

THE WORKER

FOR WORKERS POWER AND INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM

BRITS PUT

BOOT IN

THE COMPROMISE which ended the hunger strikes in H Block and Armagh is coming unstuck.

That is what came out very clearly from the National H Block campaign conference in Dublin on 25th January. A statement from the prisoners, read out to the delegates, said that a renewal of the hunger strike was back on the cards.

The prisoners reported that while they had been prepared "to make genuine attempts to resolve the protest", they had been "exasperated and frustrated by the British Administration".

So what are the sequence of events since the ending of the hunger strike, that has led to this?

The hunger strike ended on December 18th when the prisoners were shown a 32 page document written by Atkins.

It contained a number of promises. They could wear their own clothes for three quarters of the time. Involvement in educational activities would be counted as work.

50% remission would be granted by the governor (at his discretion) to conforming prisoners. Finally they were told that these concessions would come into effect "within a few days of the protest ending".

The Provos outside immediately proclaimed it a victory.

The H Block campaign was demobilised—without even waiting to see whether the agreement was going to be implemented. The SWM believes that agreement itself did not constitute a full victory.

But after the agreement the Brits stuck the boot in even further. They seized on the confusion reigning after the hunger strike and, backed up by taunts from Paisley and the Loyalists, proceeded to go back on even the concessions they had promised.

On January 12th many blanket men moved to clean cells. Ten of them the following day were to wash and shave and requested their own clothes. The Governor of the H Blocks, requested a weeks grace before they could wear their own clothes. The prisoners granted him the week.

One week later the prisoners again requested to wash and shave and get their own clothes. This time they were told that they would not be receiving their clothes until they "completely conformed." Only "completely conforming" had now come to mean agreeing to do prison work and obeying all the petty rules of the jail.

The prisoners, then, had been conned. Conned at the beginning, because the agreement, wrest from them under

extreme psychological pressure did not recognise them as political prisoners. And conned again now, as clearly the British had no intention of implementing even those concessions. Once the pressure of mass action was taken off the British could sit even further back in their seats and grant next to nothing.

That means that the movement must get onto the streets again. There will be problems.

Mass movements cannot be switched on and off. But we cannot just wait for another hunger strike to start.

For that reason we need to begin organising groups of workers in the unions and industry, and visiting and pulling out our supporters for the demo on March 1st and the picket in Armagh on March 8th.

Thatcher can be defeated. She has already bent. Now we need to build to break her.



BERNIE:

What's the British army hiding?

by EAMONN McCANN



WHAT were the soldiers who found Bernadette and Michael McAliskey last month up to?

The commanding officer says that the men of the Third Paras were on "routine patrol".

This is not true.

The paras were miles away from their normal area of operation in County Armagh. The Argylls are the "resident" unit in the County Tyrone area where the McAliskeys live.

Whatever the paras were doing it wasn't routine. The house had obviously been staked out. Soldiers had been dropped in the vicinity by helicopter the previous day.

Was it staked out because the army had a tip-off that the murder bid would be made?

If so, how come three hit men in face masks were able to reach the cottage and spend some time prowling around before smashing into the house and putting five bullets each into Bernadette and Michael?

The laneway to the cottage is a rutted dirt track 400 yards long. A car's maximum speed along it would be about ten miles an hour.

How come there was no action from the army until the murder attempt was over? How come the killers got so far? People have been shot dead in the North for far less by undercover patrols.

How come the commanding officer of the Third Paras, Hew Pike, was at the scene with a press statement even before the local cops had arrived?

Some local sources insist that the army allowed the attack to happen before making their

play. That they thought they might be able to have Bernadette dead and bag the killers into the bargain. Two birds with one stone. It is the type of suggestion which, in the absence of information, is impossible to prove—or disprove.

But the more fundamental political questions can be answered readily enough.

Questions

The Ulster Defence Association has never hidden its intention to kill people like Bernadette McAliskey. Its 'Supreme Commander', Andy Tyrrie, spoke on ITV a few months ago about the organisation's intention to 'eliminate Pro-Republican leaders'.

The UDA does not deny that in recent months it has killed Miriam Daly, John Turnley, Ronnie Bunting and Noel Little—all prominent H-Block campaigners.

The UDA remains a perfectly legal organisation.

Mr Tyrrie carries a loaded and perfectly legal revolver. A few years ago one of his Clubs was ceremonially declared open by Junior Minister Lord Belstead (of the Labour Party). Mr Tyrrie has never been arrested in his life.

It is that general background, as much as the murky circumstances of the Paras behaviour last Friday morning which leads Catholics in the North quite reasonably to suspect the worst.

They know that while the UDA can go too far and its rank and file members fall foul of the law, there is an identity of interest between it and the police and the army. Both seek the elimination of 'the rebel element' and the preservation of the Northern state.

aside

Another year

by CHARLIE NOLAN

LAST YEAR saw no progress politically or economically in Ireland. The same old problems are still with us.

Unemployment is still with us and increasing all the time. There is stalemate in the Six Counties and the Dublin summit drew Paiseley back into the limelight condemning Thatcher's "sell-out".

His statements on a referendum shows the uncertainty of the Unionists and he sees this as an opportunity to grab power. Official Unionists are more cautious.

The Hunger Strike succeeded in pressurising the British into coming to Dublin—a significant concession judging by the furore it created.

On the industrial scene, we again witnessed, last year, the use of the army in the tanker drivers dispute. The year before it was used in the Corporation fitters dispute, when they used army lorries to collect rubbish.

I wonder what they will use the army for this year?

In the Dail we had the Arms Trial Debate. Or I should say we would have had it if anyone had been allowed to speak.

But the opposition let the Government off the hook on the more important economic issues by their failed attempt to score political points.

As a result, we are into 1981 with a general election coming up and the main opposition parties have no clear economic or political policy which distinguishes them from the Government.

Unless they adopt strong socialist policies and carry them out they are not entitled to call themselves opposition.

In 1981 we will have to see a more organised effort by Trade Unionists in defending their rights as this is the only way opposition to injustice can be demonstrated in the absence of a genuine opposition party.



Abortion a woman's right to choose

SPUC say NO!

ON THE Sunday after Christmas, the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child (SPUC) organised a march in Dublin.

There were about 1500 people on that march which called on the Government to close down the two abortion referral agencies.

It had been well-organised with posters all over town, and it represents the culmination to date of the anti-abortionist movement's activities over the past 6 months.

