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Comment

FORTWICHTLY

NATIONAL WAGE AGREEMENT

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THE CHOICES FACING WORKERS

The two alternatives facing workers as the 14th round Wages Agreement comes to an end for many of them in December next is whether there should be a new 15th round Wages Agreement or a return to a free for all.

The 'left' advocates a return to a free for all together with extravagant claims for a £35 minimum wage for a reduced working week.

The conservative trade union leaders as well as economists and the capitalist press want another wages agreement though some of them want it to be in a wider frame-work than the 14th round. This would include such things as adjustment in Social Welfare payments more jobs, tax on farmers etc.

Some idea of how the different classes were affected by the present agreement may be got from the Government Economic Review which gives figures for the year ending Dec. 1972. Aggregate weekly money earnings for all workers in 1972 increased by 15%.

Profits and other non-employee income increased by 15½% and farmers income increased by 35%. The value of the real increase of wages as opposed to the money increase was 6½% though due to the continuing rise in inflation this rate of increase is now down to around 3½%.

So it can be seen that though the workers standard of living improved under the Agreement they did

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slightly worse than the capitalists and considerably worse than farmers.

The so called policy of the 'left' would lead to an even more rapid rate of inflation where the capitalist is in a position to pass on the cost increase in a price increase. And where (contd.P.6)

POWER TO THE LAITY ?

With the approval of the Minister, Sean O'Connor, Sec. of the Dept of Education, made a comprehensive statement on the reorganisation of S.Irish education at the annual conference of the Catholic Primary School Managers in Athlone. By making a major speech there, at a gathering of the strongest power in primary education, Mr.O'Connor has provoked public debate on education for the first time in months.

In the conflict involved in this debate we can get a good indication of the relative strength of the forces in the South.

The Government proposals have two

aspects: on the one hand, they affect the role of the religious in education and, on the other, they are concerned with the reorganisation of the structure of primary and post-primary education. By proposing that national(primary) schools be managed by a committee on which two parents, and perhaps even a teacher, would sit as representatives, the Govt. is proposing to affect what the 1965 Maynooth Synod described as "the management system....most suitable to our conditions...to be preserved at all costs"

The religious orders have always regarded the management system as

the seat of their power because it carries with it the right to hire and fire suitable teachers, thus ensuring ideological supremacy and, as a result their continued support.

The existing management system is that the parish priest alone manages. Changes in management bring into question the right of the Church authorities to control the propagation of ideas, especially concerning morality, in schools attended by 94% of primary pupils. Thus we can expect controversy over who exactly controls the teachers.

CATHOLIC ACTION

After the 1951 'Mother and Child' controversy, the Catholic Hierarchy began to get very worried about the inept way in which the laity defended their Bishops. The fact that many lay Catholics defended the Bishops(contd.P.6)

THE "IRISH PEOPLE" & BRITISH WORKERS

"The Irish People" is the Official Republicans' venture into a weekly 'news' paper.

We are quite used to hearing from the Officials how they really are socialist internationalists, non-sectarian, secularist, defenders of the workers etc. The Protestant workers in Northern Ireland and the English workers of Aldershot have, of course, experienced all-too concrete examples of how sickeningly untrue all the above really is.

In a column entitled 'Viewpoint' in "The Irish People" of June 8 we can see in print how skin-deep the new 'progressive' look of Catholic nationalism really is.

The writer of the column, Cormac Dunne, becomes hysterical at the prospect that the real Irish People might be granted their demands to have unhindered access to British television programmes, Dunne writes

"There is widespread concern among thinking people in this country (and there are few left) at the proposal of our new self-proclaimed Fuhrer of the Kulturkampf, Herr Doktor Konor Kruise O'Brien to beam British and 'Ulster' television programmes into Irish homes in the Twenty-Six Counties."

".....It seems as if Herr Doktor Cruise O'Brien is bent on emulating

the Nazi leader who reached for his revolver whenever he heard the word 'culture!'"

