bring about those changes.

At present, on the political front, we're the only ones with coherent, relevant policies for job creation and wealth generation — through expansion of the tax base, collection of all outstanding taxes,

more selective and effective public spending, investment in worthwhile, sustainable and efficient enterprise, cuts in wasteful subsidies to unproductive private firms, and development of the necessary social services and infrastructure to form the foundation for the future growth of all our resources. And we need to keep reminding ourselves of this. We do have solutions to poverty.

By and large, the trade union movement at certain levels is pursuing similar policies, but is limited by lack of resources, lack of unity and lack of a direct, effective political expression. Even more problematic is the lack of unity and cohesion among social welfare recipients and the many people — generally poor, isolated, vulnerable and female — who work in the home.

An emphasis on economic solutions to the poverty problem must not be taken to imply any lack of attention to the need for social welfare reform.

"The Workers' Party is a socialist party, not a 'social welfare' party. There is a vital difference. We do not see our role as being confined to seeking improvements in social welfare, while leaving the economy largely as it is. We see social problems arising primarily from economic ones; and our main objective is to bring about social progress through fundamental economic change. At the same time, we believe that some social reforms can and must be made straight away."

In our 1984 'Submission to the Commission on Social Welfare' we spelt out how a minimum income system could simplify the incredibly complex social welfare system which has developed, remove all the indignity, inequity and discrimination with which the system is riddled, and effect a major redistribution of income in our society. We emphasised that in order to provide an acceptable minimum income, there would have to be substantial growth in employment and output and comprehensive tax reform.

Discrimination

Unfortunately, in the years since then there has been no tax reform, no permanent widening of the



Elderly women feature strongly in high-risk categories.

base, no real growth in employment, and now a strong drift towards tax cuts for the better-off rather than increased taxation to finance improvements in social welfare.

When the Commission on Social Welfare published its report our Party welcomed the main thrust of its recommendations and endorsed the vast majority of them.

One significant reservation we had was in the area of sex discrimination. The Commission did not deal with the various anomalies left untouched by the EC Directive; nor, indeed, with the new ones created by the chosen manner of implementation of that Directive. And, of course, the chaos surrounding the 'equal treatment' changes in 1986, and the way in which they backfired against many women, many low-income families, and indeed the principle of equal treatment itself, have meant that most people have been avoiding this issue ever since.

However, our Party's position, in response to the Commission's Report, was that most of the remaining problems derive from the continuing concept of 'dependency' in social welfare law.

We believe that such outmoded concepts must be abolished and that all adults must be treated as individuals with entitlements in their own right. A decent minimum income for every adult is

of course the best way of achieving this. But in the interim, even paying what's now called the 'adult dependent's allowance', to the adult in question, rather than the so-called 'breadwinner' — and calling the allowance something less degrading — would be a slight advance.

Other discriminations which need to be tackled urgently include:

- the fact that married people still do not get the full personal rate of social welfare payment if both are claiming, even if both are classed as being 'in the workforce' (as opposed to one being in and one out) — this despite the EC Directive and, more recently, a High Court ruling that the present practice is unconstitutional;

- the fact that men and women are still treated very differently when they separate, divorce, remarry or cohabit — e.g. men raising children on their own do not receive the same benefits as women who do, but neither are they subjected to the same kind of questioning, scrutiny or harassment about their personal lives as female parents.

Solutions to such problems and anomalies are hard to find in isolation — even with the best will in the world (which of course isn't normally there). Our policy, of complete individualisation of social welfare benefits, with a guaranteed minimum for every adult (and a proportion of this for every child) makes the most sense but is still anathema to every government intent on cutting down the social welfare budget.

Our job is to keep pointing out and to keep insisting that there is an alternative., The alternative strategy is to

- ★ politicise the poverty issue by demonstrating the connection between right-wing economic policies and the growth of poverty, both nationally and internationally;

- ★ insist on the correctness of our alternative economic, employment and taxation policies — we've been proven right on every major issue in this area to date; keep up the pressure for job creation as the key to ending

poverty and counter all the various arguments about this being 'impossible';

- ★ campaign at EC level for a real 'social dimension' to 1992;

- ★ continue our campaign at national level against social welfare cutbacks by stealth, and for reforming of the social welfare system — by improving the lowest levels of payment as a matter of urgency; increasing child support; abolishing all remaining sex discrimination and particularly the concept of 'adult dependency'; individualising all benefits and guaranteeing a decent minimum income for every individual;

- ★ work for better liaison and cooperation between trade unionists and social welfare recipients, e.g. by rejecting the argument that 'the unemployed are the cause of our high taxes' (on the one hand) or that 'greedy trade unionists are the cause of unemployment and low social welfare payments' on the other. In fact all sections of the workforce have a common interest in tackling unemployment and poverty in our society.

A very high proportion of those living in poverty are women



Last October I attended a conference in Cardiff on 'Nuclear Pollution in the Irish Sea'. The Conference was organised by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Delegates from Ireland included Greenpeace and CND. The Workers' Party was the only political party, North or South, to attend from Ireland.

Coming from the part of South Down known as the Lecale Coast, I had an especial interest in the conference. For too many years now the Lecale Coast has been synonymous with cancer, especially leukaemia. I can't say I went to the conference with an open mind, I didn't.

Practically every person in that community blames the high rate of cancer (especially child leukaemia) in the area on the nuclear dumping from Sellafield into the Irish Sea, despite the constant government assurances to the contrary.

Independent research, like that of Doctor Lowry of Queen's University (Feb. 1989) fail to reassure us. We are concerned that such reports only state that it cannot be proven conclusively that radiation causes cancer. We (the local community and the Workers' Party) want conclusive proof that radiation does **not** cause leukaemia.