The two main groups in this movement are Life and SPUC. Life is directly funded by the Catholic Church. Word has it that when the Corrie Bill was defeated through mass action last year, SPUC decided to move most of its resources from Britain to Ireland.

All over the country, these organisations have been setting up local groups, organising public meetings and marches and seeking publicity in the media.

They are mobilising on the ground and that is what makes them so dangerous. There was little need for an anti-abortion movement here until the Women's Right to Choose group formed early last year.

SPUC and Life are hoping to nip that campaign in the bud before it gets any further.

That is why it is essential that all those who support the woman's right to choose must be prepared to oppose any moves against the Well Woman and the IPCC.

Open abortion referral to Britain is a far cry from abortion on demand and if these centres are successfully shut down it will put the abortion campaign for years.

Now is the time to start raising the abortion argument with your friends and in your workplace.

Remember there are 10,000 Irish women having abortions every year—they and you are not as isolated as you might think.

The Government must not be let think that SPUC speaks for us.



Defend
the
clinics!

THERE ARE no Abortion Referral Agencies as such in Ireland. What SPUC is talking about when they call on the Government to close them down is the Well Woman Centre and the Irish Pregnancy Counselling Centre, both of which do abortion referrals as one part of a general pregnancy counselling service.

The Well Woman has been openly providing abortion referral since it opened in Jan. 1978, although this service could not be widely publicised—it is better known as a family planning clinic.

When the Woman's Right to Choose Group formed early last year, it decided, as a first step, to set up the IPCC as the Well Woman was unable to meet the demand.

Under the 1861 Act. Abortion and helping to procure an abortion is illegal under all circumstances. But because the

"crime" is committed in another country—where it is not a crime—the Director of Public Prosecutions has not moved against either centre.

The IPCC is directly linked to the Woman's Right to Choose group—a member of one must be a member of the other. This link is to ensure that the provision of the service is never separated from the political campaign—a lesson that was learnt from the contraception campaign which was greatly weakened by its separation from the Family Planning Clinics.

The IPCC is entirely funded by the voluntary donations of the women who use it and does not benefit in any way from any decision a woman makes about her pregnancy. One full time administrator and three part time counsellors are employed and paid union rates.

Women who attend the IPCC are encouraged to attend a counselling session before making any decision. She must decide for herself what to do.

Despite the fact that abortion is widely condemned in this country many are pressurised into terminating by the threat of being outcast by their families, sacked by their employers or the inadequacy of the £29 unmarried mothers social security allowance.

If a woman chooses to have an abortion, IPCC will make a booking with a safe and reliable clinic in England, a travel agent will arrange the flight, overnight hotel and taxis to and from the clinic and the total cost is about £150.

by MARY GORDON

We say YES

HUNDREDS and thousands of women have abortions every year. Clearly, for them, their foetus does not have the same value as their other children or other people. Women die in their hundreds of thousands from back-street abortions because they'll have them anyway, whether they are legal or not.

For women to be free they must be able to control their fertility. How else can they begin to control their lives? Contraception is never 100% reliable and people make mistakes. If women can not control what's inside their own body they will always be the victims and not the owners of their bodies. Because of that the power to reproduce must carry with it the right to control that power.

Socialism is concerned with the reality of people's lives. It can not ignore what hundreds of thousands of women are doing or the misery, poverty and pain involved. Anywhere women are fighting for their emancipation the demand for the right to choose is central. That demand is for the right to have children as well as for the right to terminate pregnancies.

In the "Third World" and for many black and working class women it is often the struggle against massive sterilisation programmes and the use of dangerous long-term contraceptive drugs like Depo-provera and being used as guinea pigs for the drug companies.

Look at those who oppose the right to choose. More often than not they are the same institutions and individuals who are opposed to workers control, trade unionism, women's rights and civil liberties. That is not a coincidence.

RIPPER Is the horror film over?

PETER SUTCLIFFE has been caught. The nightmare story of the ripper's relentless murders is over. A sigh of relief goes up.

It's like turning off your telly after a horror film. The baddie has been caught and everything returns to normal.

But does it?

The dimly lit streets are still there. The buses aren't anymore frequent. You still strain for the sound of those footsteps behind you, walking home after dark.

The advertisements blazen out provocative object-like women and Sun readers go on drooling over Page three.

And the wife battering, sexual harrasment and the rapes continue.

For women, Peter Sutcliff being caught—whether he is a ripper or the ripper—changes nothing.

For the media, of course, his capture is a triumph. More police on the streets has rid us of this outrage. Catch him and the problem's over. Law and order rules again. Trust those men in blue; they'll protect you.

The reality was, though, that those men in blue were far more ready to protect certain women—what they called the "innocent" victims—rather than the prostitutes also killed by the Ripper. The police hunt was stepped up when the Ripper's last victim—a "decent young girl from a good family", walking home at a "respectable time"—was murdered. Suddenly the ripper became a real embarrassment.

"Stay at home". "Don't go out alone", we were told. "If you get done, you've only yourselves to blame: you shouldn't be walking the streets alone". The ripper threat became the occasion for women to be told that their place was at home and their lives dependent on men.

But women in Britain were not going to be cowed into passivity.

by MARNIE HOLBOROW

In Leeds, Manchester and London they organised Reclaim the Night demonstrations. They took to the streets and defied together the intimidation that a solitary women feels. They organised pickets outside films like "Dressed to Kill" which also degrade women to the level of objects for sexual aggression. They demanded special buses home from late night shifts, and asked for better street lighting. As a hospital worker from Leeds put it: "The Ripper has reinforced all the attitudes that a woman needs a man to protect her: we have to argue that we have the right to walk WITHOUT men to protect us".

For the Ripper is not just an isolated freak phenomenon as everyone would have us believe. He is an extreme case of violence in a society, that, at a subtler level condones such violence.

Not only are we daily confronted with images of women that invite aggression, but also women are deprived of the means to their independence.

Many women have to work at night either because that's the only time their husbands can look after the children, or because they are forced to take the lower paid more unpleasant jobs. Without adequate bus services and not enough money for a taxi, she has no choice but to walk home and "risk it".

But what sort of society is it that a woman fears to walk alone at night simply because she is a woman? One, maybe in which the Yorkshire Ripper can feel completely at home. But one that we, in Ireland, like the women in Leeds, must defy.