Our radical columnist's Germanic obsessions might be regarded as a most painful effort at humour were it not clear that it is he himself who is closest to Hitlerism with the following racist sneers at British workers:

"Despite what Dr. Cruise O'Brien says about the need for cultural exchanges, I fear that we in the 26 Counties will get the bad end of the bargain; who, for instance would term 'Coronation Street' or any of the British comedy shows 'cultural'? Perhaps this is what is meant by 'cultural integration' - that we here, with the few honourable shreds of a national culture that are left to us, should become integrated with the great fish-and-chip, mild-and-bitter, News-of-the-World masses in England, and snigger with them at the double-meaning jokes, and wax intellectual at TV exposures of marital infidelities, easy sex and materialistic thinking?"

This 'progressive' racism is the cultural side of the Aldershot bombing. Now we can really appreciate how the new-left look of Official Republicanism adds up to National Socialism.

M O'RIORDAN

BOXES FOR SALE

The confession box is on the way out among U.S. Roman Catholics. So says a recent article in the "Evening Press". Up to 80% of American Catholics don't go any more. One theologian said that it "suffers from a malaise that has all but eliminated private confession from the regular life of most practising Christians".

R.C. theological experts are now frantically looking for new rituals to replace the box. Our guess is that they will opt for the impersonal Protestant method of repentance.

It shouldn't be long before the 'Confession Box Crisis' reaches Ireland. Remember the pill? Five years ago the majority of U.S. Catholics rejected the Pope's Encyclical. Now in Ireland, the majority of R.C.s are reaching the same decision. And so it will be with the box.

When this happens there will be precious little to distinguish the R.C. Church from the Protestant ones.

We'd be having warning sermons about this impending peril but for the fact that Archbishop McQuaid has departed for Heaven and the Devil has run away with the tongue of Bishop Browne of Galway!

D.D.

One-Eyed Robber

When workers look for better things in life, the bosses say they can't afford it, or the economy can't afford it or the national interest would be endangered.....

We are glad to report that there is no longer this danger. There is too much money floating around and the rich can't find suitable outlets for it.

Look what happened when the one-eyed Jones Group of gun-running fame, went "public" the other day. All that was wanted was £1.3 million but they were deluged with a staggering £50 millions.

At 5lp. a share, it's supposed to be a real bargain. It is confidently predicted by the experts that

there will be a 20% premium on the shares in a week or so.

This means, in simple language, that if you had a mere £10,000 to invest, you would make a cool £2,000 in the space of a week. AND IT'S ALL TAX-FREE.

But the easy wealth and profit has to come from somewhere. And it is out of the sweat and suffering of Irish workers that it comes. Gerry Jones can batter us with his cheque-book in the South and he can batter Northern workers with his shiploads of hardware.

D.DENNEHY

I.C.R.A. — UNEASE

The last Comment reported on the plight of Simon O'Donnell and Hugh Meehan, whom the Provos have physically assaulted and threatened with death in the Curragh Detention Camp.

The Ballumun Branch of the Irish Civil Rights Assoc. has since, in a fair-minded statement issued 7/6/73 condemned both the Govt. and the Provos for their joint intimidation and harassment of the two. The I.C.R.A. was set up as a Provo support group and clearly means to stay that way. Their H.Q. later counterclaimed "blame for any additional suffering endured by the two rests with the Govt. and the Minister responsible for the camp."

Partial blame, undoubtedly. But it was the Provos who beat them up. Where does the blame rest for that.

NATIONAL ECONOMIC COUNCIL

To an increasing degree the most conscious representatives of the State, Employer and Banking interests are recognising that in order to ensure that production is not undermined by increases in incomes outstripping the growth in productivity it is necessary to give the trade union movement some role in the management of the economy.

The response of trade unionists to such developments has so far been divided into two camps only. The 'left' representing total opposition and the 'right' representing total collaboration. The 'left' denounce any participation at all and call for an intensification of the struggle for higher wages, while blindly ignoring the reality that such an approach will result in both a higher rate of inflation and higher unemployment. The 'right' take the easy way out accepting wage moderation for the sake of a quiet life; take up positions on boards and councils of this, that and the other, without making the slightest attempt to give a decisive working-class orientation to the control and management of economic development.