Before going to the conference, I would have been hard put to explain how nuclear pollution is a class issue. But I wasn't there too long before it became crystal clear. For nuclear pollution read BIG business. It's as simple as that.

Most people know (and it has been proved scientifically) that the Irish Sea is the most radioactive sea in the world, and that Sellafield alone pumps into it two million gallons of nuclear waste a day.

However, many people do not know that Britain, and especially Sellafield, is the nuclear dumping ground of the world. That, for a price, we take the world's nuclear waste and 'reprocess' it and 'dispose' of it.

I'd say most of us don't realise that we've a time bomb sitting waiting to explode. That we've a cesspool of nuclear waste that can only 'safely' store until 1990. It's March 1989 and we still don't know what to do with it. *Maybe*, by 1992, a new 'reprocessing' plant — Thor P — will be ready. *Maybe*.

But the money's right so we keep accepting more. And what we can't pump into the Irish Sea we 'store'.

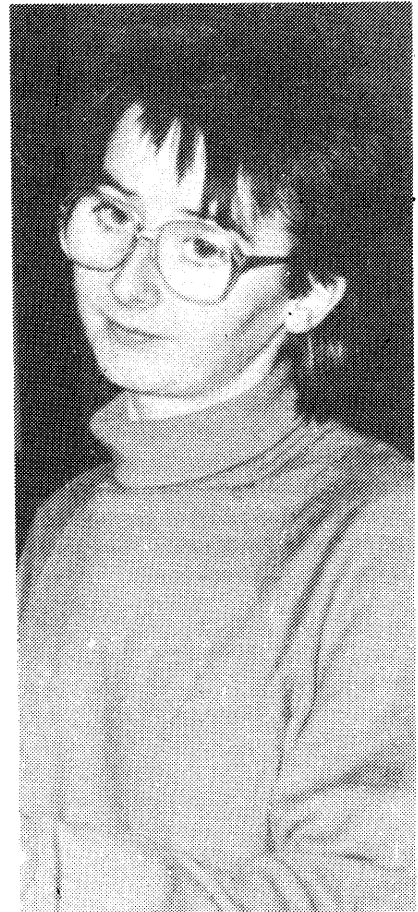
Nuclear dumping is BIG business

IMELDA HYNDS reports from the Cardiff CND conference

In fact, the money's so right (!) that the government is planning to fly in the world's waste. Mid air crashes, terrorist hijackings... the potential for disaster is huge, but the price is right.

The conference highlighted maps which showed that areas close to nuclear power stations had exceptionally high cancer/leukaemia rates. And (surprise, surprise) tidal maps showed that places like Dundalk and the Lecale Coast, which are linked to Sellafield by tides, have exceptionally high cancer/leukaemia rates.

The medical scientists at the conference were emphatic that the only known cause of childhood leukaemia is radiation. But the daily dumping of radioactive material goes on because there's not enough conclusive evidence to prove this!

