

the worker

No 23 July 1974 Price 5p

FOR A WORKERS' REPUBLIC AND INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM

Food for the rich

"The White Paper was intended to provide food for thought. Whatever some people may feel about it, it certainly forced us all to think about the use, purpose and location of wealth in our society, and that is no bad thing... It is however better to settle in this imperfect world for a man with plain common sense, which I hope I am". - Richie Ryan T.D., Minister for Finance, speaking to a meeting of the Confederation of Irish Industry, 15th May, 1974.

THE DEBATE that has taken place since last March's White Paper on Capital Taxation has had very little to do with "the use, purpose and location of wealth in our society" - which is what the White Paper talked about. It was a political discussion between different sections of the people who own and control the wealth. Of course, the proposals were put forward at a time when the National Wage Agreement was being pushed through and Richie Ryan was promising income tax concessions for workers.

The promises have been washed away in the rising tide of inflation. And Richie Ryan still announces, in the speech quoted above, that as "a man with plain common sense" he was planning substantial amendments to the original capital taxation proposals.

Of course, the truth is that even without the amendments the proposals in the White Paper would have widened the gap between rich and poor, not narrowed it. Small wonder, then, that the 'Irish Times' reported that "businessmen at the lunch (about 200 of them paid £5 or so to attend) were visibly pleased...

One economist has calculated that the amendments will give the rich an extra £4 million per annum. For instance, for someone with an annual income of £10,000 the amendments will double the tax cuts already given in the Budget.

At the same time, the 60,000 low-paid workers who were relieved of income-tax under the Budget will almost certainly be caught in the net again next year when the wage agreement increases come through.

The real statistics concerning wealth in this country are that 5 per cent of the adult population own 75% per cent of the wealth. In that 5 per cent, 13,000 people own an average of £115,000 each. This tiny social minority owns and controls the resources of the country; it is for their benefit that the state is organised.

Their wealth has been accumulated out of the work of the mass of the working class population - a process which socialists call exploitation. The government's proposal will not alter this distribution of wealth - the White Paper admits that it is most unlikely to do so - tougher taxation elsewhere has had very little effect.

Yet, the ICTU and the Labour Party go on proposing such legislation. It should not be a reason for workers holding back on wage demands or on independent organisation. That would hurt no one but the workers themselves. In this society the real questions about wealth are the questions of power, not of distribution. Poverty and exploitation are basically caused by the concentration of wealth and of power in the hands of a small minority.

The only way workers can rid themselves of poverty and exploitation is through the workers organising to overthrow those who have this so that we can build a society based not on profit but on human need.

We are all suspects now

A SINGLE DAY'S raid in Catholic areas of Belfast during the last week of June brought 50 arrests. About half of those arrested were released in the next 24 hours. But the British Army was careful to claim that they had got some valuable information from them.

The authorities in the North are still aiming to divide the people in the working class Catholic areas among themselves. They treat whole areas as 'suspect'. They create and foster suspicions among the people to undermine the solidarity which is still there - and is a base for the continuing fight against military and political repression and the power of British big business.

The Dublin government used to be a 'second guarantor' for the minority population in the North, but now every move by the British government is mirrored by the Cosgrave government. Already engaged in a big recruiting campaign for the army and 'toughening up' the Garda, Cosgrave and his ministers are trying to generate an atmosphere of suspicion and hysteria about anybody or anything to do with republicans - however remote the connection.

The new 'observer corps' is supposed to help trace bombers, but no doubt the volunteers will be told to watch for any 'suspicious movements' which would help the Special Branch build up their information on republicans, socialists, or anybody fighting for a change.

This affects us all. The trade union movement which represents a majority of the working population, should urge total non-cooperation with ex-army officer Cosgrave's latest, and dangerous toy.



ABOVE: Free State troops rehearse for the real thing - searching a suspect.

INSIDE: 50 years of the WUI (p.6); After the UWC strike (pp. 4 and 5); The Equal Pay Con (p.3).

CAR JOBS CRUNCH COMES

THE THREAT to our assembly workers' jobs became much more imminent last month. Within less than two weeks of each other, two Dublin companies announced plans for closures and lay-offs. McCairns management gave their first statement for a year on General Motors' Plans to cease assembly in this country - all the assembly jobs will be gone by 1976. Then Fiat management announced they were planning to close their service depot at Grand Canal Street at the end of this year. If the Fiat plan went through, 100 workers would lose their jobs - in McCairns it would be 200 jobs lost.

FIAT UNIONS FIGHT

The response of the two unions in Fiat AGEMOU and ATGWU - was immediate: they would not accept any redundancies.

As long as Fiat intend to keep on assembly here, they will be hurt by a stoppage in the assembly plants - and that is the best possible back-up to the service workers: that management are admitting that the work is there, because they have said that Fiat dealers would have to take on extra staff. If the work is there, Fiat can, and must, be forced to keep workers on it.

There is an unhappy contrast to the solidarity of the Fiat unions in McCairns. There, the axe on assembly jobs has been hanging over the men's heads for some time. A stoppage last year to demand clarification produced only the informat-

ion that General Motors would be building a new factory at Tallaght to manufacture wiring harnesses.

The long delay has produced confusion among the men. That could have been avoided, however, if the three unions concerned - AGEMOU, ATGWU and ITGWU - had taken a clear line from the beginning not to accept any redundancies at all. If GM want to build an electronics plant at Tallaght, that's their business. But the unions have already indicated their willingness to talk about replacement jobs and so on.

Worse than that, officials of AGEMOU seem to have taken advantage of the fact that some assembly workers were prepared to accept redundancies, and were not interested in moving to Tallaght, to suggest to them that AGEMOU could get them bigger compensation than their present unions, ITGWU and ATGWU. Because some of them were also in arrears with their unions, 70 or 80 men tried to transfer to AGEMOU. A three-week strike by ITGWU and ATGWU members in protest against management recognition of AGEMOU's right to represent assembly workers and a Congress ruling that AGEMOU should hand back the transferred members stopped that move.

SCABS

But the divisions linger on. The strikers returning to work after the Whit weekend refused to handle the work done by the would-be AGEMOU members during the strike. They rightly regarded it as "scab's" work - in fact, the men who went on working during the strike had offered to work a three-day week, presumably in order to "starve out" the strikers.

In spite of the Congress ruling many of the men had not gone back to their original unions several weeks after the end of the strike. Some were talking of moving over to the Marine Port and General Workers Union. Nothing could be better designed to play into the hands of management. A divided work-force will be unable to put up any serious fight to keep, or even to replace, every single one of the jobs, with no worsening of conditions and no loss of earnings.

SEEK NEW JOBS

The main union concerned, the ATGWU has said that it will be looking for job-for-job replacement, and will oppose any attempt by General Motors to have the McCairns and Reg Armstrong workers apply again for jobs at the new factory. That is, they are already accepting that the close-down is inevitable - that it can't be stopped, or even delayed. They are accepting that men who have been working near the city centre should be moved out to Tallaght but without mentioning the compensation which they would demand for any such move.

Last November, THE WORKER published a survey of the car assembly trade. We pointed out that the men whose jobs were threatened could not look to the government for the answers, or place their trust in the union officials. We said that a rank-and-file committee across all the plants and across union boundaries was needed to take up the fight. Early this year it looked as if this was going to happen. The Dublin evening papers carried big headlines proclaiming the formation of a Cars Action Committee.

The committee was set up from within the car workers' branch of the ATGWU on the proposal of a Britain's worker. There was no suggestion at that stage that it would take in people outside the ATGWU. Only last month an attempt was made to bring in others, and to contact the various plants asking them to send delegates. The committee does not seem to have met in all the months in between.

It is now a full year since 2000 car workers staged a demonstration in Dublin to show their intentions of fighting for their jobs. Officials and shop stewards told the big crowd that this was only the start, that there would be action taken from then on. But the matter was left in their hands, and little has been done, apart from a meeting or two arranged with Justin Keating.

If some car workers, and even normally militant shop stewards now feel a little despairing, it is because the opportunities were missed. The contacts which are being made only now could have been made then. But it is not too late to act. Workers in the car assembly plants - not only in Dublin, but in Cork and Wexford too - should demand that a fully representative action committee meet regularly with full reports back to general meetings, and draw up a plan of campaign to resist any closures, partial lay-off or rationalisation measures leading to redundancies. A threat to one plant must be taken as a threat to all.

Action At Unidare?

TRUCK DRIVERS at the Unidare complex of factories in Finglas, Dublin, have been looking for an improvement on their basic pay for some years. The National Wage Agreement rise in June brought their rate to a magnificent £28. Drivers in Heitons get £35 basic, in J & C McLoughlin they get £32 a week, and at Irish Shell and BP the drivers are on £40.60 basic, plus 73p a day meal allowance. The Unidare drivers are getting angry — and well they might, for the Unidare shop stewards committee has done nothing to push their case.

WORK TO RULE

The same committee has, in fact, repeatedly turned down opportunities to push forward the workers' claims. There is a claim with management now for an increase in shift allowance from one sixth to one quarter of basic pay. A work-to-rule to back up this claim was proposed recently, and got a lot of support. The men in No. 1 factory felt so strongly about it that they started the work-to-rule by themselves on Friday, 14th June.

The Management's response was immediate — they refused to negotiate while this action was being taken — and the committee turned tail and fled. They got the work-to-rule stopped. But did it not

occur to them that Manahan, the personnel manager and the rest of the management would have had no choice but to negotiate if a work to rule was kept on, and stepped up to other forms of action? By backing down, the committee opened the way for management to walk through the workers.

COMMUNICATION

There is also a general claim for a £1 increase on the basic wage. But communication between the rank and file workers and the committee is so bad that many workers don't even know this claim is in. A £1 increase is hardly outrageous. But management came back with an "offer" of 16 pence — less than the price of a packet of cigarettes. Even committee members have talked of 'stern' measures but Arthur Kelly, the Branch Secretary, has been arguing against anything like this.

In the Transformers section, the men took action because of discrepancies in the bonus scheme. But again, because of the pressure from management, the committee gave them no support.

At Anodising Ltd., also in the Unidare complex, the men resisted a divisive move by management who wanted to bring in men from other Unidare factories to do overtime. Anodising was short-staffed because of the high turnover of workers there — and that only happens because of the bad pay and conditions. The ball is in management's court to improve conditions so that there will be no need to bring in

men from outside. A stoppage and a meeting in the canteen let management know that the Anodising workers would not have this. Notices were put up by men in the other factories which read "No Workers For Anodising".

Another stoppage took place at Anodising recently when a new man was given a day job over the heads of the many shift-workers who have been there a long time. The man was immediately taken off this job.

These two stoppages show that management can be made to heed the worker's view. Words have failed for so long at Unidare — its direct action that pays.