Because most workers instinctively see through the sham rhetoric of the 'left', the right-wing position triumphs -- but while being more realistic economically, it is also more conservative and bureaucratic. The result is that the undoubtedly strong bargaining power of the trade union movement is never used in order to advance the position of workers towards controlling their own productive environment.

It is for these reasons that, despite the fact that the ITGWU adopted a resolution at its recent Annual Conference calling for prices and all incomes to be comprehensively controlled only in the context of trade union involvement in overall economic planning, the National Economic Council announced by the Minister for Labour is initially unlikely to be much more than a talking shop. This is because of the quality of trade union representation likely to be on it.

The old N.I.E.C. which it now replaces with employer, trade union and farmer representation, undoubtedly produced very informative and useful reports on the objective state of the economy. But these were mainly written by the NIEC's civil service secretariat with little or no advancement of the class interests of workers despite the trade union representatives.

The Minister, Michael O'Leary recognised the calibre of the likely trade union representatives on the N.E.C. He appealed to them not on the basis of their own class interests, but drew on Thomas Davis' concept of an all-class national alliance. He rhetorically declared "WORKERS, YOU HAVE A NATION!".

There is little point in the 'left' yelling "class-collaboration" and "away with all N.E.C.s". The fundamental task is the struggle for a democratic trade union movement which can then be in a position to use its economic strength on N.E.C.s and the like in asserting the class interests of workers.

This can be done by demanding a meaningful and democratic controlling role in the economy. Conservative class-collaboration will only be defeated by the working-class movement having an even more realistic appreciation of the facts of economic life and on the basis of these realities further its control over society.

JEM CASEY

SPARE A COPPER SIR

We notice in the Estimate for the Dept. of Justice in the Vote for Public Works and Buildings of June 7th, that a sum of £498,000 is being advanced. The 1972 figure was £290,000. However, the Parliamentary Sec. to the Minister for Finance, Mr. Kenny, introducing the vote, declared that this half-million was "mainly for the erection of new Garda Stations and the improvement of existing stations".

Not a word from him, or from

HARE P.3 KRISHNA

Have the Hare Krishna monks got room in their sanctified hearts for such a human emotion as malice? If they have, they must be smirking into their navels these days.

Nell McCafferty reported District Justice Breathnach's ignorant and vicious attack on them. Now everybody but Stevie Coughlan is after his blood.

Breathnach's clumsy bigotry is out of date. Though when he said he wouldn't be surprised if any decent Irishman attacked them, he wasn't just talking in a trance. It's only three years since a pacifist demonstration was beaten up by some Fianna Fail thugs in Nenagh.

For many months Nell McCafferty has been giving an accurate report of what goes on in the courts. She has shown as clear as day the courts are a minefield for the ordinary man with no money and no influence.

But there has been no outcry to have O'h-Uaidh sacked for sneering at working-class lads who were beaten up by the guards. Or to have O'Hogan sacked for insulting a widow who is behind hand with her hire-purchase payments.

So long as the courts are run by the middle-class, workers will get short shrift there. Is there any reason why the trade unions should not have power to appoint some Justices from among their own members.

Most Justices are political hacks with no knowledge of the law. Any good shop-steward could swot up enough law to hear ordinary cases in a few months, and he might have some sympathy or understanding when a worker appeared before him.

T. BATES

succeeding speakers, about the improvement of existing prisons.

The Coalition Government up to now has been taking an obstinate and authoritarian attitude to the question of prison reform.

Do they really think that there's nothing else to be done but get the bars and windows and roof back on Mountjoy?

Catholic way

The Catholic Church has for many years operated a complete stranglehold on social thinking in Southern Ireland, partly through their enormous influence on the educational system and partly from the pulpit. Ireland was very much the Church's oyster, completely and effectively insulated from any outside or 'alien' influences or ideas. This situation was made possible by the protectionist economic policies which were pursued by Irish governments until the late fifties; these policies were naturally complemented by insular thinking, isolated from developments elsewhere.