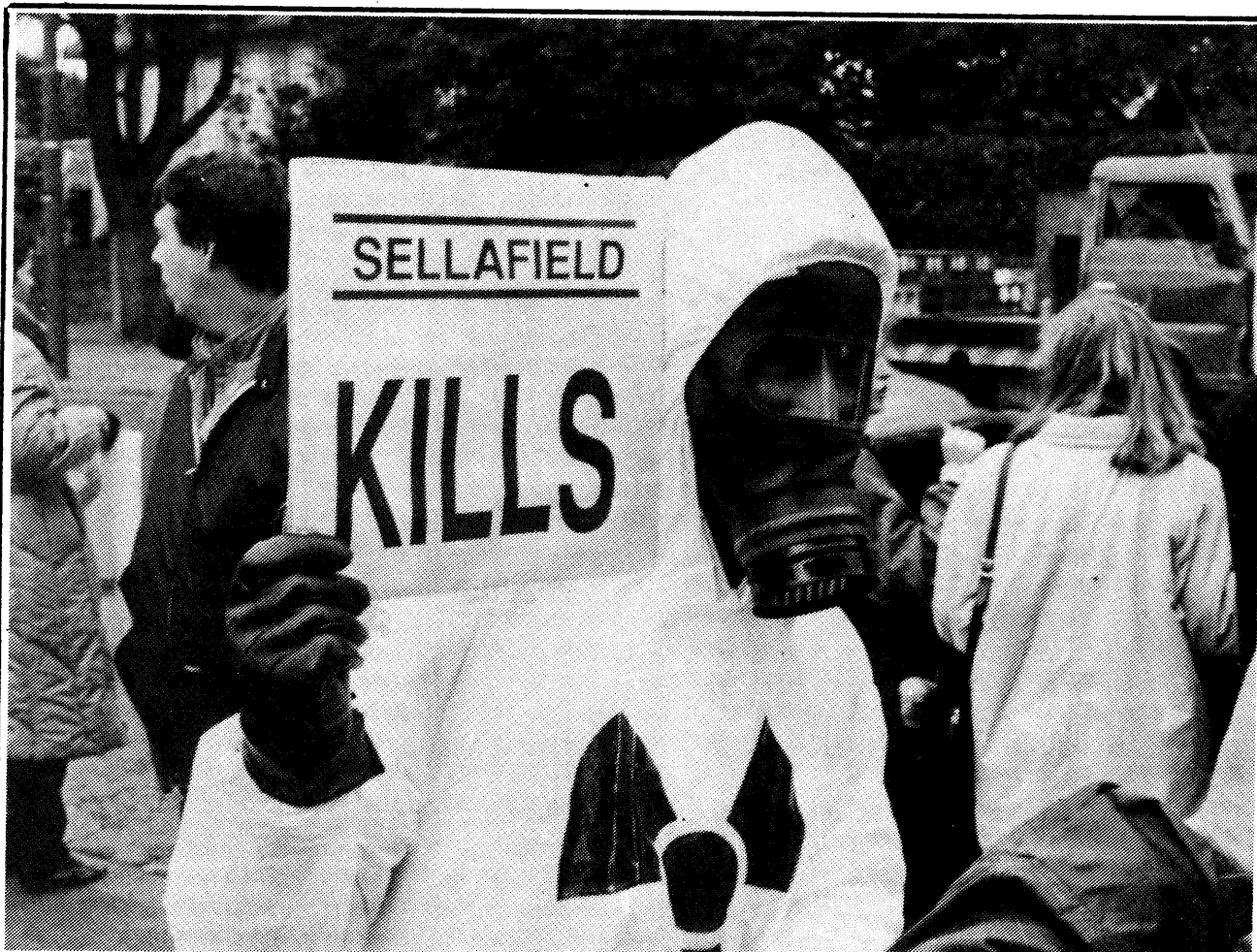


Yet again, CND and Greenpeace warned that the super powers are playing 'hide & seek' with their nuclear submarines in the Irish Sea. No later than Sunday 5 March 1989, a Belgian trawler sank without trace in the Irish Sea, 123 miles from Blackpool. Of course, there is 'no conclusive proof' that a 'hide & seek' submarine caused this, or any of the other 20 trawlers to sink.

This doesn't take into account the unreported damage caused to nuclear subs and their unreported consequences in terms of radiation. You get very sick of hearing the government response — 'no conclusive proof'.

But what is the government response to nuclear pollution in the Irish Sea?

The conference highlighted the fact that although a North Sea Treaty



Sellafield — nuclear dumping ground for the world

had been internationally agreed, restricting pollution from 1989, no such treaty has been agreed for the Irish Sea. This, despite the fact that the Irish Sea is shallower, has a tenth of the volume, has severe current restrictions and is already the most radioactive sea in the world.

Not only have we no plans to stop the dumping, but both the Irish and the British governments have followed Uncle Sam's example and refused to ratify the United Nations Treaty on pollution of the seas.

And as already stated, the British government is so interested in nuclear pollution that it is planning to fly in the world's nuclear waste for 'reprocessing' and 'disposing', for profit. At what cost to human lives?

Neutral Ireland is prepared to let submarines into its territorial waters and aeroplanes through its airspace, so long as they 'promise' that they're not carrying any nuclear content. And of course the Irish Government will accept their word. There's no need to do any spot checks.

To address this particular issue, the Workers' Party have already tabled a Private Member's Bill in Dáil Éireann, regarding passage through Irish waterways and airways. So far the other political parties have not supported this initiative and we now repeat our call to them to support the WP Bill.

We have consistently called for closure of Sellafield, and have pursued this issue through our links with the British Labour Movement and among Irish emigrants in the UK.

We have repeatedly called on the Irish Government to press at inter-governmental and EEC level for the phasing out of Britain's existing, outmoded, unsafe nuclear power stations. We stress that they meet only a tiny fraction of Britain's energy needs, that the safety of nuclear power stations cannot be guaranteed and that no safe method has yet been found for the disposal of nuclear waste.

The Workers' Party have also called for the establishment and adequate resourcing of a Radiological Protection Authority, which would be responsible for monitoring, for providing risk assessments of the hazards of low level radiation, and which would be the licensing authority for radiological materials used in Ireland. This body would also be responsible for preparing and publishing plans for coping with major releases from UK or other nuclear installations.

Finally we have called for a complete stop to all discharge of nuclear waste into the Irish Sea and for the setting up of an international, independent authority for the Irish Sea, which would have responsibility for monitoring and controlling discharges into that sea and other hazards to it. Obviously we can no longer be dependent upon those responsible for the pollution to monitor and report on the effects of it.

For further information see the Workers' Party 1988 Document on The Environment.



Most women are carers at some stage in their lives

*TRIONA DOONEY
predicts a*

CARING CRISIS

"Family Carers are the unrecognised backbone of community care — inadequately supported by State and other agencies in the task they have undertaken with such dedication and very often carrying out the task at great personal sacrifice. Without the commitment and dedication of the family carers, the demands on the State for institutional care of the elderly would be very much higher."

This is the central conclusion of a Study recently published by the National Council for the Aged. The Study, *The Caring Process: A Study of Carers in the Home* is the second part of a project which focuses not on the elderly themselves, but on those who look after them in the home environment.

Over 66,000 elderly people living in the community are regularly dependent on help from another person, and 36% of these need a great deal of help. That gives some idea of the number of unpaid Carers in our society. And these figures refer just to those looking after elderly people. Thousands more provide virtually full time care to severely ill children or younger adults.

The number of elderly people in this country will continue to grow, and in the Dublin region it will grow dramatically. In 1981 the elderly population in Dublin was 24,000 and we all know how poorly that number has been catered for.

By the end of this century that figure will have shot up to 50,000. The number of people requiring care will be much higher, but there will be fewer to share the burden of care because families are now much smaller. A caring crisis is inevitable if radical changes are not made in the ways we support old people in the community.

Most Carers are women. Many of them have given up work to look after elderly relatives. They provide cheap care as far as the State is concerned, but the costs to the Carers themselves are high. There are financial costs, such as loss of earnings, loss of pension rights, the expense of

meeting the special needs of the elderly (house adaptations, medical aids etc.). And there are physical and emotional costs.