INITIATIVE

But the question must be asked: who do the committee represent? Workers or management? If they represent the workers they will back the calls for a work-to-rule and other action to get our demands. And if they are not representing us then Unidare workers must decide to take the initiative, and keep the initiative, themselves. We must make sure the real decisions are made at general meetings, and that these meetings tell the shop stewards what to do, and demand that the shop stewards report back to full meetings about negotiations with management.

Businessmen Control Galway



GALWAY is a growing city, with a population of 30,000. Like all cities, it needs decent sanitation and dust-bin facilities. During the last local elections in 1967, a lot of people complained about the services in Galway. The usual promises were made but nothing has been done and it does not look as if anything will be done.

Galway Corporation has an impressive fleet of rubbish trucks — a grand total of 2 (two). A tractor or two is sometimes brought in, but they have a habit of breaking down. The Corporation has to rent a lorry from a local haulier for an undisclosed fee which no doubt is worth a drink or two for the odd councillor.

The Corporation is pouring money down its own choked-up drains. Under pressure from local businessmen, who just happen to be on the Corporation as well, they have spent £½ million from public money on Leisuriland, the expensive bubble that has now burst. A couple of years before that, thousands were spent on redecorating Eyre Square in the middle of the town. The Corporation's schemes are geared to the needs of the businessmen, not to those of the

working people, the majority of those who pay the rates and the rents.

The people of Galway, and the Corporation workers, suffer the consequences. Work pressure builds up on the Corporation employees because of the bad facilities. The men on the dust-bins don't get gloves — for fear this would break the public purse. In Ragoon Park, The Corporation workers have to lift over 50 seven-foot high bins from the flats each week. The work is heavy, dangerous and unhealthy.

Whatever new faces there are on the new Corporation — and the chances are it will mostly be the old familiar ones — the situation will not improve for the people of Galway generally or for the Corporation workers until such time as both of them have much more say, and more direct control, in the Corporation's affairs. For they have common interests — and their common interests oppose them to the people who now control the Corporation. They are both interested in better working conditions and better living conditions.

When you go to the Corporation to make your complaint and to ask for some service they make you feel like you're asking a favour, or you're just not wanted. You can queue for hours in the offices in Dominick St. just to get somebody to listen to you.

Don't let anybody blame the low interest in the local elections on people's apathy again. The local authorities are remote from the people and all the time strengthening the feeling that they can't be controlled. If people feel apathetic, it is because they are powerless.

THE FIGHT TO CHANGE THE UNIONS

IF YOU TAKE a look behind some recent industrial disputes, particularly "inter union" disputes, you will find they are marked by one thing: workers looking for a better service from their unions, dissatisfied with what they are getting. The Dublin Corporation dispute and the Dublin busmen's disputes have both shown workers in disagreement with their own union officials; indeed, the National Busmen's Union was founded ten years ago, because Dublin busmen felt their main union, the ITGWU, was out of touch. County Council engineers are now demanding recognition of AUEW (TASS) because they believe they will be better represented by it than their existing organisations. McCairns car assembly workers have tried to transfer to AGEMOU because they thought they would get better service there.

RESENTMENT

In these disputes, and in a whole number of other cases we see trade unionists trying to answer one question: How can we improve our union? — and too often giving up the effort and moving to another. Union leaders will deny it, but there is a strong current of dissatisfaction and resentment, with the trade union movement, and particularly with the officials. There are thousands of workers who feel that the Congress conference which took place in the first week of July was nothing to do with them. They think of Congress as being in the same boat as the Labour Court and the FUE. It is "them", not "us". And who can blame them for thinking this?

What changes are needed in the trade union movement? We need a trade union movement which is responsive and responsible to its rank and file members and which places their interests above all notions of "the national interest", "profitability", or any of the other terms bosses use to con us into inaction. We need a trade union movement which is a weapon of the working class in struggle, not another device by which employers and government control us. The fact that we don't have anything like this can be seen daily. How often do we hear

rumours of officials getting back-handers? How often do union leaders try to persuade members that their boss is not doing too well, so they shouldn't push too hard?

But that does not mean the problem is solved simply by changing the people at the top. Yet there are many good trade unionists — some of them genuine militants — who believe this. The Communist Party, whose members hold an increasing number of committee positions and official posts in the unions, has virtually made a strategy out of winning places. So now they have a leading member Andy Barr, as President of Congress. Apart from anything else, that means that Andy Barr is going to have to defend Congress policies and enforce the National Wage Agreement.

A serious militant or socialist trade unionist would never have to do anything like that. But even "good people" put into official positions have to toe the line. They are generally being elected without rank and file backing, without the active support of members who understand their policies and are committed to them. If Andy Barr was elected with such backing his position on Congress Executive would be the spearhead of the discontent of rank and file members. If he did what a socialist should do, i.e. resign rather than enforce a National Wage Agreement, there would be mass support for his action, leading to a direct onslaught on the National Wage Agreement. But how many ordinary trade union members, know, or care, about Andy Barr's policies, or his claim to be a socialist?

There are so many pressures on a full-time official or even on "lay" officers at the upper levels to conform, that, unless they have active backing, any good intentions they may have are quickly swallowed up. The Socialist Workers Movement is not against militants and socialist contesting elections or union positions; our own members have sought election — in many cases successfully — as shop stewards, and section, branch, or regional committee members. They have done so as far as possible on a clear and open commitment to militant policies and democratic trade union practices. They would only go for full-time positions where their record is well established and rank and file support assured — and always making it clear that they are in favour of the election of full-time officers and far less interference by full-time officers in the day-to-day industrial affairs of the members.

RANK AND FILE

If some comrades think that the policy of capturing positions is justified because the rank and file are "apathetic" they should ask themselves why the members do not feel involved. It is because they feel powerless — and that leaves them accepting the influence of the executives. If militants who are elected or appointed to official posts are not to be generals without an army, there must be an organised fight to win greater democracy in the unions, to get rank and file control of industrial negotiations, to get more regular branch meetings, and many other points.

Changing the unions does not simply mean getting paper resolutions passed or formal policy changed in a

radical direction. It means revitalising the daily life of the unions. And that can only be done by the rank and file. Only rank and file control of the unions can ensure there is no backsliding of promises and policies. The ordinary members are the union, NOT the full-time officials, as many of them would have us think, and too many members are prepared to accept.

DEMOCRACY

It is the efforts and, indeed, the subscriptions of the rank and file which has made the unions. But more importantly it is only with the active participation of the rank and file that we can hope to curb exploitation and oppression in this society, or build a new and better society. That will not be done by manoeuvre at the top, in board-room meetings, or in conferences between government and union-leaders. Changing the unions, therefore, is not just changing faces and names, it is changing the structures, bringing real worker's democracy into the workers' own organisations.

With inflation effectively at 20 per cent a year, and redundancies again reaching record levels, the trade union movement faces serious challenges which the bureaucrats are obviously not able or willing to face. They are tied too closely to the state and to the whole structure of this economy. But unlike them we have the confidence in the rank and file that they can take on and defeat the bosses. To do so, they need to be organised — organised at the work-place in representative works committees, organised in their unions to keep up constant pressure on the officials and take the initiatives where they fail to do so.

That is why we support any activity which encourages the self-confidence and the independent action of the rank and file. The Dublin Shop Stewards Committee has been able to do this in spite of the efforts of union officials and their supporters to distort its intentions. But we need groupings within the unions with demands for militant policies and democratic structures to make the fight for changes more effective.

The main points which must be taken up are opposition to National Wage Agreements, to productivity deals and to redundancies, and the call for full rights on the job and in the unions for women workers and youth. To create a forum in the unions where such policies could be argued out we need more regular branch general meetings, more powers for shop stewards and shop steward committees, full control over negotiations by general meetings of the workers concerned, and the election of full-time officers.

All the short-cuts of transfers to smaller "more militant" unions or unions outside Congress, or capturing positions in the unions without a clear programme, are not shortcuts at all. They only delay the essential job: uniting the rank and file of the working class movement to defeat the employers' attacks and make THEIR movement democratic and controlled by them in their interests.

SOCIALIST WORKERS MOVEMENT
NATIONAL COMMITTEE

GAS CO. THREAT TO JOBS

MR. ALLEN, the General Manager of Dublin Gas Co., says he is worried that there would be "extreme hardship" as a result of any redundancies in the company. As he points out, there are no replacement jobs for most people working in it. And yet, Mr. Allen thinks redundancies are inevitable, and has written to the unions softening them up for the blows.

In a very complicated argument about the increased costs of oil, and so on, Mr. Allen does his best to make the unions feel sorry for the Gas Co.'s position (that is, the position of its shareholders and management). He explains that the government made a capital payment of £2 million to the Gas Co. to help it deal with increased costs.

But that £2 million has to be re-paid. So the company has to save. And where does the management first look for places to make savings! — In the jobs and livelihoods of the workers. The Gas Co. has to be efficient, Allen says. It will have to close down part of its maintenance service. It will have to eliminate "wasted time" and "duplication of effort". It will have to aim for a "more even distribution of work."

All of that adds up to one thing — a tighter screw on the workers, who, as we have explained in previous articles in THE WORKER have succeeded in making gains ahead of many other workers. And it also means redundancies, in spite of the "extreme hardship".

Pickets vs. Police

POLICE clashed with pickets during the strike at the British-owned Osborne Electronics factory in Newry in late June. The strike started on 11th June when 150 workers, mostly women, walked out in protest at the non-payment of a £1.20 'threshold' agreement.

The workers were not unionised, and joined the ITGWU immediately after coming out on strike. The new manager of the factory, Taylor, made a vague promise that the payment would be made and the workers decided in a secret ballot to return to work.

Taylor's promise proved to be a sham. Picketing continued and workers from other factories joined in. The shop stewards committee at Bessbrook Products offered to black enamel wire supplies to Osborne, if requested. There were still some scabs working at the Osborne factory. But the officers of the TGWU Markey and McAleavey, did not take up the offer. They wanted more than anything else to get the dispute over with.

The clash between pickets and police

But it only means that if the unions let it happen. And, of course, Mr. Allen is looking for their co-operation. He points out that unofficial stoppages have had serious consequences — and he hopes, obviously, that the union officials will co-operate with management in having that scourge stamped out. And he says that the company could never again agree to pay workers who had lost earnings because they refused to pass a picket.

Allen makes it clear that they only made that payment on the last occasion because of the union's "special request". The request came because the union leaders were afraid to go against the wishes of the rank and file who were showing their anger in very powerful ways.

came when managers and scabs sought protection to take them past the pickets. The RUC provided it—with machine guns at the ready.

Taylor's next move was to sack the strikers. At a mass meeting which followed, the two Transport Union officials proposed that a delegation should go to the Manpower Ministry for discussion on a Sunday—not even the 'rest day' was going to bar their efforts to get the strike finished.