During this protectionist period the social and economic backwardness of the country was much worse than today. If the Church had been interested in democracy, it could have pressed strongly for reform in many different fields. Instead the Catholic Church effectively resisted even the mildest attempts to make this a more humane and democratic society, proudly proclaiming that they were not a democratic organisation, but took their instructions direct from God.

A NEW SITUATION

The economic protectionist era has ended. With the entry of Ireland into the larger economic spheres, first of Britain and now of Europe, Irish society has been subjected to all kinds of liberal, even 'permissive' influences. In the face of this relatively democratic deluge, the old, once so firm bastions of Catholic social power are

beginning to crumble. Liberal and democratic movements are springing up where they would never have been tolerated before.

The Catholic Church has reacted to this situation in two ways - diehards like Bishop Lucey of Cork have resolutely maintained their Canute-like stance and act as if nothing has changed. Other more realistic individuals, the most notable being Fr. James Good, have decided that the way to survive is to swim with the tide and become champions of democracy. This attitude is typified in an article by Fr. Good in the Irish Times of May 11th where, in very strong language he points out the need for a vigorous but 'loyal' opposition to be set up within the Church. There is no doubt that Fr. Good's line is developing in the Church at the moment.

PRIMARY CONCERN

While this is a welcome improvement on the old, bald reaction, we should be very careful not to confuse this tail-ending of social progress with a genuine interest in democracy. It is very clear from Fr. Good's article that his primary concern is not with democracy, as such, but with the preservation of Catholic social influence, which will always be a brake on social progress.

JOHN GAULT

politicians could rant on about the evils of partition for the oratorical hell of it, and not have to compete with those who meant to do something about it.

From the start of the Provo terror campaign to the defeat of the Lynch government, the B&ICO and the W.A. took an honest, consistent and democratic opposition to the Republic's claim on N. Ireland. Cruise O'Brien and his small and none-too-vocal band of supporters also opposed the claim, with varying determination. But that was about that - the rest were either Provo supporters or hypocrites. Little wonder Gerry Collins of the Party of Hypocrisy had to invoke his magic Section.

It now appears that many members of the Coalition Govt. are taking a more democratic attitude to the Northern Ireland question, and are intent on trying to undo some of the disastrous effects on Irish politics and Irish public opinion of fifty years of nationalist breast-beating, Britain-baiting and half-hearted warmongering.

This is especially evident after Cosgrave's reference to "the British dimension in Irish affairs"; his rejection of Lynch's Trojan horse concept of a Council of Ireland, and O'Brien's proposal to pipe British and Ulster TV down the country. In saying "I intend to repeal Section 31 next year" O'Brien is probably making the mental proviso "depending on how the ideological burial of De Valera is going".

There is quite some work ahead there, though. Speaking in the Dail on May 24th on the Posts and Telegraphs Estimate, where O'Brien had first mooted his intention to repeal sec. 31, Ruairi Brugha of F.Fail said:

"Our problem in relation to radio and television, particularly, is that I do not think a national broadcasting system which belongs to the State could be independent of Parliament.....I see a situation here where a section, such as Sec.31, which would not be used unless it had to be used, is bound to be necessary so long as the disastrous situation of Partition exists." (official Dail report)

Yes, indeed. But what can you expect of a man who was suckled on the Educational History of Ireland, or something such, and weaned on Dorothy MacArdle.....

J. MINIHANE

O'BRIEN & SEC. 31

We cannot but applaud C.C.O'Brien's stated intention to remove Articles 6 and 31 of the Broadcasting Act of 1960. Section 31 demands that RTE do not broadcast "any matter that could be calculated to promote the aims and activities of.....violent organisations."

Its only function is to keep the public in the dark about aims, opinions, ideas and activities current in the society, all of which have been logically sanctioned by 50 years of official ranting about Partition and its injustice. It can only be necessary to keep the likes of Rory Brady off the screen if there is nobody around who can

match him in argument, if there are no public figures actively, honestly and consistently campaigning for an opposite solution to his. Only then is public opinion liable to be unduly influenced by him. And that has been the case for the last three years.