Poland what next?

by KEVIN WINGFIELD

UNDERNEATH all the Stalin-inspired mumbo-jumbo, Poland remains an exploitative capitalist society. The political forms are different to the West, but the basis of it's economy is in all essentials the same as Europe or America.

It therefore shares in the world crisis that is sweeping this planet, and it is this which gives hope that it too can share in genuine socialist hope for mankind that lies beyond these crises.

The countries of the Eastern Block compete with the countries of the west—NATO—in producing and stock-piling the means of destruction, arms.

This competition forces the Warsaw Pact countries to devote a huge part of their production to not only arms but the heavy industries necessary to support modern arms production.

Consumer goods production is cut back to the bone and the countryside is squeezed of resources.

In addition to arms spending, the Russian satellites have increasingly engaged in economic competition with the west.

East European goods more and more find their way onto world markets and foreign credit from western bankers flows in to countries like Poland.

The cost of servicing this international debt and producing goods cheaply enough to compete with those of Germany and Japan have seen the Polish rulers attack workers living standards in order to divert production to these areas.

It makes production at a profit—and profit is every bit as important to the Polish Communist Party leaders as it is to the bosses of Irish industry—even more difficult and uncertain.

The impact of this deepening economic crisis on the Polish working class was dramatic. Last summer a series of economic strikes against increases in meat prices and wage rises led to the formation of a joint strike committee representing hundreds of thousands of striking workers demanding political reforms including the right to new "free" trade unions.

Poland stood at the brink of revolution, Soviet troops massed on the three borders—those of Russia, Czechoslovakia and East Germany—Party boss Gierek was deposed in favour of Kania. The country was at a standstill.

POLITBUREAU

The world watched and held its breath.

Early on in late August, the Politbureau of the Polish CP divided 3-5 in favour of Gierek's proposal of military action against the occupied Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk. But military and security chiefs objected that they could not vouch for the loyalty of the security forces. The Central Committee in fear agreed to independent trade unions, but still hoped to escape its full implications.

Having tried and failed to achieve plant by plant agreements, the government still hoped to split the movement and using every trick at its command—from Cardinal Wyszyński's televised plea for "moderation" to a smear campaign in the government monopolised press—with no success.

Solidarity—in name and deed—grew in the space of weeks to claim 6 million members, half the workforce and the vast majority of workers in large scale industry. The government prevaricated in the law courts insisting on an acknowledgement of the "CP's leading role" in Poland.

However, in the last few weeks the government has tried a new trick—incorporation.

No doubt inspired by the success of the Irish bosses in drawing the teeth of trade union leaders here with "workers participation" schemes, it is trying the same thing.

The Financial Times reports plans for industrial democracy involving members of Solidarity as well as the CP bosses union.

Central state planning would be reduced to the barest outlines and decentralised decision making would be influenced by directors nominated by workers representation.

It is all very familiar, and so is this clause, included lest there should be any doubt: Profitability would be the measure of a factory's efficiency. Those that do not return the right profit will have to be reorganised or "eliminated".

AGITATION

But the agitation continues. Last month seven million Polish workers defied the government and stayed away from work on Saturday.

The government had declared that day a work day in spite of assurances that Saturday working was to be abandoned.

Eighty per cent of the workers in Warsaw and even larger amounts on the Baltic Coast simply did not show for work.

The strike waves are very far from over.

Following the lead of the workers, peasants have now built their Rural Solidarity.

Most agriculture in Poland is conducted on small privately owned farms. The government has for many years hungrily exploited the countryside for cheap food and starved it of resources.

The result is incredible backwardness in the country—transport is by horse and cart and fields are plowed often by hand with the help of a horse.

Fertilisers are sold to the state farms at a fraction of the inflated prices charged to the peasants, and prices gained for agricultural products ensure the impoverishment of the country.

The farmers are demanding reforms in all these areas.

Whatever temporary stand-off is arrived at between the free unions and the government, the tempo of the world crisis of capitalism—in which the East is up to its neck—and the relative backwardness of Poland's industry and agriculture, ensure that fresh attacks will be made on the Polish workers and peasants.

Like Iran, a repressive state has stifled all opposition so that religious and nationalist forms are given to the explosion when it occurs.

Genuine socialist ideas are, not surprisingly, in short supply. And a genuinely socialist workers movement is also absent. The free trade unions can get the workers only so far and already the leaders are exercising a "moderating" influence.

The creation of a revolutionary workers party is what the situation demands in Poland as elsewhere.

Stop the SA tour

RUGBY FOOTBALL is great to play and watch. Even though it's a highly physical game, it requires a lot of skill and know-how.

But most of those who play—or are involved in the running of the Irish Rugby Football Union are from a conservative middle class background.

The majority of rugby clubs still draw their members from the established colleges such as Blackrock, Belvedere and the like.

One glance at the social background of the Irish International team will bear this out. The "old-school-tie" mentality still prevails.

The masculine Tony O'Reilly image along with the sexist jokes still dominates the clubs.

In many of Ireland's upper-class private schools, rugby is an integral part of educating future businessmen. Many of the schools are run by Catholic orders but some are Protestant.

Christian Brothers, for instance like to keep in touch with all classes in society, so in Dun Laoghaire Secondary School it's Gaelic Football for the workers, while up the road in Monkstown College the Brothers like the rugger.

Rugby as the established game caters for a small minority. Therefore the decision of the IRFU voted on by the clubs to let the Irish International team tour South Africa in early May comes as no surprise.

As with the Lions' tour last year the Irish team—if they do go in

May—will not play against one genuine multi-racial team picked on merit.

Last year the Lions played 16 matches. Eight of these were against all-white provincial sides, one against a "coloured" team and one

against an African team.

The Irish touring team plan to play many of the same segregated sides. The South African Rugby Board is still a racially organised body. It is divided into black and white teams and strictly segregated to adhere to the racist government policies. There are at present 20 bodies for whites only and one each for Blacks and Coloureds. There are no mixed clubs.

Racism is enshrined in South African law and permeates every area of life—including sport.

"Non-whites" live in different areas and need special permits to play sport or even watch a match in areas where they are not allowed to live.

The vast majority of the South African population is African.

Yet they cannot travel, eat or drink in white areas and must carry "pass books" at all times or risk arrest and imprisonment.

They are not allowed to vote or hold a skilled job in 87% of their own country. It is the barbaric side of capitalism.