The strikers have shown enough determination to win their demands, to get everybody re-instated on their terms. They will need to keep up the picketing and take up the offer from Bessbrook. There must be no going back on the basis of promises from Taylor about union recognition and the £1.20 payment. And nobody should be intimidated by the threats of closure.

Having won a victory in this strike the Osborne workers can then go on to build effective shop-floor organisation and take up the many other issues—including low overtime rates and high bonus targets.

And that is precisely where Allen must get his reply from — from the rank and file of gas workers who have shown in the past their determination and solidarity. They can force the management to withdraw any direct or indirect threat of redundancies and rationalisation, and, if they are not prepared to do that, go on to force the government to take over the financing of the company, leaving the day-to-day running in the hands of the workers themselves.

Support needed for Cork tenants

CORK TENANTS are continuing their struggle against the Corporation as more tenants have been given sentence of one month's imprisonment. The Corporation have been careful to see that the sentences were given with stay of execution. They did not want to imprison tenants just before the local elections.

In another attempt to "cool" the rent strike before the elections, the Corporation also did repairs to some of the houses. They tried re-plastering some of the cracked and damp walls, but they are in such a bad state that nothing short of demolition and re-building will do.

COURTS BLAMED

The Lord Mayor, Labour man Patrick Kerrigan, also tried to smooth the way for the local elections by suggesting that it was the courts, not the Corporation, which was responsible for the sentences. Obviously replying to this, one judge remarked as he handed down sentence on tenants that he had no option but to jail them since they were not paying their rents. That was the law, even though he himself understood the tenant's point of view.

Tenants should not get caught up in this argument. The fact is that courts and Corporation work hand-in-hand. They both represent the bosses' state, which is designed to keep things running so that the flow of profits into the pockets of contractors like Sisks does not cease.

The tenants strike is now three years old. From time to time, some have been "persuaded" to come off the strike —

intimidated would be a better word. But the majority are still solid.

The new Corporation may contain one or two more sympathetic people, but that is no guarantee at all of victory. A couple of months ago, dockers struck in protest at the jailing of some of the rent strikers. What is needed now is an organised campaign within the union branches, on other estates, and in the Trades Council, to get a one-day stoppage throughout the town and a massive demonstration. And if that doesn't get all the sentences lifted, and firm guarantees from the Corporation and from the government on improvements in the housing, then the campaign must be spread nationally.

TRADE UNION Branch Secretaries are well known for finding excuses for not attending meetings with their members. But Michael O'Brien, the secretary of Waterford No. 1 Branch of the ITGWU, must have found the most original however. Over 200 members of the union in Munster Chipboard were due to discuss strike action in protest against two men being moved on to shift work. But Michael couldn't get to the meeting. He had to get his trousers fixed he said.

A GENERAL MEETING of Unidare workers at Liberty Hall on 23rd June rejected the company's offers of phased increases in the shift allowance and a 50 pence rise on the basic wage. The meeting was an angry one and the anger was addressed at the committee as much as at the company. There was widespread criticism of the committee's disregard for the majority decision in Wire & Cables for a work to rule.

THE MAKE BELIEVE ENTHUSIASM of the Coalition government for reforming our society has slowed down — not that you could introduce any worthwhile reforms anyway. But even the window-dressing has stopped — for instance, the window-dressing of the Equal Pay Bill on which the government is giving in to the bosses' pressure. Even if they were to include the I.C.T.U. amendments it is doubtful if the legislation could really change the situation. In the second of a series of articles on major problems facing trade unionists, we look at the struggle for equal pay.

FASHIONABLE

OF COURSE, it's very fashionable for government ministers, particularly Labour Party members, to talk about women at work, the discrimination they suffer, and the like. Now we're in the EEC, the government is worried that Ireland might be too obviously backward.

Michael O'Leary introduced a Bill some months ago with gaping loopholes and he's called it the Anti-Discrimination (Pay) Bill. It is the first of several bills intended to improve the lot of Irish womanhood.

This legislation ought to raise the pay of the female quarter of the total work-force; it ought to raise the pay of the female third of the industrial work-force. But it won't. The employers have been given nearly two year's notice to re-grade women who might be covered by the very narrow comparisons. If Irish women's pay has risen above the present average 56% of men's pay by then, it will be by luck — or by hard struggle.

Each case for equal pay will have to be proven. A woman worker will have to show that her work is directly equal to — the same as, not just similar to — that of a man working in the same place for the same employer.

If a girl in Dunne's Stores Dublin, is granted equal pay, that will not entitle a girl in Dunne's Stores, Cork, to get it too. If a woman works in an all-female factory she will not get equal pay to a man who might be doing the same job for the same employer a mile down the road.

Even the 1970 British Equal Pay Act allowed for much broader comparisons than this, and women in Britain still only get two-thirds of the male hourly rate and just over half of male take-home pay. O'Leary's Bill actually reassures the bosses: "Nothing in this Act shall prevent an employer from paying his employees who are employed in like work in the same place of employment different rates of remuneration on grounds other than sex."

In other words, women may not be doing night work; they may not be working overtime; they may not have done apprenticeships; they may

THE EQUAL PAY CON



have time off for pregnancies and an employer would legitimately pay them unequally. Not, note, because they are women, but because they are young, unskilled, pregnant and leaving work at 5 sharp to pick up the kids. Of course, most women working are unskilled and under 25. Many of them become pregnant, and those who are working mothers have first responsibility for the kids.

APPRENTICES

EQUAL PAY is the tip of the iceberg of discrimination; low pay is a symptom of the low status of women. They get very little training for industrial work. Of a total of 16,000 AnCo apprentices, only twenty — 20 — are women. AnCO provides only two courses for women workers. Most apprenticeships are effectively closed to women as are many jobs.

The discrimination even runs into names of jobs. Male supermarket workers, for example, are called trainee managers; female ones are called

shop assistants, and paid accordingly. Any action to end discrimination would need to ensure equal training and job opportunities, maternity leave and child care facilities.

If it does really come to the crunch and the union has managed to push an equal pay claim to the point where job evaluation "experts" are called in, the employers can still win. Female rates can simply be rated lower than male ones.

If trade unionists, male and female, are to succeed in getting better pay and conditions for female workers, they should be well aware of the traps and pitfalls and develop their own means to minimise these.

UNIONISED

THE FIRST major problem is that only one third of working women are unionised. Nearly half of these are in the I.T.G.W.U. — they are general workers, poorly paid although probably a lot better paid than their non-unionised counterparts. Joint Labour Committees set the rates for many jobs where women are concentrated — female rates are three-quarters the male rates.

Add to that the effects of overtime, higher grading, and so on, and the take home pay of these women is reduced further in proportion to the men's. The non-unionised women in these industries — and they are mainly in industries covered by the Joint Labour Committees — are worst off; they must be unionised and once unionised encouraged to be active members.

Shop stewards negotiating equal pay claims will obviously have to base them on the broadest possible definitions of comparable work. The initiative will have to come from the rank and file for such claims to be pressed and for single sex grades to be abolished. Indeed, it is only under pressure that O'Leary has agreed to amend the legislation to prevent collective agreements which distinguish between male and female rates.

Some union officials have suggested that definitions of similar work could be based on measurement of work by "job evaluation". This is a divisive method which takes each worker's performance separately. It should be resisted where at all possible; where it is being introduced, union representatives will have to ensure female skills are not evaluated as lower than males skills.

Equal Pay legislation in Britain was not triggered by a general union campaign but by a strike of female machinists at Fords, Dagenham, which brought Ford car plants throughout the country to a standstill. Militant rank and file action for equal pay in this country would undoubtedly leave O'Leary and his Bill withering. But to get such action, women have to be convinced that they deserved as much as men — and men have to believe it too. Obviously equal pay is in men's interests; they are often squeezed out of jobs because women can be used as cheap labour. The unequal rates are a source of division, and therefore of weakness, in the working class.

With our present trade union officials it is clear that legislation would not guarantee progress in the fight for equal pay. Most officials — the vast majority of them male — were very reluctant to press claims under the last National Wage Agreement which allowed for an extra 17½% of the difference and much broader comparisons than are proposed in the present Bill. Rank and file pressure will be needed to get claims taken up — and rank and file solidarity to defend anybody who might be victimised for doing the pressing.

Denis Larkin hopes there will be no conflict between what the unions want and what is in legislation drawn up by a Labour Minister. But there is a conflict, and there will continue to be one. O'Leary and his colleagues are governing a class society on behalf of the tiny minority who own and control. That ruling minority are simply not going to fork out the costs of full equal pay. They gain too much from discrimination to do without it. The Bill, then — for all the fashionable concern — is just icing on a cardboard cake.

Inside the Strike

WHEN THE Ulster Workers' Council first announced their intention of calling a "general strike" against the Sunningdale agreement, there was very little response. Apart from a mild condemnation from the ICTU Northern Committee, few paid any attention to the threat. That was in late April.

Within a month the Sunningdale Agreement had been all but scrapped and the Assembly and the power sharing Executive had collapsed in ruins. The U.W.C. had called their strike, backing it up at first with massive intimidat-

ion, then moving tens of thousands of Loyalist workers to give it active support, and within two weeks, they had destroyed British imperialism's plans for the future of Ireland.

Where all the constitutional and parliamentary debating of the Loyalist politicians had failed, where all the Loyalist bombing and sectarian killing had failed, where the Provisional IRA had failed, the industrial might of the Protestant section of the working class succeeded with dramatic effect.

THERE CAN be little doubt that the success of the UWC strike came as a surprise to the UWC themselves. At first they only called for the scrapping of Sunningdale and for new elections. They had not set out to topple the Assembly or end power-sharing. When the strike began it is unlikely that very many Protestant workers had even heard of the UWC, or, if they had, took it very seriously. The experience of past loyalist strikes, organised by the loyalist Association of Workers, would have discouraged most workers from attempting similar tactics again. On the first two days of the strike there was virtually no support whatsoever: most workers turned up for work as usual.

HEAVIES

For all its claims to be working class, the UWC launched the strike by methods that were the very opposite of working class democracy. The meeting which took a "vote" for strike action in the Harland and Wolff shipyards was attended by only a few hundred. The vote in favour represented only a minority of the workers present, but was imposed by the "heavies". At the height of the strike 940 workers still turned up to Short Bros. & Harland, beside the shipyards.

300 shop stewards met on the first Saturday of the strike had passed a resolution condemning it and calling for an organised return to work. The return to work march on the following Tuesday was however, very poorly supported. One important reason for that was that the Northern Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions announced just before the march itself was unnecessary; they simply wanted people to go back to work.

There were Protestant workers, however, prepared to risk isolation, and run the gauntlet of intimidation, to turn up for work. They did so for various reasons. Some of them, no doubt, support Sunningdale and the Congress of Trade Union's idea that progress can be achieved through co-operation with the bosses. Others may have thought the strike could not win but supported the aims. And yet others certainly resisted the strike because they recognised that it was a waste of working class strength - because they believed in using that strength for distinctly working class aims.