Physical drudgery, isolation and loss of freedom all take their toll. Many Carers carry out their task in poor conditions — no running water for instance. Large numbers do not even have a telephone. Emotional conflicts can also be sharp, as feelings of love and attachment are accompanied by resentment, frustration and guilt.

Many Carers are torn between the desire to care for someone who needs them and the need for a life and identity of their own. Stress on family life, undefined roles, lack of social guidelines, and 'role overload' resulting from competing demands are all too common. Very often the Carer's own health suffers — one study found that two thirds of Carers themselves suffered from significant levels of ill health and disability.

The caring role is nearly always a long term one, with a commitment stretching for years rather than months. Many women are multiple carers, looking after more than one person in their lives and quite frequently trying to care for more than one at the same time.

Financial support to Carers barely exists. If they are in any sense part of a larger family unit Carers get nothing at all. Single women may get assistance from supplementary welfare if they are adjudged 'in need'. Alternatively the person they look after may get the Prescribed Relative Allowance.

The PRA is difficult to get, is set at a derisory level and is not paid to the Carer. But it does have one important aspect — the Carer is credited with social insurance contributions. That is about the only recognition there is from the State that Carers are doing a valuable job which saves the State many millions of pounds each year.

Putting elderly relatives into a home is almost always a last resort. There is certainly little basis for the view of nursing homes as a dumping

ground for old people whose families cannot be bothered to look after them. A much more common pattern is for family care to struggle on until the burden becomes too great — then the system breaks down (often as a result of the Carer herself falling ill) and institutionalisation follows.

It seems basic common sense that if greater support was available to Carers they could continue to look after the elderly in their own homes for far longer. Yet once someone has taken on the caring role they receive virtually no help, practical or financial. Conventional health and welfare services see the dependent person as the client. Any support which the Carer gets is accidental.

The Community Care concept, in its best form, aims to do away with the dependency associated with institutions. It says that the elderly are best cared for within their own communities. And few of us would quarrel with that. But in this country, as indeed in Britain, Community Care has come to mean cheap care — and cheap care based on exploiting women as unpaid labour, trading

on the guilt they feel all too often.

Most elderly people live pretty independent lives in the community. Only 5% live in hospitals or other institutions. Of the remainder 81% are fully independent, 12% need some degree of care and 7% need a lot of care. Dependency is not due solely to a 'natural' decline.

Much depression and confusion among old people stems from poverty and loneliness rather than from physical causes. Lack of amenities, lack of access to a car — these are all things which have a significant effect on the quality of life for the elderly.

Proper social policies for the elderly will lift much of the burden from Carers, but it will not dispense with them. People will, by and large, continue to want to care for their elderly relatives in an environment as near normal as possible when they can no longer care for themselves. The Carer's own role must be recognised and their needs addressed. There is no sense, either human or economic, in overloading Carers to breaking point so that they can no longer function and old people have to be institutionalised.

A CHARTER OF RIGHTS FOR CARERS is long overdue. Such a Charter would include the following provisions:

★ **Recognition** of the vital role performed by Carers and of their own needs.

★ **Practical help** in carrying out their task (Respite Care, Home Help Services, Laundry Services, etc.)

★ **Financial Support** — a system of guaranteed minimum income is probably the most rational method of ensuring this and has the added benefit of undermining the dependency concept. In the interim there is an urgent need for an Invalid Care Allowance to replace the Prescribed Relative Allowance. A special allowance for those giving 24-hour care — a Constant Care Allowance — should also be available.

★ **Counselling, Information and Training** for Carers.

★ **Improved Day Care Services** for the Elderly.

★ **A Carer's Support Unit** in each Health Board Area.

Such measures would go a long way to help Carers carry out their task with some security and in tolerable conditions. In the longer term, the question is more than one solely of resources. English researcher Cheryl Meeks puts it well: *"A bridge needs to be built between the invisible world of family care and the public one of long-stay, institutional care. We also need a new approach to old age and disability, to throw out our stale ideas about care and dependency and to understand that for elderly and disabled people, as for most of us, the choice is neither dependence nor independence — but interdependence."*

What's it all about

LAST SEPTEMBER, the Minister for Social Welfare, Dr Woods, announced the establishment of a scheme designed to allow the long-term unemployed to take part in full-time "second chance" education, without losing welfare benefits.

But the 10 new centres expected to serve some 250 students were never established. Two pilot schemes, one in Tallaght and one in Limerick, each of a single year only, have been allowed to continue for a third year.

According to the Department of Social Welfare, the delays are caused by the Department of Education, and it is probable that this is due to financial reasons.

This scheme would permit students sign off the live register and receive their full benefits from the VEC while taking part in full-time study including a number of leaving certificate courses.

In Firhouse Community College, where the Tallaght centre is located, the students have one classroom in the post-primary school. They have no facilities, no library or coffee room. There are only four women on the course and they have no children.

While this might reflect the gender balance of the live register, one student believes it also reflects the absence of a creche.

In the new year the ICTU's general secretary, Mr Peter Cassells, told an adult education centre that the trade union movement would be demanding that the 10 new centres be opened immediately. The Minister has still to reply!

The Association for Improvement in the Maternity Services was set up to:

- increase awareness in parents of their choices, rights and needs in pregnancy and childbirth, and to support parents in asserting these;
- to inform parents — through publications and referral to other resources — of the physical and psychological effects of childbirth practices, so that they can choose what is best for themselves and their baby;

AIMS to improve maternity services

★ Annual Conference April 29th in the Pillar Room, Rotunda Hospital, Dublin

- to increase awareness in the medical profession of parents' rights and abilities to assess their own needs in pregnancy and childbirth;
- to campaign for the adoption of the AIMS Principles of Maternity care — for services that meet the emotional needs of

families and provide the safe aspects of medical care.