The Provo supporters and the even more numerous hypocrites, have ruled the world of politics and the media (regarding the national question) which has left the hypocrites with a problem.

Section 31 was an attempt to sweep the Republican Movement under the carpet, so that the

SOCIAL BACKGROUND

&

ILLITERACY

P.5

An informative report of a survey of reading in Irish schools was published in a recent issue of the 'Sunday Press'. The survey was carried out under Mr. D. Swan, lecturer in the Department of Psychology, U.C.D., on a representative sample of 3,300 pupils in 161 post-primary schools. The following are the main findings:

16% of all the children tested were backward in their reading;

9% of secondary school pupils were found to be backward, compared with 30% of vocational school pupils;

Children of manual workers were nine times more likely to be retarded in reading than children of professional workers;

Almost two-thirds of the backward readers were found in vocational schools.

The results confirm the impression which could be got by anybody with a knowledge of the educational system in the Republic.

Most children who suffer from reading problems are working-class children. Since most secondary schools manage to keep out educationally backward children by means of entrance tests, the majority of them are to be found in vocational schools. This explains the high percentage of poor readers in vocational schools.

Overcrowding in primary schools, poor facilities, neglect of backward pupils by teachers, are all

factors which help to explain why kids who have reached the age of fourteen have not yet learned to read. But the causes are not to be found solely within the walls of the school.

The chances of success in education for any child are heavily influenced by conditions in the home. These conditions begin to have their effect practically from the moment the child is born. Working-class children may be severely disadvantaged in this area. In the particular case of reading, a working-class child's chances of doing well may be affected by such things as a poor vocabulary heard from his parents (small number of words in use), a lack of books around the house, a lack of interest in reading material on the part of his parents, and a general failure to appreciate the importance of education, perhaps due to economic pressures.

All of these factors will affect the child's motivation to learn, even if he has the inherent ability, which most children have. Mr. Swan recognises this when he says:

"The causes of reading difficulties are not simple, nor can they be easily isolated from each other.....factors in the home may be more significant than anything the best teacher can do."

He doesn't take the question any further than this, however, which leaves him without any effective proposals for solving the problem,

apart from getting better teachers, and social workers to work more closely with teachers.

It must be obvious that the high incidence of reading problems among working-class kids is a single aspect of the way in which social inequalities discriminate against the working-class, especially against the lower-paid sections. A vicious circle is set up, whereby educational failure in one generation leads to a failure to properly motivate the next generation towards learning, leading to more educational failure, and so on.

The problem is therefore, at its broadest, a social and political one. The acquisition of educational skills is vitally important to the working-class if it is to gain increasing control over the production process. Reading is fundamental to most of these skills. It was the advances in education and resultant growth in literacy among the British working-class in the latter half of the last century which enabled the trade union movement to develop so rapidly.

An increasing level of literacy on the part of the w/c is necessary for it to understand new developments in production, the operation of economic laws, new trends in industrial relations etc.

Surely this is a question which deserves to be taken up by the trade union movement? Urgent attention to such a grave social problem as illiteracy is one of those demands which, together with demands for industrial democracy, would fill out the presently inadequate role the trade unions play on behalf of workers.

D. MELEADY

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EDUCATION

contd. FROM PAGE 1.

by attempting to show that they had not exceeded their lawful jurisdiction showed to the Bishops that their Catholic flock poorly understood Papal teaching on the rights of the Church authorities. The Roman Catholic Church claims the right to define the limits of its own jurisdiction.

That Catholics did not realize that their Church could not overstep the boundaries of its authority was a cause of great concern since such Catholics could fall easy prey to secularism. For that reason a great drive was put into educating the Catholic public on the way to Catholic Action. However, it was essentially a back-up job, an attempt to develop public support for Church authorities, and nothing more.