There was, in any case, a minority of Protestant workers who actively

opposed the strike. That alone should be a warning to republicans and "socialists" not to talk of a fascist threat as if the whole Protestant section of the working class was committed to sectarianism, racism, fascism, or whatever. It also points to where the resistance to organisations like the UWC must most importantly come from - from among the Protestant workers themselves.

In a statement on the strike, the Socialist Workers Movement said: "We are not opposed to political strikes in principle, but we oppose this strike, and we support the attempt of shop stewards and union officials to get a return to work - NOT because we support Sunningdale, but because we reject the aims and objectives of the strike leaders."

No doubt the British government was counting greater opposition to defeat the strike. They believed it would simply run out of steam and collapse like the LAW strikes of the past. But it did not. Instead, as the British government dithered, and the army opted out, the strike gathered massive momentum. Resentment and frustration at British policy found a means of expression which the tactics of the Loyalist politicians had failed to give.

POLITICIANS

In the initial stages of the strike these politicians went so far as to condemn it. Robert Bradford, the Vanguard Assemblyman, called on the UWC to end the strike at once. Paisley conveniently left the country for a trip to Canada. The UWC was on its own. But as the strike showed that it did have the support of thousands, and as the prospects for victory grew, the loyalist politicians, in typically opportunist fashion, swung behind the strike.

When the Professional politicians finally gave their support they were invited on to the Co-ordinating Committee and Craig and West were soon issuing statements on behalf of the UWC. They had made a determined attempt to capture the leadership and the worker-members of the UWC were happy to let them do so. Some members of the UWC admitted that they had never read the Constitution Act which the strike was called to oppose. That was a matter for the politicians, they said. And they made no attempt to maintain the supposedly working class initiative at the grass roots level either.

Wherever mass demonstrations were organised in support of the strike, the leading role was played by the Orange Order and the Loyalist politicians.

AFTER UWC'S ONLY A WORKING SOLUTION

For instance, at a mass demonstration of 10,000 in Portadown not one single member of the UWC spoke. Instead there were three Assemblymen, one M.P., a local Vanguard organiser and two high-ranking Orange men. This was to be the pattern for most of the marches and rallies throughout the strike. Even at the massive victory parade in Belfast, after the strike, members of the UWC played a minor role, the platform being dominated by Craig, Paisley and West.

POTENTIAL

THE STRIKE was an extraordinary display of the potential of the working class, both in the way it was organised and in the effects it had. But it was not a worker's strike which made demands for workers, as workers. In fact, its total success was to make it possible for the middle class politicians to get themselves into positions of power - a power which they exercise over Protestant workers as well as Catholic workers.

The ICTU was ineffective in the face of this abuse of the working class organisations. It is unable to face up to the threat from the Right because it supports the British government's and British big business's involvement in the North, and attempts to collaborate with them. When the ICTU is praised for "keeping politics off the shop floor" it is only keeping radical or socialist politics in check.

But it is only with real working class politics - a struggle for real improvements in standards and conditions and for worker's power - that the alternative to the right-wing loyalist clap-trap could be found. By its co-operation with the "fur coat brigade", the ICTU leadership ensures that loyalist workers will continue to distrust their motives.

There is, therefore, one thing the UWC and the ICTU leadership have in common - their politics lead them to collaboration with the middle class. Loyalist workers

MANY LOYALIST workers are groping around for ways to deal with the situation. In spite of all the new organisations, the conferences and so on, they are mostly finding them in the well-trodden paths of loyalist sectarianism. That is not all that surprising. For if they looked at the Catholic workers, and to their organisations specifically the republican movement, they would find little to attract them there. The fact that the West Belfast UDA calls for talks with the IRA does not change that. The strike and the continuing crisis have left the republican movement at sea, not even able to give any coherent account of what has gone on.

The Officials and the Provisionals were equally struck dumb. In some areas of Belfast they did come together to organise relief and - if necessary - defence for the minority population. In Derry the Provisionals were claiming credit for the magnificent political achievement of having brought "delicious fresh Irish loaves to the beleaguered population from across the Border.

The Officials, have recently being seizing on every radical-sounding word



may have good reason to have no confidence in the ICTU, but as long as they are committed to the idea of a loyalist six-county state they will let the politicians keep the leadership, and they will cling to the notion that they are entitled to superior status over Catholic workers.

The past couple of months have shaken up many things in the Northern political situation, but they could not change that: loyalism is and remains anti-democratic and anti-working class. Whatever new solutions the loyalists may produce, as long as they are put in the framework of a Six County loyalist state - with or without a direct British presence - they have to be opposed. But now more than ever it is urgent - and possible - for socialists to put forward the alternative to these politics from within the Protestant working class itself.

THE BRITISH ruling class is divided and confused over the Northern situation. Obviously, the part of that class which sees its interests most clearly would like to re-establish some form of power-sharing. They are still prepared to give that another go. But to make it work they have to use the army against the loyalists - and during the UWC strike British Army officers were the main force in stopping such moves.

DOOMSDAY

Britain is now gripped by "election fever" and talk of "doomsday" and the gathering economic crisis. That could have two effects on the Northern situation: a weakening will on the part of the British government to put resources into the North, which would obviously be an encouragement to the loyalists to continue their present path. But the crisis could also lead to greater working class militancy among the

British working class. It could encourage some sections of workers to fight, conditions and living standards quickly discover that politicians have nothing

The immediate strike has been to an alliance of military and loyalist work alliance is could months and years.

If this alliance the aim of re-Orange state; if the leadership of politicians develop and its active opposition movement body; if the British powerful section of way of dealing situation other control to the some financial and then there is a real

But what of Ulster"? This notice encouraging noise quarters, simply breaking away from

Republican Confusion

from the Loyalist organisations to disguise the reactionary essence of their politics, but they first of all took no notice of the strike. The two issues of the "Irish People" published during the strike did not mention it on the front pages.

Then the paper's columnist, Ann Devlin, took "the ultra-left, and Provisionals" to task for describing the loyalists as fascists. But by that time the Official Sinn Fein had issued a statement which spoke of fascist leadership of the strike, fascist policies, fascist tactics, etc. They said the basis now existed for a complete fascist take-over in the North. An earlier issue of the "Irish People" had noted that the "anti-sectarian line of the UVF" had dominated the strike leadership - but not the strike supporters, for during the length of the strike, 40 people were killed either by bombs in Dublin and Monaghan or shooting incidents in the North. All but one were Catholics. As we go to press police are looking for a UVF Commander in connection with the Southern bombings.

The Officials are mesmerised by the fact that loyalist workers have been forming their own organisations and policies - an important fact - but are too ready to deduce from this that these organisations and policies are anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist.

The Officials own solution is still the Bill of Rights and "democratic structures". They continue to believe that it is possible to get radical change without completely dismantling the Northern state. But it is in the existence of that state that loyalist workers can always find a reinforcement for their sectarianism.

CEASEFIRE

Obviously, many of the Officials rank and file are straining at the leash of the crazy civil rights strategy and also the continuing ceasefire. But their alternatives are not clear. Simply to start "having a go at the Brits" - and saying publicly that it is being done, instead of trying to hide it as at present - would put them in the same situation as the Provisionals.

The struggle to get the British Army out is as urgent as ever - and that involves military action. But more than that too. It needs a set of demands to link the fight against Imperialism North and South, to smash the six-county state, to drive a wedge between those Protestant workers who opposed the strike and the right-wing loyalist leaders and to draw Catholic working class support away from the SDLP - not a more nationalist alternative, but to a socialist working class alternative.

THE PROVISIONALS from recognising When David O' he was impressed discipline and authority strike, he said political aims. Brady went on Provos were pre the loyalist leadership would talk at question.

Brady went on Provos were pre the loyalist leadership would talk at question.

BOMBING

The Provisionals egypt to reach Provos and they don't distinguishing between and others. The campaign has in simply driven loyal the arms of middle leaders. They are any struggle against state and could Protestants that to incorporate County gomme

the worker

I wish to take out a subscription to 'The Worker' and enclose 80p for 1 year

NAME

ADDRESS

Send to: TOP FLOOR, 95 CAPEL STREET, DUBLIN 1

STRIKE CLASS



loyalists' reasons for doing that would be quite different from those of republicans, never mind socialists. They aim through these means to get loyalist supremacy established again. That is all that is thinly disguised by the talk of "democracy" we hear from the loyalists. An independent Ulster, by virtue alone of being financially independent of Britain could only be built on the most severe repression - not only against Catholics, who would obviously bear the brunt of it, but also against any Protestant workers who showed any desire to fight for their class.

It is possible, of course, that some of the loyalist workers will come to realise these implications. And in that case, they might start to move in the direction of "Six Counties socialism". But socialism in this country can only be built by a united working class that means a working class united throughout the country. Confined to Six Counties it would still be sectarian "socialism" - i.e. not socialism at all. It is the responsibility of socialists within the Catholic section of the working class, North and South, to show that they are in earnest about the struggle for worker's power, in order to stand a chance of building on any Protestant working class radicalism (a very different thing from "Ulster nationalism") which could grow out of the present situation.

STRENGTH

It is doubtful if the loyalists can ever again give such a display of organised industrial-political strength as they did in the UWC strike. But they are not going to throw away the possibilities now that they have had a smell of success. Which way they direct their power depends to a large extent on the political and economic crisis in Britain and its effect on the British working class; it depends on the sticking together or falling apart of the all-class alliance; and it depends - far more than the republicans seem to appreciate - on the political stands taken by Catholic workers in the North and by the Southern working class.

on

NALS are as far as ever. Connell said that with the disparity of the UWC something about the and Rory O' saying that the pared to talk to ers. What they out is another

BING

ls have no strat- testant workers, ven see a way of tween workers Provo bombing many instances list workers into classreactionary not involved in st the Southern never convince hey do not want hem into a 32- republic.



During the course of the strike itself the Provisionals halted their bombing campaign. It seemed like a tacit recognition that something important was happening which might be upset if they continued as before. But they have been unable to translate that recognition into something more lasting - a political strategy, based on the awareness that in order to defeat imperialism the power of capitalism has to be overthrown too. That is not done in separate stages, North and South, and it can only be done if the fight against imperialism is led by those who are committed to build working class unity.

The Officials know, in some vague way, that working class unity is necessary. So they pull in their national horns, and keep on prodding away at "democratic" demands. By doing this they leave intact the Northern state, the Six County structure but it is

Fascist Links

IN RECENT MONTHS there has been increasing attention given to the activities of the National Front in the Six Counties, and to its relationship with the Loyalist camp. After the UWC strike one of the leaders of the the N.F. John Tyndal, visited the North for a series of meetings with the leadership of the UWC, UDA, UVF, Vanguard, and other Loyalist groupings. Relations between the N.F. and the Loyalists are friendly and have been cemented at the organisation level through N.F. participation in the Ulster Loyalist Front.