If you would like to join AIMS, just contact: Dee Neeson, Secretary, 48 Wyvern, Killiney, Co Dublin. Tel. 856947. Stamp or stamped addressed envelope with all requests please.

NEW DEVELOPMENT IN THE DOCKS: North Wall Women's Centre

Almost all the women coming to the Centre are living in one or other of the 18 four-storey blocks of flats on Sheriff Street.

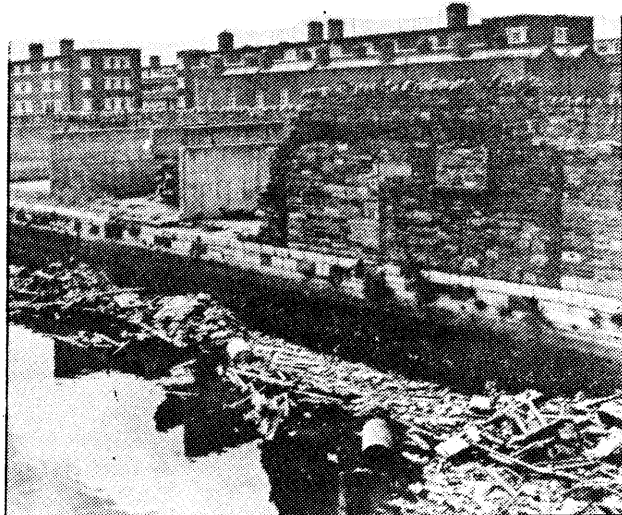
These flats are bordered on one side by the site for the new National Sports Stadium, and on the other by the Custom House Docks Development site.

The people living and working in this area share the hopes of many in the city and elsewhere, that these developments will truly bring an increase in employment and prosperity for themselves and others. Nonetheless, some basic questions have remained loudly unanswered to date.

- What effect will these developments have on the people in the Flats?
- Will they be left in the area, to have a share in the promised prosperity or
- will they be re-housed elsewhere, whether they like it or not...?

There is a growing uncertainty in the area, as more and more cranes appear on the Custom House Docks site.

The Women's Centre as such does not have a front-line role in relation to this situation. It was un-



● What future for Dublin's Sheriff Street Flats?

fortunately established too recently for that.

Nonetheless, it has a crucial role to play in providing local women with premises where they can meet, discuss their needs, and be facilitated in trying to meet these needs.

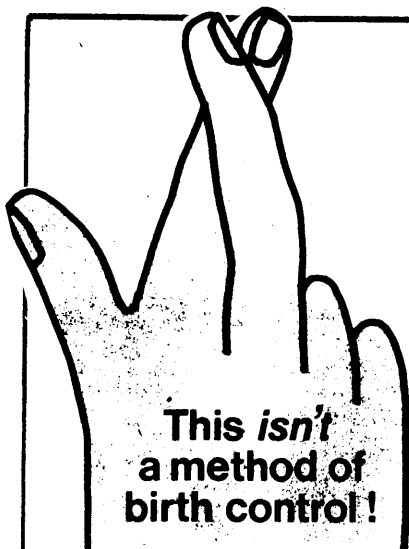
Through the on-going education offered them, they can be helped to face with greater confidence the changes that lie ahead for themselves and their families.

One of the flats in the Centre houses the Creche, where a group of local women look after the 0-3

year olds. In the other flat, there is a larger kitchen and a sittingroom, used for cookery, craft-work, drama, literacy, personal development, health education, etc.

A key feature of the Centre is the planning by the groups of their own programmes at the start of each term. There is a monthly meeting of groups and staff together.

This course is not only building up the confidence and skills of all who come to it, but also providing further valuable links between projects with similar aims and interests.



**This isn't
a method of
birth control!**

Less options for Birth Control

AS OF MARCH 31st new regulations introduced by Health Minister Rory O'Hanlon — under which the copper coil IUD is reclassified as a "medicinal product" — mean this contraceptive device is no longer available to family planning clinics.

The new classification means it is no longer possible to import the device unless the manufacturers first receive "product authorisation" from the National Drugs Advisory Board.

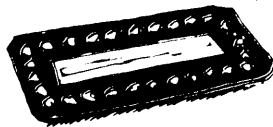
Certain spermicidal creams, jellies, foams, pessaries and vaginal sponges are also being withdrawn from the Irish market as a result of the Minister's decision.

Two of the major manufacturers of IUDs have refused outright to apply for product authorisation because they say the Irish market for IUDs is too small to justify their paying the £1,500 product authorisation fee demanded by the Department.

London International has withdrawn two spermicidal Durex products, Durocream and Durogel (used in conjunction with the cap), from Ireland for the same reason.

We look at a new contraceptive for women presently undergoing trials in Britain — while at home a ruling by Health Minister Rory O'Hanlon severely limits the birth control options available to women in Ireland.

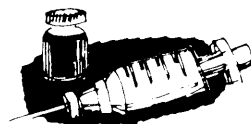
THE COMBINED PILL



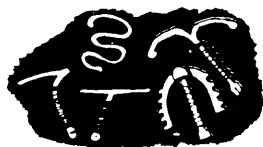
MINI-PILL



INJECTABLE CONTRACEPTIVE



INTRAUTERINE DEVICE



DIAPHRAGM OR CAP · SPERMICIDE



The latest contraceptive for women, still undergoing trials in Britain, will not be introduced into Ireland for some considerable time, according to the Irish Family Planning Association.