Eleven million Africans—nearly two thirds of the population—robbed of their ancestral lands, mainly live on reserves or "Homelands" which account for a mere 13% of South African land. Needless to say the best farming land is not available to them either.

Overcrowding in the reserves, hunger, police harassment and poverty drive many Africans to work in mines, industries and farms, all owned by white capitalists who mercilessly exploit this labour.

The South African and foreign multi-national capital owners and large landowners who continue to rule, have cultivated racial divisions as a most effective instrument in their drive for cheap black labour and high profits.

White workers are bought off with privileged rates of pay and promotion, greedily guarding their feather bed against those they see as "racially inferior."

The suffering and humiliation of Apartheid is intensified by economic support and trade provided by foreign capitalists.

Irish, French and British governments, for example, shed crocodile tears while their businessmen—for whom they speak—worldwide gain from their involvement in this blood trade.

But they can not speak for us—Sport for ALL, Stop the Tour!



EXILED - BRIAN TRENCH writes

JUST OVER a year ago, Oscar Sanjines was elected general secretary for four years of the Bolivian Workers' Centre (COB). He had been a trade union activist for 25 years and had worked in the same shoe factory for 32 years. Today he is out of a job, out of his trade union post and out of his country. If he returns to Bolivia, he would be executed or imprisoned.

That has been the fate of his comrades, friends and members of his family since General Meza came to power through a coup d'etat. Others of Oscar's friends and colleagues are scattered through several Western European and Latin American countries.

On Thursday July 17, the executive of the COB and the National Committee for the Defence of Democracy were meeting in the COB headquarters when 3 ambulances arrived outside. Out of them jumped groups of right wing paramilitaries who first started shooting at the building and then stormed it. They killed five and left the bodies behind as they took others prisoner. One of those killed was the leader of the Socialist Party. The same day, a far-right military junta had taken power.

Oscar Sanjines managed to avoid capture and went into hiding for two weeks. He then got out of the country through the Venezuelan embassy. His 25-year-old son Sancho was not so lucky and was held in prison for two months. Of the 3000plus who were held or are still being held in Bolivian jails without trial, the majority are trade unionists.

"This coup was different from the hundred-or-more which have gone before in Bolivia's recent history," says Oscar. "The first target was the trade union movement because they knew it was strong. Only last November (1979), the unions organised a 16-day general strike. They had to smash the workers: otherwise they could never hope to put through their massive price rises."

But Oscar also says that some of that strength still survives. Government officials have found that their "suggestions" as to who should represent the workers in factories and mines have been flatly refused. However, more open political opposition is likely to be met by death or imprisonment. The trade unions can only operate clandestinely and the national headquarters of the COB have been partly demolished and made unusable. By the methods which trade unionists and radicals throughout Latin America have had to learn and develop, the opposition to the Meza junta does manage to circulate petitions and leaflets. "And because the workers were due a wage rise earlier this year," says Oscar, "the leaders find a ready response."

This group of "crazy fascist officers", as Oscar calls them, does not even have the merit of having a programme. It has simply raised prices of essentials like sugar and meat, formed closer ties with the equally "crazy, fascist" Argentinians and made sure that it benefits from the massive marijuana and cocaine market.

Oscar Sanjines is convinced that this blow from reaction can be reversed. He and his comrades in exile are canvassing support from the trade union movement throughout Europe. At a meeting in Quito, Ecuador, in late November, the scattered COB leaders and others were co-ordinating their efforts, aiming to establish a centre for the international opposition to the Bolivian junta. They are also appealing directly to socialists and democrats in other countries. Along with representatives of other Latin American movements, such as the Sandinista Front, the Revolutionary Front of El Salvador, the MIR of Chile, Oscar addressed an impressive meeting of over 1000 people in Lisbon during November.

What Oscar Sanjines hopes for beyond all this is the creation of a movement linking all the Latin American trade union organisations in a combined push against the gorillas of the right. That could create the conditions for an appropriate response to these military monsters. On the same day as Oscar Sanjines was in Lisbon, the General Secretary of the Bolivian Communist Party was arrested—by the Peruvian police.



Oscar Sanjines, General Secretary of the Bolivian Trade Union Confederation, now in exile.

FIGHT FOR BRITISH WITH

Mass action now!

THE HUNGER strikes in the H Block and Armagh ended just before Christmas. Confusion abounded at first. Had the Brits made a secret deal? Were the prisoners defeated?

But there was also a massive feeling of relief. Across the Catholic ghettos of the North—a relief that the lives of 10 fighters had been saved.

There was a different sort of relief in other places. Inside the Dail and the British Parliament there were howls of glee. A threat had been lifted. The threat of a steadily advancing and powerful mass movement. They had seen two general strikes which paralysed Derry. They had seen organisation: hundred strong youth committee around West Belfast; H Block groups dotted around the country; resolutions and debates rolling up from the rank and file of the unions and other organisations; massive demonstrations.

For the first time in years the anti-imperialist movement has made a serious turn to working class movement.

That turn came late and wasn't consistent enough. But it did bring about the beginnings of a strike wave. The centre of the storm was in the North. But in work-places in the South like Waterford Glass Irish Cement in Drogheda, Irish Steel in Cork and Dublin Corporation, workers had downed tools to support prisoners. Often they were minorities. In most cases there was no factory meeting to devote and decide the issue.

But a break with the tradition of Southern isolation had been made.

The mass movement around the H Block issue has raised some fundamental questions for the political organisation involved. The members of those organisations like the SLP or the CP who gave verbal support and did nothing to build the campaign, should take another look at their organisations' anti-imperialism.

But a more decisive debate should also be taking place inside the Republican movement.

During the campaign the IRA military activity was toned down—with the exception of a brief spate of bombings in Britain. Some have claimed that 'this foretaste' clinched the issue. The reverse was the case. The British ruling class can only regard those bombings as a minor disturbance—and as a disturbance

which could be turned to their advantage in driving British workers into support for a law and order government.

Socialists oppose that type of militarism—not because we are pacifists—but because we are against the type of nationalism that says 'They (British workers) need a sample of what we've put up with for years'. More than that: isolated bombings were doing nothing to help build the mass campaign in Britain or here.

And it was the mass action that forced any concessions. Thatcher was being clearly told by workers that if she let the prisoners die her class was going to pay for it through workers actions against their investments here. It is that which terrifies the right—not the threats of bombing against a few symbolic targets.