The National Front set up in Belfast in April this year, although they have been active for many years. Their full-time organiser, Billy Annett, stood in the Assembly Elections as a National Front Loyalist. N.F. policy here is for the restoration of Stormont, re-arming of the R.U.C., re-establishment of the B Specials, and the re-introduction of hanging.

WELCOME

The National Front was established in Britain in 1967-68. It was made up from such groups as the British National Party, the League of Empire Loyalists and the Racial Preservation Society - all overtly fascist in ideology and practice. The leaders of the N.F. John Tyndal and Martin Webster, came from the British National Socialist Movement, modelled on Hitler's Nazi Party. They carried and wore the emblems of German fascism - the Eagle and Swastika. They wore military uniforms and engaged in training with weapons.

The U.V.F. which the Officials like to see as a working class and progressive movement, welcomed the establishment of the N.F. in the North. The magazine "Combat", wished "every success to the National Front in Northern Ireland and trusts that it may grow from strength to strength and be of assistance to the people of Ulster in seeking peace prosperity and contentment . . . we agree that there is room and need for a strong patriotic loyalist party to emerge in Northern Ireland".

precisely the continuing existence of that structure which feeds and maintains the sectarianism of the loyalist workers, and their desire to keep a position of ascendancy. As long as the state exists the Protestant workers have something to focus their ascendancy desires on.

In that sense the Provisionals have been right to carry on an active campaign against the Northern state - and that includes against the troops who uphold it. But their bombing campaign has not furthered that campaign. While it has not been sectarian in itself, it has reinforced the loyalties of Protestant workers to loyalist politics the politics of class collaboration.

By itself a campaign against the Northern state - whether a hopeless campaign to reform it, or one to smash it - could never have been enough. One thing runs through all the loyalist twists and turns: they refuse to be



Ken Gibson

The N.F. is fascist, and like all fascist movements has churned out what might appear to be a radical social policy. The "Ulster Worker", published at N.F. headquarters in Belfast says: "We hope the N.F. the U.L.F. and the UDA will soon get together and hammer out a realistic Workers, Farmers and small businessmens policy for N.I. The vested interests with their villas in the South of France and bank accounts in Switzerland are again trying to channel the working class vote to their own selfish ends! Let's have no more Fur Coat Brigades." At the same time it emphasises its determination to wipe out communism - a mixture which is not uncommon to the UVF, just as it was not uncommon to Hitler and Mussolini.

There are deeper ties too between the N.F. and the para-military UDA. Earlier this year a number of UDA men were arrested in England while training in the use of arms. Two - possibly three - of the men were members of the National Front. In Glasgow a number of men were jailed recently for possession of arms and explosives. They were UDA men who had known ties with local fascists.

NO TALKS

Fascism is not defeated through secret negotiations in back rooms. There can be no compromise with it whatsoever. Those leaders within the loyalist camp with overt fascist leanings and organisational ties must be isolated and made completely ineffective. One sure way of ensuring that this never happens is to peddle the illusion that the "radical" talk of the loyalist leaders is a sign of their developing towards socialism, or working class politics. Official Republicans who continue to push this notion are sowing the seeds of their own destruction.

forced into a united Ireland. They have never seen any indication of what a united Ireland would be like other than one under the sway of gombeen capitalists and the Catholic Church - they have never seen any real evidence from republicans that they were out for something completely different.

Neither the Officials nor the Provisionals have shown themselves able or willing to challenge the Southern state with real working class action. The low wages, unemployment, and the power of the Catholic Church need to be fought not just to appease Protestant workers, but because Southern workers suffer under them too. In the process of such a fight, with real working class alternatives, the links with loyalist workers can be built.

The right-wing reactionaries among the Protestant workers will only be defeated with a consistent socialist struggle throughout Ireland. This would begin to split loyalist workers from their present mis-leaders. Because neither wing of the republican movement is able to recognise the right-wingers and reactionaries for what they are, but instead cling at the straws of "nationalism" in Ulster nationalism, and the hints of radicalism in the tirades of loyalist working class leaders against the "fur coat brigade" they must always fail even the tasks they set themselves.

The Struggle now ahead

THE UWC STRIKE took many people by surprise - not least loyalist workers themselves. It has added to British Imperialism's mounting problems and upset their plans for a solution to the Irish question. It has thrown the Unionist politicians into disarray, sending the "moderate" Roy Bradford, succumbing off to join hard-liner Harry West. It has thrown the SDLP into disorder, and left the republicans groping.

Neither the strike itself, nor the events since then, have shown clearly where the next decisive moves will come from. The North is in a crisis which could find solutions in several different ways. The forces of revolutionary socialism are not yet strong enough to influence crucially which way that solution is found. But there are aspects of the situation from which class-conscious workers - those who want to fight against the power of big business not just the presence of its troops - can learn and on which they can build.

RESISTANCE

The resistance to the strike from many Protestant workers shows the possibility of isolating the right-wing leaders from within the Protestant section of the working class. The loyalists are continuing to chop and change their demands, talking about separating themselves from the politicians but in fact unable to do so, breeding new organisations almost every week. At no point in the strike, or since then have the loyalists presented a challenge, or even a mild criticism of the domination of Ireland by British big business in spite of their claims to be working class. They have put forward demands for loyalist workers, as workers. Until they do that they are always easy prey for the middle class politicians.

Many of the UWC leaders were trade unionists - and they made great play of this fact - but none of them has any record of struggle for the class they claim to represent. One of them, Harry Pattison, tried to sabotage strike action in Shorts last year against the Tory government's Industrial Relations Act.

The misuse of trade union positions for sectarian purposes will have to be actively opposed from within the trade union movement. Any attempt by UWC supporters to take over union positions must be resisted. But that will not be done by the Congress leaders or by people supporting their policies. Socialists in the trade union must be brought together to present an alternative to the sectarian and anti-democratic behaviour of the loyalist organisations and to the "peaceful co-existence with big business" proposed by the ICTU. Inflation and redundancies are likely to hit Northern workers hard in the coming months unless there is resistance. That fight must be organised in a way to show loyalist workers just how much the loyalist political organisations stand in the way of a struggle for clear working class goals.

GUIDANCE

Many Catholic workers and republican supporters have been forced to recognise what socialists have been pointing to for years - the potential of the industrial working class. It is, of course, the fruit of many years of discrimination that the key positions within the industry are held by loyalists. But the Catholics who do hold jobs must see now that they are getting no leadership from those organisations which demand their political allegiance either the SDLP or the republican movement. Many are looking for guidance towards playing a more effective role in the trade union movement.

The SDLP has, to nobody's surprise, done yet another turn-about in order to win back the loyalty of

Catholic workers. They must not be allowed to do so, and any existing working class support must be prised away from them, not just because the SDLP do not fight hard enough for anti-imperialist demands, but because they are committed to capitalism and therefore cannot bring any gains for workers. And the alternative is not going to be found in the republican movement, either.

The republican movement continues to play an essential role. In opposing the imperialist domination of this country, it is opposing the major obstacle to progress towards worker's unity and workers' power. It is still providing necessary defence for the minority population against sectarian and military attack. But it has shown itself incapable of sustaining a mass political movement - although it once led such a movement - and unable to take the opportunities arising from a new political situation.

Those workers who have seen that the interests of their class are totally opposed to anything put forward by the loyalist organisations and cannot be represented by the republican movement or, even less, by the SDLP, must be brought together on the basis of a distinctly working class alternative. That must be an alternative to any attempt to re-establish Protestant ascendancy in a sectarian Six-County state and opposition to any solution imposed by British imperialism, whether it is a Sunningdale-type package or something different. Socialists have to oppose, too, any attempt to force the Protestant section of the working class into a united capitalist Ireland, or any futile endeavour to work for socialism against one or other section of the working class. Now more than ever before the traditional republican solutions are seen to be inadequate.

The fight against the presence of British troops and against repression must go on. Although it is for their own sectarian reasons, the loyalists are opposing internment and the Emergency Provisions Act. In the continuing break-up of the loyalist organisations we can expect some to turn even more to anti-Catholic violence, but also to intimidation of Protestant workers who don't toe their line. There is a need for self-defence against military and sectarian attack and against such intimidation. Never again must self-appointed leaders be allowed to organise a general industrial stoppage by thuggery.

TASKS

None of the tasks can be taken up by the existing working class or anti-imperialist organisations. Making demands on the SDLP to take any of them up will only encourage illusions in that party. The Congress of Trade Unions is unable to relate to the rank and file. The republicans are still effectively confined to a ghetto perspective.

It is in the ranks of the trade union movement and the anti-imperialist movement that the socialist working class alternative must be fought for - to bring together those prepared to fight repression, the presence of the troops and any British-imposed solution as well as the UWC's attempt at a sectarian stranglehold on the unions, Congress's present bureaucratic manoeuvres and the government's and employer's attacks on jobs, on living standards and on working conditions. From that base, limited to a fight by Southern workers against the reactionary Dublin state, the only long-term solution could become real: a struggle for socialism by the whole Irish working class which would overthrow the power of British big business here, and the power of the Orange and Green bosses.

WUI: THE RADICAL ORIGINS

THIS YEAR sees the 50th anniversary of the foundation of the Workers Union of Ireland, the second largest union in the 26 Counties and the fourth largest in the whole country. The union was founded against a radical background, with a radical leadership; it has a radical tradition which survived after the death of "Big Jim" Larkin in mellowed form under "Young Jim" Larkin. Under Denis Larkin as General Secretary that has changed, but even he is given to occasional flashes, and contrary to what you might expect was reported to be in support of the Guinness strike, in favour of a strike in Aer Lingus, and in favour of making the one day unofficial action by UCG lecturers official. He is not always in that frame of mind, of course.