Their information is that further tests need to be carried out before it can be known whether it is effective or not. However they welcome the idea of a female condom, as it widens the choice of methods available to women.

It is a loose-fitting polyurethane sheath with a thin rim of plastic at the open end and a thicker one inside the top. The thick rim enables it to be inserted in a similar way to the diaphragm, but without the worry of having to ensure covering the cervix in order to be effective.

The outer rim covers the vulva completely and thus offers, it is hoped, full protection against all sexually transmitted diseases, including Aids.

Now undergoing trials for its efficacy as a contraceptive, Femshield appears to have many indisputably desirable points in its favour.

It has no side effects and it should give greater protection against sexually transmitted diseases than any other available contraceptive.

The researchers themselves feel it is far too early to know how successful the new method will be. All contraceptive methods have both perceived advantages and disadvantages and no single type ever suits everyone.

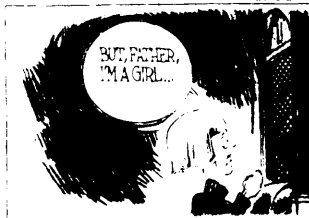
Whether Femshield will be widely tried, however, and whether its potential users will include the young and most at risk, remains to be seen, especially if they have experience of neither the condom nor the diaphragm to compare it with.

Hypocrisy lives

THE ANGLICAN Church in Britain, already divided on the issue of women's ordination, gave a largely negative reception to news of the consecration in Boston recently of the Rev Barbara Harris as the first woman bishop in the history of the Anglican Church.

The Archbishop of London, Dr Graham Leonard, said he would not consider himself to be "in communion" with a woman bishop or with those who consecrated her.

The issue of women's ordination dominated the Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops last July. In a vote, the bishops rejected women's ordination by an overwhelming 423 votes to 28. However, the vote is not binding, and each of the 27 Anglican provinces across the world is free to make its own decision.



Women's views

TWO-THIRDS of surgeons offer minor surgery instead of mastectomy to women with early breast cancer, compared with 18 per cent five years ago.

A survey of nearly 300 surgeons, reported in the Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine, also shows that most now offer women a choice of treatment.

But only 52 per cent of patients had access to a breast-care nurse, skilled in explaining treatments and in helping to allay fears.

Only 5 per cent of the surgeons said that they never offered a woman alternatives, but of those who did, few offered written follow-up information to help a woman to decide, while 74 per cent said they never provided written information.

Women had variable lengths of time with the surgeon to learn of their disease and treatment; 39 per cent of the surgeons said time varies according to patients' needs, but 34 per cent of women only had five to 10 minutes,



and 26 per cent had 11 to 20 minutes.

The surgeons were also asked to what extent they thought local (or conservative) treatment affected how their patients felt. The majority, 88 per cent, thought patients' morale was better in every, or most, cases.

The researchers from Southampton University and the Royal South Hampshire Hospital, call for the employment of more breast-care nurses, whose work has proved successful in helping the early detection of psychiatric illness in breast cancer patients.

US women's groups push for parental leave

MORE than two dozen women's groups have united to mount a campaign for legislation requiring all but the smallest companies to grant unpaid leave to parents of newborn or seriously ill children.

"If politicians truly want to capture women's votes, they must go beyond pro-family rhetoric and photo opportunities with children," said Judith Lichtman, president of the Women's Legal Defence Fund.

The measure would require companies with more than 50 employees to

allow workers to take unpaid leave of at least 10 weeks to care for newborn, newly adopted or seriously ill children.

At least 15 weeks would have to be made available to employees suffering a serious illness themselves. Another provision would permit leave to care for seriously ill parents.

Small business organisations are mounting a major effort against the bill, using many of the arguments larger employers used against legislation passed last year that required 60-day

notices of shutdowns and mass layoffs.

"We think the Bush campaign showed some good signs," said Ms Dorian, executive director of the National Federation of Business and Professional Women. "There is room for some productive dialogue on this."

The associations, companies and citizens' groups that make up the business alliance fear that unpaid leave would lead to paid leave and even more hardship for their businesses. They argue that the bill is not needed

because in Ms Tavenner's words, "We're in a more enlightened age now."

But Ms Lichtman said some employers have yet to get that message. The victims, she said, include a baker who lost his job because he took a day off to be with his daughter during her heart operation, a postal worker who was denied a week of unpaid leave after his wife gave birth to twins and a hospital supply technician who returned from an approved maternity leave to be told her job was gone.

Booby prize

RTE were recent award-winners in a competition organised by Britain's *New Woman* magazine, having been nominated by sports-producer Caroline Murphy.

But Ms Murphy's glowing testimony of RTE's equal opportunities profile has been met with hollow laughter by the majority of women workers in RTE!

According to *Feedback*, RTE workers' broadcasting journal, RTE's treatment of women workers leaves a lot to be desired. Ms Murphy's nomination for the award contained a company profile which was checked by RTE management for accuracy so it was assumed that this profile was accurate in every detail.

However, it emerged that some of the claims in the nomination profile had no basis in fact.

Feedback points out that there is a substantial body of women workers who not alone are among the lowest paid workers in RTE, but many of them are contract employees and not entitled to basic statutory rights.

Now's your chance

IN AN EFFORT to increase the numbers of women contributors to radio panel discussions Eileen Ryan of RTE Features and Arts programming is compiling a Directory of Women. The directory would be made available to producers of programmes.

Women who would like to have an opportunity to air their views should write to Ms W. Ryan, Co-ordinator, Directory of Women Contributors, Radio centre, RTE, Dublin 4.

Irish worst off

PRELIMINARY results issued in February from a study of poverty in Europe shows that relative poverty is higher in Ireland, where 20% of people are below average income, than most other countries.