The Socialist Workers Movement believes that the armed struggle is a legitimate and often necessary tactic to be used against the British military presence. But the armed action of a few is also less powerful



and less effective than mass action and particularly workers action.

The H Block campaign bears that out for that reason it must be totally subordinated to the need to build a massive movement that is fighting in the streets and the factories.

Many republicans have seen that during the prisoners campaign. The question is where do we go from here?

The campaign that was built around H Block can be extended to tackling the roots of the problem. It is the British presence which produces the H Block. It is the British army which is the sharp end of that presence.

Gerry Adams is right in saying that the 'Provos can never achieve a purely military victory'. (Nor for that matter can the Brits). That state can only be broken by re-directing the H Block movement into a British Withdrawal campaign—a campaign that says: Troops Out Now. Get out of Northern Ireland.



JOHN BYRNE is a member of the Corporation Crafts Group—rank and file organisation with members throughout the countries Corporations.

He is also active on the Branch Committee of his Union—the EEPTU. John was involved in organising a work stoppage in Dublin Corporation during the recent H Block campaign.

THE WORKER: Could you say something about what happened in Dublin Corporation during the hunger strike and what sort of organisation was involved.

JOHN BYRNE: When the National H Block Campaign called for demonstrations in support of the prisoners, there was originally

a general feeling of apathy among workers in the Corpo. That is until a small section of workers on one depot decided to build interest in the issue.

We started two weeks before the first march and got out a 'Corpo Workers Against H Block' leaflet. During this period about half a dozen workers formed themselves into a proper group. We visited various depots and got the feeling of the men on the H Block issue. We met once a week to discuss the results and how to react.

Because of that work we got a substantial section of workers out for the first Dublin march—behind our banner. We tried to get a relative to go around but none was available to speak.

What happened on the Day of Action?
We had a meeting about the best tactic of getting our members out on strike. We decided to push for a 1½ hour stoppage and to assemble outside the GPO.

In Stanley Street, on the mechanical section, not only did they withdraw their labour, but they also handed in to management the exact reasons why they were striking and expressed their total support for the H Block Campaign. Two questions: Was it minority groups of workers who came out? And were there votes taken beforehand?

Yes it was minority sections that came out, no question of it. There were no votes taken. We knew we would have lost but we still felt we had a right to make our protest.

It's often said that workers in the



In the

South cannot be moved on the national question. What's your feeling on that?

During the year many workers would not bother talking about the North. But when something like H Block arose, they found they had something to say. That was a start. That was the consciousness we worked on. They said 'we want to do something.' It was our job as socialists to give that feeling a direction and a confidence to take action.

When you were pushing for industrial action on H Block, did you appeal for support because you were 'fellow Irishman' or on a working class basis?
To be honest, we found ourselves at times having to appeal on a humanitarian basis—and it was effective up to a point.

But there was also a section who were very sympathetic to the argument that the prisoners were political prisoners—who landed in jail because of the political situation in Northern Ireland.

We argued that as workers we could change the situation in the H Block dramatically. As workers we have the power to smash the Northern State that exists today.

Because of that approach we were victim of some red scare tactics—but that sort of thing didn't not when there was real political interest in the matter. More generally, the H Block Campaign showed that workers in the South can and will move over the National Question. But the firm response to the issue in Dublin shows that the political ground work has not been done. Workers

BRITISH WITHDRAWAL!

The British army

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The physical presence of the British Army on the street of the Six Counties is a guarantee that the status quo, ie, the artificial statelet of Ulster, will not change. For that reason the call for the withdrawal of the British Army is a progressive call. At this stage it must

be repeated lest it is forgotten that the British Army is not there to defend the nationalist population but is a vital part of a repressive state machinery.

A quick assessment of the methods used by British Army will dispel any illusions that they are there to maintain peace.

The nationalist population and its left wing supporters are kept under a blanket of surveillance which makes Orwell's 1984 seem insignificant.

It keeps detailed records on every single family in Catholic areas. The SAS has been given free rein to shoot on sight in areas such as South Armagh.

It must be remembered that this machinery is controlled not by the RUC ie. the official police, but by the British Army and its different agencies. This in itself, belies the claim that



the British Army's role is purely a peace-keeping one. Unlike the British Army's role in Malaya, Aden, etc., the



JOHN BYRNE is a member of the Corporation Crafts Group—a rank and file organisation with members throughout the counties Corporations.

He is also active on the Branch Committee of his Union—the EPTU. John was involved in organising a work stoppage in Dublin Corporation during the recent H Block campaign.

THE WORKER: Could you say something about what happened in Dublin Corporation during the hunger strike and what sort of organisation was involved.

JOHN BYRNE: When the National H Block Campaign called for demonstrations in support of the prisoners, there was originally

a general feeling of apathy among workers in the Corpo. That is until a small section of workers on one depot decided to build interest in the issue.

We started two weeks before the first march and got out a "Corpo Workers Against H Block" leaflet. During this period about half a dozen workers formed themselves into a proper group. We visited various depots and got the feeling of the men on the H Block issue. We met once a week to discuss the results and how to react.

Because of that work we got a substantial section of workers out for the first Dublin march—behind our banner. We tried to get a relative to go around but none was available to speak.

What happened on the Day of Action?

We had a meeting about the best tactic of getting our members out on strike. We decided to push for a 1½ hour stoppage and to assemble outside the GPO.

In Stanley Street, on the mechanical section, not only did they withdraw their labour, but they also handed in to management the exact reasons why they were striking and expressed their total support for the H Block Campaign. Two questions: Was it minority groups of workers who came out? And were there votes taken beforehand?

Yes it was minority sections that came out, no question of it. There were no votes taken. We knew we would have lost but we still felt we had a right to make our protest.

It's often said that workers in the

In the Corpo

South cannot be moved on the national question. What's your feeling on that?

During the year many workers would not bother talking about the North. But when something like H Block arose, they found they had something to say. That was a start. That was the consciousness we worked on. They said "we want to do something." It was our job as socialists to give that feeling a direction and a confidence to take action. **When you were pushing for industrial action on H Block, did you appeal for support because you were "fellow Irishmen" or on a working class basis?**

To be honest, we found ourselves at times having to appeal on a humanitarian basis—and it was effective up to a point.

But there was also a section who were very sympathetic to the argument that the prisoners were political prisoners—who landed up in jail because of the political situation in Northern Ireland.