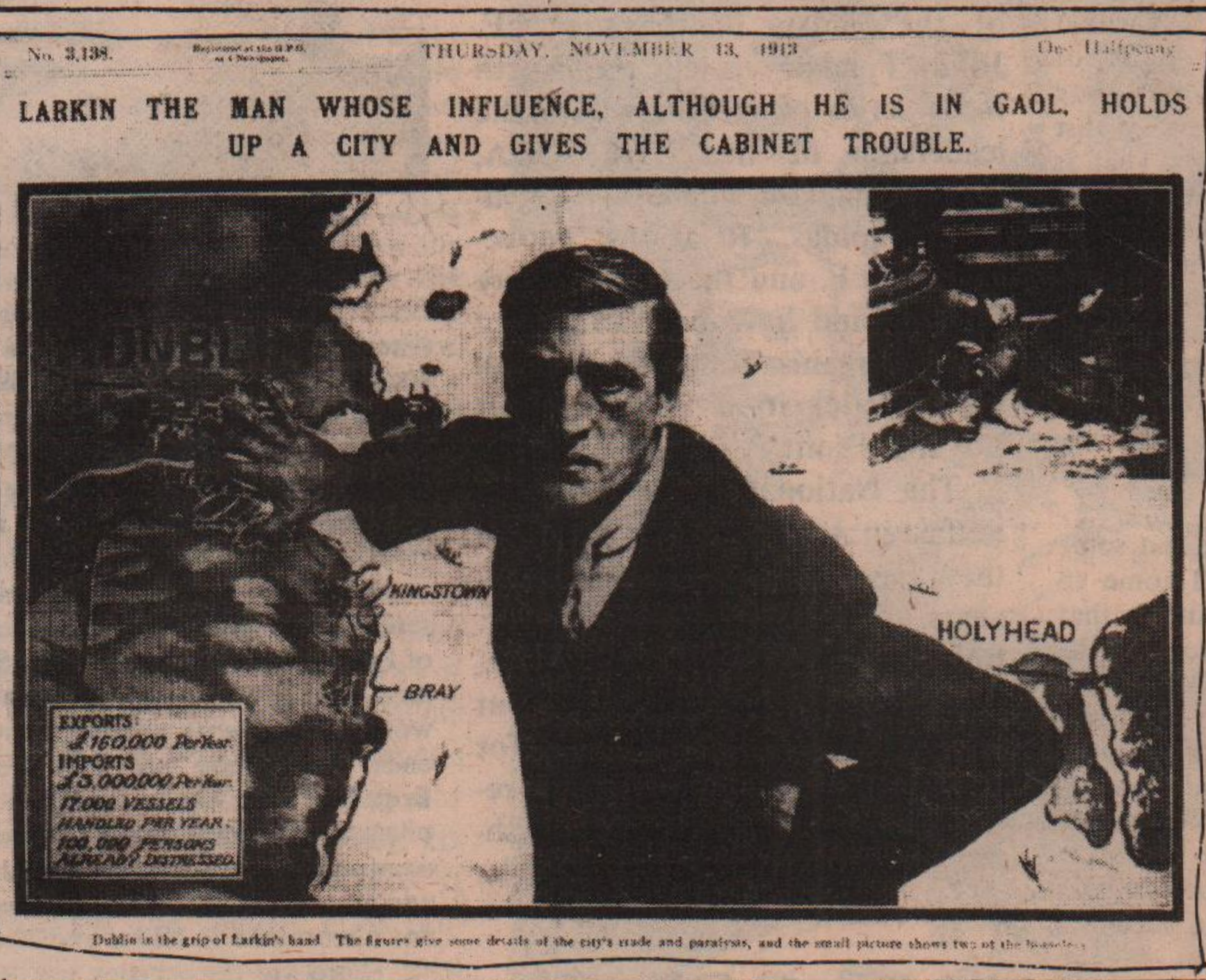
Trade Unionists must often ask themselves how it is that the Larkins, Mullesn, Fosters, Carrolls, William O'Briens, Merrigans, and so on, manage to get so much power, how they can swing votes, keep the militants in check, and come through the most awkward situations with flying colours. The birth, growth and development of the WUI shows clearly how trade union leaders in this country have been put up on a pedestal. The history of the WUI is linked more closely with the shape of politics in the 26 Counties than most political parties would like to admit. It is seen, just in one small way, in the fact that the Communist Party has never done well in elections where it stands against candidates sponsored by the WUI, for the majority of workers feel that in voting for a "Larkinite" they were voting clearly enough for the left.

IT WAS in 1924 in Luke St., off Townsend St., that Peter Larkin founded the WUI in a back-room. Luke St. is in the South docklands of Dublin. Peter Larkin was "Big Jim's" brother — he had played an important role in worker's struggles in Australia as well as here — but it

was the man and the name of "Big Jim" which brought some of the most militant sections of the Dublin working class to the WUI.

There is no mystery as to how Jim Larkin made this name. He did it by leading the workers of Belfast and Dublin in vital struggles, coaxing them, encouraging them, persuading them with the conviction of someone who believed in the power of the working class, used their language, and understood their lives.

Jim Larkin's name is remembered through the bitterly fought battles that took place. He is identified with the militant methods which workers used at that time to fight their struggles. An old militant who was in his early teens at the time of the 1913 lock-out told me how scabs were thrown, with their drays, into the Liffey, and gave the reason why horse mounted police never survived in this country. The Dublin archins, "gurriers", workers made them obsolete in 1913 in the narrow streets of Dublin. The police would gallop down the streets swinging long sticks and occasionally sabres, but they were brought down by young boys with iron bars who ran low to the ground and struck the horses on the fetlocks. It was the battles on the



Larkin as the capitalist press saw him

streets and the victories for the workers in their jobs which built the name of Larkin.

"Big Jim" founded the Irish Transport Union in late December of 1908 after he was suspended from the National Union of Dock Labourers. The I.T.G.W.U. was, therefore, in its origins a breakaway union, but it's worth remembering that Jim Larkin fought within the NUDL until he was thrown out. The ITGWU was seriously hit by the results of the

1913 lock-out and was barely recovering when Larkin left the country for the United States in 1914. He had not intended to stay long but got caught up in a series of disputes with friends, which finally led to him cancelling a speaking tour which, he had hoped would bring him the money to take him back to Ireland.

Larkin saw Mexico in revolution, spoke at the graveside of Joe Hill, and was elected to the International Bureau of the Socialist Party of

Part 1 of a series of articles by Ken Quinn on the Workers Union of Ireland, founded 50 years ago this year.

America, representing the left wing of the party. There, he was in the company of such people as John Reed, author of "Ten Days That Shook the World", a book on the Russian Revolution, Larkin later helped found the Communist Party from those who were thrown out of the Socialist Party for their left wing views. However, he disagreed with his comrades on a number of questions, specifically the attitude of revolutionaries to trade unions. His connection with the Third International and with the Communist Party had a great bearing on his life, but he still adhered to the old syndicalist view that the trade unions could become revolutionary instruments.

The way in which he saw the relationship between the trade union and the working class political party, and the way in which he tended to separate political and economic issues was to have a serious and detrimental effect on the development of the Irish working class movement. Larkin, like Connolly, left behind an attitude and tradition of struggle which is valuable to us, but also a number of political problems which still remain unsolved.

THE SECOND part of this article will cover the early years of the WUI and will include interviews with militants who took part in the struggles of that time.

WHAT WE STAND FOR SOCIALIST WORKERS' MOVEMENT

The SOCIALIST WORKERS MOVEMENT is a revolutionary workers' organisation, which aims to organise the working class in the struggle for power and for the overthrow of the existing social order. All its activities, its methods and its internal organisation are designed to achieve this purpose.

The system under which we live, capitalism, is based on production for profit, not for human need. It is driven by the capitalist's need to amass more and more profits. This makes capitalists compete with one another for markets and for political control, both nationally and internationally. The fruit of that competition is seen in war, poverty and crises.

The capitalist class controls this society by its ownership and control of the means of production; that in turn is based on their exploitation of the working class. The capitalist class is a tiny minority governing the lives of the majority, and claiming to have 'democracy' on its side. In Ireland, 7 per cent of the population own 70 per cent of the wealth.

The working class — and only the working class — has the capacity to end exploitation and oppression. In Ireland its confidence and its strength have increased enormously in recent years, and the working class is now the largest social class. What our class lacks, however, is a political leadership with the influence to resist all ruling class pressures on our actions and to point the way clearly towards socialism as the only solution to the working class's problems, and those of any social group oppressed by this system.

A working class organised independently of the middle class in its own fighting organisations in the work-place, and in its own democratically controlled socialist party can create a society based on production for human need. The establishment of a Worker's Republic the necessary goal of the class struggles, would not mean merely state control of investment and of industry, but workers control, from the bottom, of all aspects of society.

That kind of socialist society does not exist anywhere today. The attempts of the Russian working class to build socialism were halted by the failure of their revolution to spread, and by the actions of the Stalinist rulers, who established a new type of society based on exploitation and oppression. We oppose the Moscow regime as we oppose those of Washington and Peking.

Because the capitalist system itself is international, and the world economy is increasingly dominated by a couple of hundred companies, the fight for socialism must be organised on an international basis too. A Workers' Republic in Ireland could not survive without the aid of the British and Continental working classes. In supporting all genuine anti-imperialist struggles, in Ireland or anywhere else, we hold that imperialism and capitalism can only be defeated by world-wide worker's revolution. For imperialism is simply the form which capitalism takes today.

The SOCIALIST WORKERS MOVEMENT fights to unite the working class irrespective of religion and sex in struggles to cut back exploitation and improve living conditions. We fight to make the

workers' organisations, the trade unions, completely independent and democratic in order that they may play an effective part in these struggles. As immediate aims we fight for a minimum wage of £30 for a 35-hour working week, for rank-and-file control of the trade unions, and we oppose all anti-trade union legislation. We oppose redundancy, unemployment and lay-offs.

On the national question, we believe that the present leadership of the anti-imperialist movement has shown itself incapable of maintaining a consistent approach because it is incapable of recognising the class content of the question. The national question can only be solved in the working class's struggle for power, and that can only be won by a united working class. As immediate aims, however, we fight for an end to internment and to repressive legislation North and South, and for the withdrawal of the British Army from Ireland. We support the self-defence of working class areas against military and sectarian attack. We fight for total separation of Church and State.

The SOCIALIST WORKERS MOVEMENT is a democratic centralist organisation open to those who accept its principles and objectives, who work in one of the units of the movement, agree to recognise its discipline and to pay dues. Along with revolutionary organisations in other countries, with whom we have fraternal links, we are striving to build our own organisation to gain such support as to work meaningfully for a revolutionary international of working class parties.

75 Pence Worth of Puke

"Jesus, you're making it big on Broadway,
I always knew you'd make it big somehow,
Jesis, I bet your daddy's proud of you now"

sings Tom Paxton, and he's right. Religion has been the big showbiz money-spinner for the past couple of years and it was only a matter of time till some bright spark got the idea of putting the devil to work. After all, Lucifer once knocked around with the Superstar himself, so he must have picked up a few stage hints.

The bright spark was William Blatty and his film, "The Exorcist" has made him a millionaire. The publicity machine has made sure that well know by now that the film is about a 12-year-old girl possessed by the devil and there has been so much talk about it that you get to thinking that it's worth a look even if it is rubbish. Reviews have been bad but the curiosity of eejits like myself will keep Mr. Blatty in holy water for years. So I won't tell you not to see it but, amazingly, the bad reviews were right, it's a stinker.

All the old cliches are dragged out and dusted off; the eerie music, the noises in the night, the flickering lights, they've even got the sinister mist swirling round the house. All that's missing is Christopher Lee. It's as slow, dragged out and boring as one of Liam Cosgrave's speeches and if it were not for the regularly spaced screams there's a danger of dozing off. Even the jokes (two, I counted) are second hand.