The recent Budget made some slight improvements for those on the lowest social welfare payments, but entrenched existing inequalities.

Only a minority of social welfare claimants and the low paid will receive increases above the cost of living, while the better-off taxpayers will benefit most from the taxation changes.

Hugh Frazer of the Combat Poverty Agency said the results convinced them that a comprehensive programme should now be developed to tackle poverty and inequality as part of the Programme for National Recovery.

Woman wins case

● AN INCIDENT in a Killarney hotel during a weekend company course has resulted in a Labour Court award to a woman executive of the Irish subsidiary of a large multinational in the Shannon area on the grounds of sexual harassment.

The woman, who was awarded £1,500, alleged that three senior male staff members, including the managing director, entered the bedroom she shared with another staff member and interfered with their personal belongings in a manner which the Equality Officer found had a sexual connotation.



A LACK OF corroborative evidence is now seen as the major obstacle in preventing the successful pursuit of claims of sexual harassment in the Labour Court, according to both the Employment Equality Agency (EEA) and one of the country's main unions, the ITGWU.

Their comments followed the latest ruling of the Labour Court which rejected a claim of sexual harassment because only one of the several witnesses called was willing to back up the woman's accusations.

Women bringing cases of alleged sexual harassment to the court suffer immense problems in what amounts to a "minefield" according to Ms May O'Brien, women's affairs official of the ITGWU.

Employers throw as much doubt as possible on the claimant's ability and moral character in front of her colleagues, family and friends, she said. "The Labour Court procedure, though it's not intended to, has the same effect as a rape trial."

The EEA was deluged with women alleging sexual harassment after the Labour Court's 1985 decision that it constituted unlawful discrimination on

grounds of sex under the Employment Equality Act, 1977.

The advice of the ITGWU and the EEA to women experiencing sexual harassment is to keep a diary from the time of the first incident, including the names of those who witnessed it.

They also suggest that when complaining to a manager (if this is possible, since many of those who harass women are managers), a union representative or some other witness should accompany the complainant.

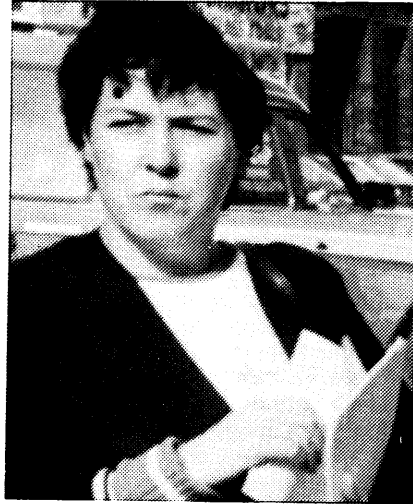
The EEA advised women to contact them immediately an incident has occurred. The complaint must be made to the EEA within six months of the last alleged incident.

The EEA is working with companies to develop in-house complaint and disciplinary procedures to deal with sexual harassment, an approach which the EEA considers preferable to going to the Labour Court.

Ms O'Brien feels that co-workers and employers might be more willing to deal with incidents of sexual harassment with help rather than denial if they understood the price of sexual harassment for the victim.

Socialist women building links

ELAINE RUSH



THE fourth Annual Conference of the European Forum of Socialist Feminists took place in Manchester from 18th–20th November 1988. Attending from the Workers' Party were Elaine Rush (Belfast) and Deirdre O'Connell (Dublin).

The Conference heard reports from most European countries plus reports from Angola, Turkey and Iran. These gave a run down on the situation regarding women in the various countries. The issues raised were varied

from each country, and covered Poverty in Ireland, Cut-backs in Benefits in Britain to Pornography in West Germany.

The report from Iran was the most informative as it gave an insight into the plight of Iranian women — the forced wearing of the hejab (Islamic cover) from head to foot and the consequences of protesting against the Iranian Regime's atrocities.

Over the course of the Conference papers were presented on topics like "Black and Ethnic Women in Holland" given by Jose

Maas. This dealt with the position of black and migrant women in relation to Western Feminists' concepts.

Other papers presented were "Struggles around Equality" by Frigga Haug (West Germany), "Women and Power" by Inez McCormick (Northern Ireland) and "Where do we want a Gender Revolution to Take Us? Today's Politics and its Future Consequences" by Dorte Marie Sondergrad (Denmark).

The Saturday afternoon session dealt with workshops on topics ranging from Women in Political Parties to Using the Local State for Women.

During this some alternative workshops took place including one on the situation of women in Iran. A slide show was presented along with a full and lengthy discussion on the situation there.

The conference finished with the Plenary: Building Links and Planning Strategies'.

The next conference will take place in Sweden in June 1989 and will be hosted by Norwegian and Swedish women.

NIGERIA

IN BIRNIN KUDU, Nigeria, last year, about 1,000 candidates, virtually all men, ran for office and in 19 other local government areas in Kano State. When the votes were counted, the winning vote-getter in the state was a woman, Ladi Adamu.

"My mission is to emancipate women. Men cannot block my path because I follow all the religious injunctions in dress and behaviour."

To encourage men to allow their daughters to attend school, the councillor bases her arguments on tradition.

"I tell husbands, 'What if your wife goes to the hospital and there are no female nurses to give her an injection?' " she said.

Ladi's own mother lives in purdah and does not know how to read.

Her 10 month old baby is nicknamed "Better



Life" after a weeklong national conference last September on the theme "Better Life for Rural Women"!

Organised by Nigeria's first lady, Maryam Babangida, this conference was by and for women. The experience inspired Mrs Adamu to run for office in the December elections.