We argued that as workers we could change the situation in the H Block dramatically. As workers we have the power to smash the Northern State that exists today.

Because of that approach we were victim of some red scare tactics—but that sort of thing could not be when there was real political interest in the matter.

More generally, the H Block Campaign showed that workers in the South can and will move over the National Question. But the limited response to the issue in Dublin shows that the political groundwork has not been done. Workers

do not rise up spontaneously on this issue—so you need proper organisation by socialists on the job. How do you think we should get on with that organising?

Any socialist on the job must first make real contact with other left-wingers and militants. From there we try to get regular meetings to discuss the particular issues and to try to find out the most realistic way of appealing for workers action. We shouldn't have any hair-brained scheme of believing that you stand up in a canteen one day and expect the members to follow you there and then.

A small point, maybe. I found the bulletin board very useful. When you put up a notice about a meeting or whatever, you'll always get conversation and an interest. If it's against you, at least you'll get the chance to argue your politics. **Why have you joined the Socialist Workers Movement?**

Two reasons. When you look at other parties' policies, the vast majority of them ultimately depend on reformist positions. No matter how radical they appear at the outset, when the existing government changes a little or compromises, they class it as a success. At the moment, you can be sure that there will be many on the left who will start grasping at straws from the Thatcher/Haughey talks.

Secondly, the SWM policy of direct intervention in strikes and its work for rank and file control of the unions is for me the only effective strategy.

We say

THERE ARE many lessons from the H Block/Armagh campaign. But we also need to look to the future.

The unity built around the hunger strike must be continued. We need to tackle the roots of the problem. It is an artificial state which creates those prisons. It is the British Army and the British presence which is the main prop of that state.

We need to organise to get them out. They will not be driven out through the present Provo campaign. Mass action shook the Brits during the last hunger strike campaign. It will take thousands more on the streets, thousands more on strike before we get them to withdraw. Its the only way.

That what we have to work for. A British withdrawal campaign that says clearly; Troops out Now. Get the British State out of Northern Ireland.

It can be built. The mass of people here distrust the British Army. They remember Derry 1972. They have seen the SAS in operation. They have heard the racist sneers of the British Upper class.

But many are also confused by a bloodbath argument—about what would happen if they withdrew. Short of joining the Provos which many won't—they're not so sure what they're going to do about it.

We can and must build a campaign that puts the arguments absolutely clear. A campaign that relies on the strength of the working class movement. A campaign that organises pickets of British Army barracks, demos to the British Embassy and strike action against their presence. As a first step we should push for trade union conference on the issue.

The Socialist Workers Movement will be arguing for this British Withdrawal campaign when the H Block Conference meets again in March.

WITHDRAWAL!

Won or lost?

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Unlike the British Army's role in Malaya, Aden, etc., the

lessons it learns on the streets of Belfast and Derry are directly relevant to its present and future role in Britain itself. The British Army's recent role during the firemen's strike and the local authorities strike is only a fraction of what the future holds.

For that reason also, it is important for the British working class to support the call for the withdrawal of the British Army.

The British Army has long been the enemy of the Irish working class, the future will prove to disbelievers that it is also the enemy of the British working class.

We failed on that score. We were politically outmanoeuvred by the Brits. They managed to impose a classical solution—they conceded improvements in the conditions of detention but maintained their absolute right to detain.

So why were we outmanoeuvred?

Firstly, the H Block campaign was not clear about its goals. The National H Block Committee insisted that we were fighting for five simple humanitarian demands—even when the thousands on the streets had gone far ahead. They were attempting to win over the liberals, the clergy, and the Fianna Failers. They never got their support in any active way. But the movement was confused when it came to the settlement. The Brits could point out that they had gone some way to meeting each demand.

In fact, those five demands never clearly amounted to political status. Take the issue of free association. The Brits told the prisoners they could associate freely in their cells for three and a half hours each evening. But they never agreed to recognise the command structure of the prisoners; they never agreed to allow them to maintain their own discipline and concede to them the right to organise inside the jails. So the Brits were able to use the basic ambiguity of the H Block campaign to manoeuvre their way through.

Secondly, we were still not strong enough. There was a fatal weakness in the campaign—the Southern working class. The wave of industrial action in the South was magnificent but it was often the minorities who came out on strike. In Dublin, the minorities were tiny.

What went wrong? Very simply the experience of Southern workers have changed. They do not move spontaneously on the H Block issue on purely nationalist appeals. They have been involved in large scale struggles against their own boss class. We need a clear political working class argument to win over those workers.

More than just argument. We need organisation. An organisation rooted in the factories, that is struggling on the day to day issues and which makes the political connection of why workers have a direct interest in the Northern struggle.

Thirdly, the hunger strike tactic has its own weaknesses. Hunger strikes start because the movement has failed. They attempt to substitute, to push forward the pressure. In that, they are successful up to a point. But they also take the control of the campaign from the strongest section—the mass movement outside and place it in the hands of the prisoners. The movement outside have no choice then but to accept the settlement.



the Corpo

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INDUSTRIAL NEWS

ITGWU versus ATGWU or workers v. bureaucrats

Ericsons boss ex union man

250 technicians from Marine Port and General Workers Union, are on strike at Ericsons for increased overnight travelling allowances. They install telephone exchange equipment.

They have placed official pickets on the main factory in Athlone where the ITGWU has instructed its members to pass. They are also picketing the main stores office in Pleasants Strand head office in Mount St. Dublin where some postal workers are refusing to pass.

They spend a lot of time away from home. One worker told us that he hasn't worked in Dublin for the past 6 years. They are claiming £120 a week overnight allowance to pay for guest house accommodation. The company has made a measly offer to top the present £69 allowance but tied it in with conditions which would make workers who travel a shorter distance worse off.

On the other side of the bargaining table they face a former union official of theirs—Tom Brady—who is now Personnel director.

Ericsons can't put on the poor mouth. In 1977 the company had orders of over £400m. on their books. Profits after tax for 77 were £81m. In early 1980 they secured a £10m order from Dept of Post and Telegraphs and a further £7m. order from the French company Cit/Alactel.

The strike could drag on and the workers need support. Send donations to The Strike Committee, c/o MPGW Head Office, Gardener Place, Dublin.

Frozen out at Unidare

On the night of 12/13 January at 5.00 am, the workers at Unidare Finglas stopp'd work because of the cold.