It has been said that "The Exorcist" was made as a propaganda effort to get people back to the church. Maybe, but I doubt it. The sight of two guys in make-up and dog collars valiantly waving holy water bottles at a 12-year-old girl floating in mid air is more likely to induce laughter than piety. It's just an old-fashioned horror movie with the added gimmick of religion thrown in. The ingredients are carefully measured to play on our emotions, and not very successfully at that. I've seen better back in the days of the nine-penny rush.

And despite the publicity there's nothing great about the special effects. Furniture jumping about, people floating etc. was done earlier and better by Walt Disney in 'Mary Poppins.' O.K., so he didn't have green vomit flying about, but then is it really worth paying 75p to see someone puke?

G.K.

Worthwhile books

THE NEW TECHNOLOGY OF REPRESSION; Lessons from Ireland — Pamphlet. 30p. Published by British Society for Social Responsibility in Science.

This pamphlet describes Army riot control and interrogation techniques used in Northern Ireland. It also describes weaponry developed but not yet used, and the range of new technologies waiting in the wings.

THE HAZARDS OF WORK. By Pat Kinnersly — Paperback 90p, Pluto Press. Kinnersly's book details the physical and mental hazards of a wide range of jobs and tells how to fight them.

WAR AND AN IRISH TOWN. By Eamon McCann. Penguin 40p. A brilliant analysis of the causes and effects of the war in the North. Attacked by left and right and banned by Easons, McCann's book is in short supply.

All these books and many others available from WORKER BOOK SERVICE, Top Floor 95 Capel St., Dublin 1. Send cash with orders.

PORTUGAL: WORKERS HELD BACK

THE COUP in Portugal has let loose the fantastic potential of the working class whose strength has been "cooped up" for so long, and who have now been able to force much bigger changes than Spinoza and his supporters ever intended.

But the main parties which claim the loyalty of the workers, the Socialist Party and the Communist Party, are trying to dampen this down in favour of the politics of alliance with the "progressive", "liberal" middle class and military leaders. That policy led to disaster in Chile; it could do the same in Portugal.

The coup was backed by elements of the Portuguese ruling class because it was in their economic interests to do so. The cost of the military campaign against the African Liberation Forces has risen steadily in 1973 it took up 43% of the budget. This sort of spending on arms not only cut into the profits being made from the colonies; it also meant that industry at home was being starved of the necessary investment. In other words, in order to prevent a fall in profits and a rise in social unrest, a change of tactics was needed.

The change is from a military solution to a political solution. The aim is to end the colonial wars while still maintaining the annual flow of some £30 million in profits from the colonies. This does not mean independence, except perhaps for Guinea-Bissau which is the least profitable of them. It could mean reforms and a measure of self-government for Angola and Mozambique. A toning down of repression, it is hoped, will make possible the emergence of an African middle-class whose economic interests will be tied to

imperialism. The delicate task of bargaining the terms under which the African leaders will agree to join in the exploitation of their peoples has fallen to Dr. Soares, the "socialist" Foreign Minister.

While these negotiations are going on abroad it is vital for Portuguese capitalism that things get quickly back to normal at home. To this end there has been a call for national unity. A Provisional Government has been appointed and the Portuguese Communist Party has been given political recognition and a place in the new government, on the understanding it seems, that they will use their influence to keep the working class movement in check.

Portuguese workers have some of the worst conditions in Europe. Before the recent outbreak of strikes the average wage for a 45 hour week was £8. During forty years of dictatorship, of government controlled trade unions, press censorship and secret police activity, they have had little opportunity for advancement. The coup opened up fantastic opportunities



Portuguese workers welcome the Communist Party leader Cunhal. Their hopes are misplaced.

for the working class movement. It provided a breathing space from police repression, it saw the ruling class in temporary disarray and it signalled a sudden upsurge in the popular movement. May Day saw a massive demonstration of working class unity and willingness to struggle.

In the weeks that followed union headquarters were seized by workers who set about electing new leaders. Mass-meetings, sit-ins, and take-overs took place in factories across the country. The banks were being operated under workers' control. It was in the face of this situation that the head of the military junta, Gen. Spinoza, sought to defuse the growing movement for workers' control of society, by setting up the Provisional Government,

taking the Communist Party in and giving them responsibility for restoring "order and discipline" amongst the workers. If this ploy failed, Spinoza, who, fought with the fascists in the Spanish Civil War and was an "observer" with Hitler's army in the Second World War, threatened an immediate return to repression.

It worked. The C.P. has swung behind Spinoza, urging moderation, calling on workers not to engage in factory take-overs echoing the call for popular unity. They used all their influence to get striking workers to return to work and to prevent any other "provocations" of the armed forces. The outcome — the wage increase gained was only half of what was demanded and militancy was dampened.

The C.P. Newspaper, *Avanti*, has blamed the industrial unrest on adventurers who claim to be left-wing but who only wish for chaos and the destruction of democracy. Whose democracy? The democracy of exploitation by one class or another? The democracy of "popular unity" which provides the cover for the leaders of the working class movement to collaborate with the exploiting class?

This sort of democracy failed with tragic results in Chile. Must history be allowed to repeat itself?

E. O'DWYER



MEMBERS of left-wing organisations often get told: "I agree with what you say. In theory it's right. But look at it in practice. It doesn't work." Most often people who say this kind of thing point to the example of Russia and the other so-called communist countries. We have to explain that we do not believe these countries to be socialist or communist, and explain where the Russian revolution went wrong.

Ian Birchall's book, *Workers Against The Monolith*, is about the communist parties since 1943, the parties who have never learned what went wrong, and who are repeating all the old errors.

His coverage of the two major Communist Parties in the West, the French and the Italian, is particularly good. He demonstrates how C.P. policy zig-zagged and opened the way for working class defeats. He quotes, for instance, the French C.P. paper, *L'Humanite*, during the May events of 1968. On 3rd May it carried an article attacking the striking students and told them to get back to their book, and on 12th May, it published a statement from the Political Bureau of the French C.P. which declared "the French Communist Party associates itself unreservedly with the just struggle of the students".

Then when the workers took up the offensive and millions were out on strike what were the demands of the C.P.? Did they call for a direct challenge to the regime? No; they said they were for a "more modern democracy in conformity with the

Communists' twists and turns

Left: Brezhnev, Russian Communist leader

interests of the French people". They said anything rather than put forward the socialist alternative. (Rather like NICRA in the North calling for more democracy through a Bill of Rights).

Militant working class demands have been dropped by the C.P.'s because they have become interested mainly in forming electoral alliances with middle class and reformist parties. They hope to use such allies to get C.P. deputies into positions of "power", but in order to do that they have to drop all working class politics. Indeed, where they have gained power they have behaved just like true social democrats, defending the system, attacking militants — but of course, still talking about reforms.

In France and Italy, where the Communist parties have real influence in the working class, they have used their influence to dampen down struggles and have helped the state machine to police workers and to keep them from being contaminated by revolutionary ideas.

FOOTBALL

It should be of interest to Irish readers to note that the Catholic Church in this country was not the only institution to ask its members not to go to football matches where the Yugoslav National team was playing. The French C.P. also asked its members not to go to a match the Yugoslavs were playing in the 1940's. In fact, in 1949, a journal of the Russian C.P. stated that the bourgeois nationalist Tito clique in Yugoslavia, having taken the anti-Soviet, anti-Marxist path, had reached the logical end of its anti-communist position: fascism. But a few years later, Tito had somehow become a communist again in their eyes.

The account of the Communist parties in Eastern Europe makes depressing reading. In 1970 the Polish C.P. indulged in strike-breaking by sending coal to Spain during a strike by coal miners, despite a plea from the Spanish Communist Party not to do so. In their turn, East Germany, Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia — all of them ruled by "Communist" parties — have seen working class upheavals, which the ruling parties have usually answered with some small concessions — but, more importantly, increased repression.

How are these twists and turns possible? The answer is that the Communist parties are not guided by the one firm perspective — the struggle of the working class for control over society, the fight for socialism on an international scale. Today, the possibilities are greater than they have been for a long time to build working class parties with that perspective. The reformist "Labour" parties are being discredited, but the C.P.'s are taking up the same positions.

Because they are committed to an idea of "socialism" which is the exact opposite of the real core of socialism — that is, worker's control at every level of society — the C.P.'s, in Ireland or in India, cannot be turned into the type of parties the working class needs. Any illusions working class militants may have that they can should be destroyed by the evidence gathered together in this book. I strongly recommend it to all readers of THE WORKER.

M.S.

WORKERS AGAINST THE MONOLITH. The Communist Parties since 1943. By Ian Birchall. Pluto Press. Paperback £1.50.

INDIA shaken by strikes

What is the best way to deal with a strike of railway workers? Put them in prison, of course. That was the answer which Mrs. Gandhi, the "socialist" prime minister of India, recently gave when she locked up 15,000 trade unionists, who had gone on strike after long negotiations had got nowhere.

The railway workers worked a 12-hour day and their pay had stayed at £3.50 a week for the last two years, although in 1973 prices in India rose by 27 per cent. The action of the government was to sack thousands of railwaymen, put others on trial, and issue eviction notices to strikers living in railway housing. The army was sent to important railway junctions.

The army is playing an increasingly important role in India. Defence now takes a fifth of the national budget, although India does not seem to be threatened by any of her neighbours. Even as the government campaigned against the railwaymen, it exploded its first atomic bomb — which must have cost £1,000 million or £1,500 million.

The background to this situation is an increasingly sick economy. In 1973 the average income per person went down to £44 a year. Stocks of food are very low. The government tries only to survive. It has abandoned economic planning and the development of state enterprises, and given in to American pressure to "liberalise" the economy — open it up to American capital, which is used to make luxury goods for the small upper class. Income tax on the rich has been cut, despite the huge deficit in the budget.

The "green revolution" which was to break the deadlock by increasing the yield from crops, has enriched only a few landlords and rich peasants — for the majority of the peasants cannot afford to buy the new seeds. 40 million people are said to be unemployed or underemployed. A recent advertisement for 17 social education officers at a salary of £15 per month brought in 100,000 applications!

On top of all this, oil prices have increased fantastically. Oil may now swallow four fifths of the foreign currency obtained from Indian exports. Oil is needed for transport, fertilisers, and power.



Mrs Gandhi

In these circumstances, the country is disintegrating. Since Christmas more than 130 people have been shot dead by the police. There have been continuous food riots in the states of Gujarat and Bihar. Right-wing religious extremists have fomented religious riots. Outcast Untouchables have clashed violently with the police. Mill workers, insurance employees, and civil servants have been on strike as well as the railwaymen.

Despite the imprisonment of their leaders, the railway workers managed to carry on their strike. Indian workers for the first time realised their own power, while the hold of the Communist Party and its trade unions has been weakening. But the thought is already occurring to the middle class of abandoning their sham parliamentary democracy and handing over power to the army.