CHINA Clawback of women's progress

RECENT reports from China on the economic and social changes taking place have shown that more and more pressures are being heaped on women to return to the home.

In the past women in China had benefits that women in the west could only wish for. Generous maternity leave, time off during the day for breast feeding, and good child care provision. Now, with the changes taking place, all these things are becoming a major problem because of the managements' increased drive for profit.

The women are being faced with increased sex discrimination, cuts in wages and at times dismissal.

The employers are now employing more and more young women for a limited number of years, until they decide to get married or have children. A recent survey carried out by trade unionists found that less than 6% of managers in China are willing to employ women. Also, when workers are laid off women are usually the first to go.

The press seems to be justifying this by writing approvingly of women giving up their jobs "to take care of the household chores, children and their husbands". It now seems that the benefits for women which were once the envy of us western women are now disappearing fast. Signs of the times.

YOU can help rid Ireland of Measles Mumps & Rubella

MEASLES, MUMPS and RUBELLA may be common childhood illnesses but the after-effects of these diseases can be devastating.

The problem is — nobody knows which children will be badly affected. So any child who doesn't get the new MMR vaccination is at need-less risk.

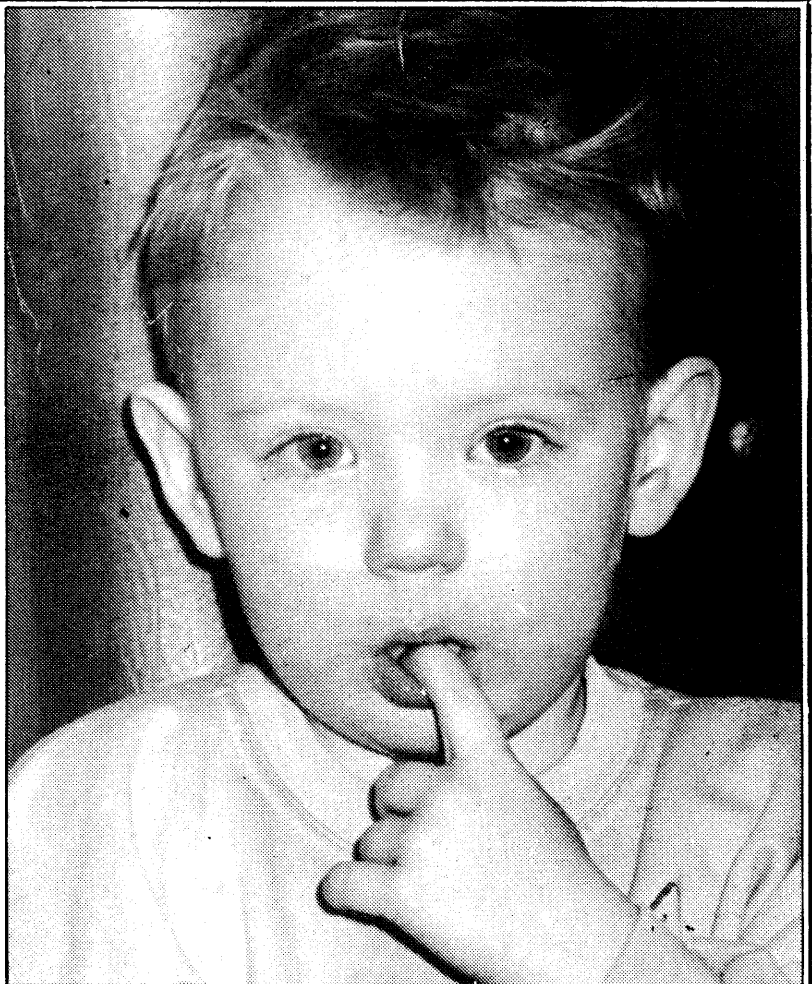
These are the risks

Measles: In some children, measles causes convulsions, blindness, inflammation of the brain and brain-damage.

Mumps: Mumps can lead to meningitis, inflammation of the brain, brain-damage, deafness, and male sterility.

Rubells (German Measles): If a pregnant woman who is not immune comes into contact with anyone who has Rubella, her unborn baby runs a very high risk of being born blind, deaf, with brain damage or heart defects.

PROTECT YOUR CHILD FROM THESE THREE ILLNESSES WITH THE NEW MMR VACCINATION. ONE FREE AND SAFE VACCINATION IS ALL THAT IS REQUIRED.



When should the vaccine be given?

The sooner you protect your child the better. The best time to have the MMR vaccine is at 15 months. Because this is a new vaccine in Ireland, all children aged 15 months to 5 years should get it.

Is it safe?

Yes. It is already being used safely in other countries.

Where do I go?

Contact your family doctor (GP) for an appointment and he will vaccinate your child free of charge.

Is it free?

Yes. Both the visit to the doctor and the vaccine are free.

What if my child has already had one of these diseases?

Even if you think your child has had measles, mumps or rubella, it's better to have the immunisation, just to be sure. And it's quite safe.

What if my child has already been immunised against measles?

Your child still needs MMR for protection against mumps and rubella. There's no harm in being immunised against measles twice.

Why immunise my son against rubella?

If your son is infected with rubella, he could infect a pregnant woman — even you, his mother — and cause serious damage to the baby.

Does it work?

Yes. In the countries where the vaccine is already being used, measles, mumps and rubella are disappearing fast. The same will happen here if everyone takes the opportunity to have their children immunised.

Measles, mumps and rubella can cause deafness, brain damage and death.

Protect your child with the safe MMR vaccination — free from your GP.

Title: Women's View, No. 13
Organisation: Workers' Party
Date: 1989

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