One of the results of Vatican II, on the other hand, was to put the emphasis on the "Apostolate of the Laity". The meaning of 'Catholic Action' gradually changed to mean the laity performing functions previously performed by clerics. The Roman Church was experiencing mass desertions, especially in Europe and America, of Catholics who saw no purpose in a religious organisation ruled by an army of robed celibates. So it became Church policy to involve the laity in managing the affairs of the Church to a limited extent.

SECULARISATION AND LAICISATION

That is why the Secretary of the Dept. of Education drew a clear distinction between "secularisation" and "laicisation" and proceeded to lecture the clerical managers. He can, after Vatican II feel a good Catholic in doing this.

"Referring to the use of the word 'secularisation', which had been mentioned earlier at the conference by a priest, Mr. O'Connor asked if what was meant by the word was laicisation. If that had been meant, he would make no apology - as he was as much a part of the Christian religion as anyone in the room - in telling them that they would have to accept that laicisation was coming through sheer force of numbers." (I.T.13/6/73)

THE FRUITS OF THE MESSAGE

The Managers formally welcomed O'Connors statement "as a clear indication of what the Minister

would wish for the future administration of the primary schools." The Managers "are particularly interested in his suggestions for the practical involvement of the parents in the running of the school". Indeed they have pointed out that in June 1969 the Bishops made such a recommendation and that the present Government proposals represent a development of their initiatives. The final decision as to their attitudes to the proposals must rest with the Bishops. So far as the question of parents on management committees is concerned, it will be the Bishops who will decide whether and how parents will be involved in the running of schools. We must await their Lordships councils.

PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

So far as the question of laicisation versus secularisation is concerned, the front page headline in the Evening Press (13/6/73) tells the story: "PRIESTS VITAL IN SCHOOLS" and the subheading "But parents have much to offer". If the parents behave themselves and are as Rev. Dr. Daly put it, "as dedicated as the priests in maintaining the religious character of the schools" they can expect to be well treated.

On the Continent parents, as the laity, have been forcing the Roman Church to relinquish step by step her social power. Increasingly they are demanding to know why it is necessary to have a special body of celibates, self-elected, to run social institutions. There the Church is on the defence - so Rt. Rev. Mgr. McLaughlin said in Athlone: "Laicisation has unfortunate continental connotations." Here, because of the absence of secular forces giving an ideological lead to the laity: "laicisation does not carry a sinister meaning in Ireland" (Mgr. McLaughlin)

NON-NEGOTIABLE

The school managers have made it clear to the Government that they regard the "Christian element" as 'non-negotiable'. By this they mean they are going to defend their right to make all teachers learn Christian Catechetics during training. They have decided that religion will not be a private matter for either teachers or children. As the real

seat of their power this right will be vigorously defended.

The religious are having to hand over to the laity. However, if the laity have nothing to offer except their services, they just become the proponents of the will of the clergy. If the Christian element remains non-negotiable, it will be the priests who instruct the laity the way to worldly wisdom. The "PRIESTS ARE VITAL", the rest expendable, would seem to be the attitude of the clergy. The religious authorities even fear laicisation because they feel that the public are not to be trusted to follow their wishes.

Surely these clerics are damned insulting!

continued from front page

this is not possible a cost increase will cause a cut in the capitalists profit margin which will cause him to reduce his investment and lead to a reduction in the number of workers he employs; and consequently an increase in unemployment.

It is obvious that given these two unpalatable alternatives the workers will choose some form of new wage agreement as the lesser of two evils. So the 'left's' contribution to the debate becomes a screaming irrelevance.

COMMUNIST DEMAND

What communists demand in return for an interim stabilising Wage Agreement is - control on the shop floor; a drastic redistribution of wealth in favour of the working-class; and the decisive say in national economic planning in so far as this is possible under capitalism.

In such an environment the dominant economic might of the working class begins to be translated into tangible gains and the development of a socialist consciousness for the working-class becomes a pressing necessity. It is hardly necessary to say that such an alternative is not being offered on a plate, but it should and it must be fought for.

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