JOHN GOODWILLIE

SDLP IN SEARCH OF THE MASSES

A CASUAL visitor to Ostan na Rosainn, the plush new West Donegal hotel, might be taken aback these weekends to encounter a morose group of Northerners huddled in the lounge during the day, or singing tunelessly in the bar in the evenings. The SDLP parliamentary party is at work formulating a new strategy.

At first sight the new strategy is not very different from the old which is surprising, since the old strategy — which could be summed up in one word: Sunningdale is in ruins.

WORKED HARD

NOBODY worked harder than the SDLP to make Sunningdale work. Time after time they backed off to give Faulkner room to manoeuvre against the Loyalists. The rent and rates strike was abandoned and penal sanctions imposed, by Austin Currie, against those who persisted. Internment was tacitly accepted and reform of the RUC put on the long finger. And at the height of the Loyalist strike the crucial "parliamentary tier" of the Council of Ireland was ditched. All to no avail.

Despite these twists, turns and betrayals there was a threat of consistency running through SDLP activity, and it was that underlying consistency which made the party the darling of the London and Dublin governments. Fitt, Hume and Co. have striven might and main to deliver the Catholic working class up to the new British-promoted Northern consensus; a consensus promoted not because the British were suddenly in favour of "fair play", but because Green capitalism is increasingly important to British big business.

After the collapse of the Sunningdale strategy the SDLP was momentarily non-plussed and a barrage of contradictory statements came from individual members. Paddy Duffy demanding a British commitment to withdrawal, Ivan Cooper publicly disagreeing and so on. But gradually the new line comes more clearly through.

What the SDLP has done is to revert to the positions it held prior to its steady climb-down. It is now waxing eloquent again about internment, protesting about this or that aspect of police activity, insisting on an "Irish dimension". It is trying to get itself into as strong a position as possible for the bargaining which is to come; trying, in fact, to start the whole charade all over again.

But there are differences this time. The SDLP's main partners, the Faulknerite Unionists, have almost ceased to function. And the British, surprised by the strength of Loyalist feeling, are unlikely to insist on an exact reception of the power-sharing experiment.

What is most likely to happen — at the level of parliamentary politics is that Britain will try to promote power-sharing — minus the "Irish dimension". This would satisfy a section of the Loyalist coalition. It would be acceptable to the Southern coalition, as Cosgrave's recent kite-flying speech made clear. And, since it would leave British interests untouched, it would find little opposition at Westminster. It would also, of course, mean an abandonment of the Northern minority and its aspiration to a United Ireland — which presents the SDLP with difficulty. Their agreement to such a scheme would leave them very vulnerable indeed to outflanking by the republicans.

The SDLP are by no means the least sensitive group in the North to changes in governmental attitudes in Dublin and London. Hume and Fitt understand well that any new deal they negotiate now is likely to give them less than they had under Sunningdale. They could only achieve more, or as much, by mobilising the strength of the Catholic working class — and they are not about to do that. Fearing, with some justification, that the Catholic masses, once on the street, would not stop short at the limited objectives the SDLP would set for them. The negotiating position they are drawing up now is being formulated not in any expectation of its achievement, but in the hope that the harder the position they adopt initially, the less they will have to concede in the end.

GALLAHERS — SAY NO TO PROD DEAL



There is no doubt at all that they will concede. It is in the nature of the beast.

But despite the betrayals, and the inevitability of more betrayals, there is no certainty that the SDLP will lose its mass support. The party is, arguably, the most effective political machine in the country. It is massively financed, professionally organised and led by some of the most polished quick-change artists in living memory. Certainly, few parties have ever turned somersaults so dramatically while persuading thousands of on-lookers that it was actually standing still.

The certainty of continuing support for the SDLP does not, however, depend on any of these "qualities", but on the absence of a coherent alternative.

In the time available to us the building of that alternative, the revolutionary alternative, cannot wait upon the ending of SDLP influence. It will have to be built in the process of exposing the SDLP.

The SDLP is one of the most effective arms of imperialism in Ireland. To render it useless is by no means the least important of the tasks which face us.

Eamonn McCann

all
correspondence
to 95 Capel St
Dublin 1

AT A MASS meeting recently workers at Gallaher's cigarette factory in Tallaght rejected a productivity deal. The two unions catering for the general workers, the I.T.G.W.U. and the Irish Women Workers Union, recommended rejection on the grounds that there was no proper training scheme, that there were too many grades and that the women were being given the lowest grades. Workers in different sections had a number of other reasons for rejection. Both unions will accept the deal however, if the major grievances are put right and there is some increase in the money offer.

Like all productivity deals this one is an attempt by management to get a lot more work for a little more money. If it goes through all production workers will be involved in speed-ups and compulsory overtime. In some sections the deal is going to mean a big step-up in production. If new machinery is brought in production could rise by as much as 60%, and this sort of increase can only mean either expansion or loss of jobs. We surely know from experience which is the more likely.

Productivity deals are traps. Once accepted there can be no turning back. Issues which are usually fought at the shop-floor level are covered by such an agreement and so shop-floor organisation is weakened and workers are more vulnerable. The shortened tea-breaks, the speed-ups, the compulsory overtime are the losses which have to be lived with long after the gains made in the wage-pocket have been swallowed up by rising prices.

Gallaher workers must be wary of sacrificing their long-term interests for short-term gains. If at the next meeting of management and unions there is agreement on this deal, the workers should make their voices heard by voting for its rejection. It is they, the workers who stand to lose out in the long run.

GALLAGHER WORKER

SOCIALISM MISSING IN LOCAL ELECTIONS

Right: Seamus Vostello

IT'S SEVEN YEARS since the electorate got a chance to vote for their Corporation, County Council and Urban District Councils. But they were in no hurry to do so on 18th June and the numbers voting were exceptionally low. If putting a mark on a piece of paper is a meaningless and powerless exercise you will not do it. And that's basically why so many thousands considered the World Cup more important to their lives than going to vote. Who can blame them.

In a press statement issued by the Socialist Workers Movement before the elections we said "There is little or no real power in the local councils and in the present economic and political system that is not going to be changed".

HOUSES FOR PROFIT

Housing, health schemes and education decisions are NOT made at local level but in the Dail. And the decisions made in the Dail are dictated by the interests of the capitalist class. No matter how honest and hard-working a councillor is, houses will be built for profit — profit for the banks, the builders, the land speculators and the building societies.

When the wealth of society is not invested in improving health and education systems, but is pocketed by the rich, squandered on I.D.A. grants and jets for

the Air Corp, no wonder the local authorities are always complaining "but we haven't got the money for this scheme". Just how little power the local councils have was seen when Dublin Corporation refused to put health charges on the rates — the Corporation was dissolved by a higher authority.

No substantial political issues were raised at all by the election, not even by the radical candidates, so a large slice of the electorate stayed at home and left the zebra-crossings and the flower-beds-in-the-park to the politicians.

One way elections can be useful is as a platform for protest against the system. A large number of radical, republican and "community" candidates participated. However, as we also said in our press statement, "rather than using the elections to point to the sham of local democracy and to demonstrate that real power in this society is not in the hands of elected representatives at all", they were making the same promises as Fianna Fail, Fine Gael and Labour about rates, houses, traffic etc. etc.

Both wings of Sinn Fein, the Communist Party and Left labour candidates stood — but from no one did we get socialist politics.

For instance, Tom Connolly, Official Sinn Fein candidate for Longford Urban District Council ran on "honesty, action" housing and the retention of a local hospital. Is this the same organisation that says it is revolutionary socialist? Is this the same organisation that is supposed to be opposing the State? They say nothing about the exploitation of the working-class and nothing about repression North or South. Official Sinn Fein has been



trying to look respectable, and has given priority to electioneering as a tactic at their last Ard Fheis.

Provisional Sinn Fein said in their literature in Limerick "Sinn Fein seeks your support at the ballot box... NOT because we have consistently defied England's right to keep an army in Ireland". Instead they fought on the same old phrases about rents, rates, housing and playgrounds. They did not put their fundamental standpoint before the people — their struggle against British Imperialism.

WHICH 'PEOPLE'?

The Communist Party of Ireland put forward a programme with slogan "More Power to the People". Both wings of Sinn Fein used "people" slogans — not to mention Fianna Fail and Fine Gael in

certain areas. The word 'people' is so vague and liberal that it covers everybody at a time when socialists should be spelling out independent working-class politics. "People Before Profit", said Official Sinn Fein.

"No Profit from the workers", say revolutionary socialists.

The Communists nowhere mentioned the pressing issue facing the working-class: inflation, redundancies, trade-union bureaucracy the National Wage Agreement or repressive legislation. Their call for money-raising lotteries and civic restaurants shows how much they are committed to reforms that change little in the capitalist system.

Again, our statement on the elections said: "We believe that the kind of attention which republicans and communists are giving these elections is a diversion from the main task of those fighting big business and the repressive state — that is to build a militant movement of the working-class based on the work place, where workers can, and do, have real power".

DISILLUSION

The Communist Party which has members in trade union positions and militants in factories, were wasting energy contesting the elections and the results show that without a mass base elections serve no great purpose.

The success of some community candidates shows a certain disillusion with the establishment parties. But community problems are not caused at community level and cannot be cured at council level. The community candidates emphasised their "non-political" stand but they all had politics whether they liked it or not. There is a world of difference between the right-winger Sean D. Loftus or the middle-class Carmencita Hedderman and socialists.

Some candidates did run as socialist. But Jim Kemmy of the Limerick Socialist Organisation published his advertisements without the word "socialist" appearing on them and Declan Bree of the Connolly Youth Movement who stood for election in Sligo, was careful to be proposed by a priest.

Seamus Costello, the Independent Sinn Fein Candidate who headed the poll in Bray, did so on his own personal record. Despite the fact that he was suspended from the Officials for political differences he claimed that the Bray electorate were voting for Sinn Fein. But the other three S.F. candidates finished bottom of the poll in Bray.

The lie of democracy in Ireland today was exposed by the harassment by the police of Republicans candidates and their supporters. Three Sinn Fein election workers were arrested in the Bray area and one of them was beaten by the police. The homes of Sinn Fein candidates in several areas, were raided by the Special Branch and in the Balbriggan area of North County Dublin police tore down Sinn Fein posters.

STANDING STILL

What do the results mean? Labour is losing support — in Dublin and other cities. But it is not now going in more radical directions. Sinn Fein — both wings — had to work hard simply to stand still, and the Communist Party made a poor showing. The Socialist Workers Movement had advocated a vote for such radical and working class candidates. The lack of success is certainly no cause for rejoicing, whatever political differences we may have with them.

But it should at least start a re-think among Sinn Feiners and others who placed such hopes in the election strategy. Because the leaders of these organisations tell the members they can expect better results, the real results always have a demoralising effect. But there is not even the compensation of knowing that they have put forward a clear socialist line. Because as explained above, that is precisely what they did not do.