Previous stoppages over the cold had forced the company to install a new heating system, but it did not work effectively.

The company refused to meet stewards as they regarded the stoppage as "unofficial action."

The ITGWU would not make the dispute official unless there was a return to work.

The workers would not return until the factory was warm enough.

Finally, on the 14th, the weather was mild enough to allow work to resume and a Union official met management, who refused payment for time lost.

Unidare won't accept Tim Cahill the Rights Commissioner as a third party because they don't like a previous decision of his. Further time must be wasted, therefore at the Labour Court.

A 10-month-old basic pay claim by Unidare workers has been rejected by the Labour Court.

The only step left would be an official strike, but Liberty Hall is worried about the implications for the National Understanding.

A General Meeting is due and some form of unofficial action—a work to rule or overtime ban?—is likely to be the only way forward.

PMPA strike for procedure

1,000 IUDW workers at PMPA walked out in various parts of the country in protest at the suspension of five of their colleagues.

They had refused to handle 'disputed work'—insurance claims as distinct from motor claims, involving more responsibility.

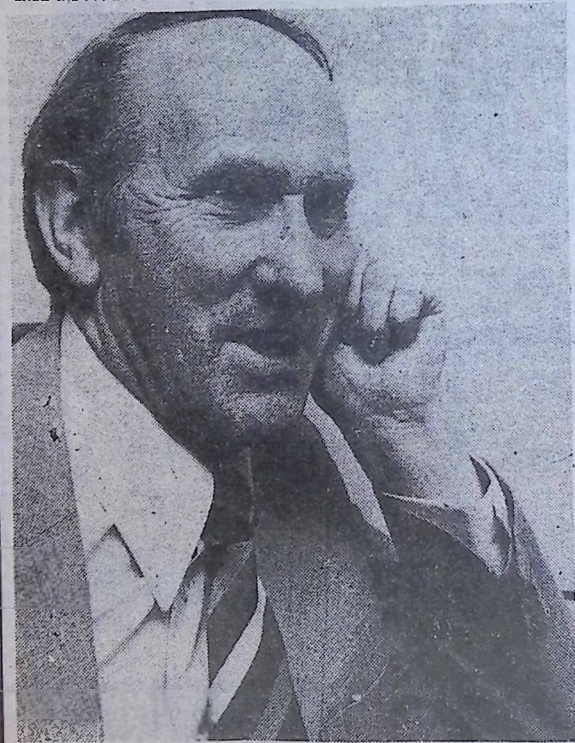
BY THE time you read this, it is just possible that the second biggest union in Ireland—the Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union—may have been suspended from Congress.

And if that were to happen, it could lead to a split in the trade union movement along North-South and British-Irish lines that would set back the cause of workers unity by decades.

If you are following the dispute between ATGWU and ITGWU in the paper—or listening to the ITGWU propaganda machine—you will be forgiven for thinking that the cause of it all is "nasty, militant, British Matt Merrigan stealing bewildered workers from nice, responsible, Irish Mickey Mullen".

The truth as always is very different. In order to find out the real story, The Worker talked to Pat Murphy, shop steward in Telecommunications in Dublin and the man who, according to the ITGWU "led a campaign of disruption" in the No. 13 Branch of the union. Pat is now Secretary of the ATGWU 11/114 Branch.

On the question of poaching members, Pat is emphatic: "This is just not the case. In every workplace under dispute, the members left the ITGWU and then approached the ATGWU to take them in.



Matt Merrigan, boss of the ATGWU

Management had ignored union rules of consultation regarding new work.

The strike was made official and pickets have been solid for 3 weeks. P.O workers have respected the picket and some members of the public. While the Company on one hand has said this is a minor dispute, they have sent what can only be called threatening letters to the workers, suggesting that although the Company will not suffer workers certainly could in loss of wages and bonus and 'perhaps in changed jobs when work was resumed'.

They also offered interest free loans and suggested other grievances that are under discussion should be adjourned until April 15 or later 'to enable good relations to be re-established'.

"In the ex-No. 13 Branch factories—Telecommunications, Kilroys and Data—we went first to AGEMOU.

"Then the ITGWU leaned on AGEMOU and they released us. So we approached ATGWU. The same with the other two workplaces—Tedcastles and Cork Regional Hospital—the workers democratically decided they wanted out of ITGWU and then approached ATGWU.

"Accusations of poaching are nonsense, designed to cover up the fact that large numbers of ITGWU members are dissatisfied with the union and want out."

Pat is also very clear on the reasons for that dissatisfaction.

"Bad service and no control by the ordinary members over the union are the reasons. The union is run by a bureaucracy of unelected full-timers. You can't control things yourselves either in the factory or in the Branch.

"We tried in No 13 Branch for years but all we got from Liberty

Compiled by
JOHN CANE

Hall was obstruction at best and outright attacks at worst. We were not anti-ITGWU, we wanted to change the union but the bureaucracy was too strong—they drove us out. You can't fight losing battles for ever.

"The only support we had was from New Liberty, the SWM and a few others, the rest of the left in the union all support the bureaucracy.

"Finally, we had to say that the most important thing was to find a union where we could control our own affairs at factory level. We think we've done that now. It's not ideal in ATGWU.

"Frankly, I think until we've got proper industrial unions in Ireland run by lay, elected and recallable officers from the bottom up, then there is always going to be problems.

UNTHINKABLE

"But for us anyway, it seems a hell of a lot easier in the ATGWU. For example, the dues are much lower so the Branch has a special levy and the members control that money, not the union. That would be unthinkable in the ITGWU."

The ATGWU may be more democratic, but their leadership—also unelected full-timers—seems to have taken the ITGWU dissidents into membership for their own reasons i.e. to attack the ITGWU. Does Pat Agree?

"That may well be true. Let's say our interests and theirs coincide at this time. But it's also a fact that the ITGWU has been getting away with murder in recruiting members in new IDA factories, and it's the workers in these factories that have been suffering as a result—because the ITGWU is the lowest bidder.

"For example, in Waterford, traditionally a militant ATGWU town, it's said that 40 new IDA factories on the industrial estate have gone to ITGWU in the last 15 years—ATGWU have attempted to get this sort of thing sorted out through congress but they prefer to turn a blind eye.

"Something has to be done about it but it's a separate issue to the one of accepting factories like ours into membership."

The argument is often heard that, whatever grievances union members may have, it should abide by Congress rules if they want to change unions, otherwise there will be "anarchy".

The Congress Rule in question

This did not take the workers in and they stuck it out!

Labour Court conciliation talks have been taking place for several days and proposals will be considered by the members at a meeting at Liberty Hall as we go to press.

Students vote left leaders

THE Annual Congress of the Union of Students in Ireland saw the election to office of Brendan Doris, a Marxist-Leninist, and Joe Duffy, active on student and other issues in TCD over the last few years.

The first step to democracy and a fighting organisation has been made. The stickies and their supporters, involved in consistent manoeuvring to keep control of the Union, have been routed.

But although the conference elected an apparently radical leadership, it failed to adopt many more radical policies supported by those elected—for example a woman's right to choose on the issue of abortion, and political status for the H Block/Armagh prisoners. Support for a militant fight against the cuts—which the new President says he will pursue—was doubtful at the conference.

The officers need to get out to the colleges to organise the fight and push for greater democracy in individual students unions.

Only the mass involvement of students in united action will keep the USI on the right track.



Michael Mullen, boss of the ITGWU.

is 47D which says, in effect, that no group of workers can move unless their present union agrees.

What does Pat think of the argument?

"47D is totally undemocratic. Congress usually interprets it that you need a hundred per cent before a move is on. We've got 100% in Telecommunications, so apparently ITGWU doesn't want us back.

"But in Kilroys, one member out of 40 stayed in ITGWU to get his 25 years silver badge, so ITGWU claims the whole lot and Congress backs them.

"It's ludicrous. I don't say anyone should change at will, 51% or two thirds maybe, would be democratic, but let's face it, you hardly ever get 100% of anything.

"I don't know what the eventual settlement of all this will be, probably some compromise will be patched up by the leaderships because of the consequences of kicking ATGWU out of Congress, but one thing is for sure they won't force us back into ITGWU.

"Congress rules are one thing, workers democratic rights are something else."

we say

ALL TRADE unions are workers organisations, built up by workers to defend their rights in the workplace and advance their interests. The trouble arises from the fact that no union is controlled by its members fully. To a greater or lesser degree they are all run by a bureaucracy which has different interests from those of the members.

The ITGWU is, unfortunately, among the most bureaucratic of the unions. It didn't start off that way in the days of Larkin and Connolly and there is nothing to say it must always remain the way it is.

If enough dissatisfied and militant members struggled hard and long enough, it could be changed. That struggle is not helped when some of the best members throw in the towel and leave for somewhat less bureaucratic unions.

It make the task of militants left that much harder.

That said, if groups of workers decide democratically that enough is enough—and this is the case with the workers in the current dispute—then nothing, including Congress rules, should prevent them from changing to the union of their choice.

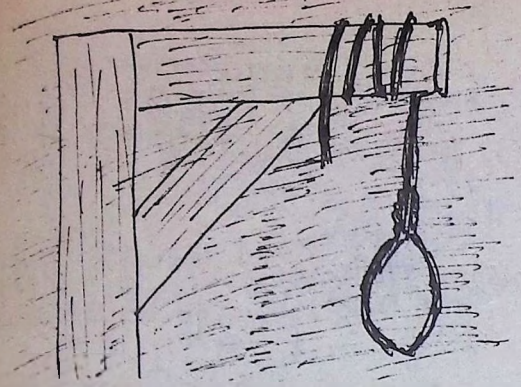
Obviously, this principle cannot extend to individuals or minority fragments, but a simple majority should decide the issue. 47D must go!

The point about union rights in new factories is not primarily one of which particular union should organise, but rather that the workers involved should be allowed time to negotiate their own conditions and choose their own union. The ITGWU monopoly is not allowing this to happen and should be broken, but not to be replaced with that of the ATGWU or any other union.

The playing of the "Irish Card" by the ITGWU leadership, backed by the media, in the dispute, must be condemned outright. Workers have nothing to gain by being controlled by Irish trade union bureaucrats rather than British, even if this were true in the case of the ATGWU, which it isn't.

The crucial point in all this is "Can the members control their union be it ITGWU or ATGWU, Irish or British, IDA-backed or not, big or small."

Union rationalisation, however welcome, is not the ultimate answer to the problem of the shop floor. Yes, we need a rational, united trade union movement, but built and controlled by the members from the bottom up, not imposed by the bureaucrats from the top down.



THE SHADOW OF THE ROPE

by PAT GANNON

AS WE go to press, three men are facing the possibility of being hanged for the murder of a Garda, which if it is carried out will be the first hanging in Ireland since 1954.

Ten years later in 1964 the present Taoiseach Charlie Haughey introduced into the Dail the Criminal Justice Act, which abolished the death penalty for any other offence than treason, certain wartime offences and four other categories, one of which is the murder of a Garda in the course of his duty.

The penalty is mandatory on conviction of such an offence.

One year earlier in 1963 during the Dail debate Brian Lenihan said:

"We are still in the position that we carry out what can only be described as Judicial Murder. I do not mind whether a man murders a policeman or an ordinary civilian. I maintain the punishment should be the same. There should be no discrimination. There should be no difference. I suggest the minister abolish the death penalty once and for all".

And Jim Tully of Labour said: "I oppose completely any idea that capital punishment is right... The only quarrel we can have [with the Minister] is that he did not say no more state executions. No more legalised murder in this country."

But today Mr Lenihan and Mr Tully are quite prepared to let the state carry out these executions.

Why? Because the circumstances surrounding the executions are different to 1963.

In 1981 special non-jury courts and heavy gangs are the order of the day. All are part of a repressive state apparatus, prepared to crush any opposition to its rule.

The argument against hanging is that there is no proof at all that murdering murderers stops murder, though those who advocate the death penalty will say that the number of murders have gone up since capital punishment was abolished in 1964.

This is true. It is also true that more crimes of every description have been committed since that

time. Manslaughter for instance—unintentional killing—, malicious wounding and rapes have increased by a far higher percentage than have murders, although none of these was capital offences.

Murder is very rare. More people are killed on the roads each year than are murdered.

It is also very largely a domestic crime. More than half the people indicted for murder each year have a familiar relationship and up to two thirds have a personal relationship of some duration and intensity with the victim.

As a result, the number of murders fluctuates violently from year to year. There is very little overall pattern because most murders are explained by upset personal relationships.

The type of murders committed show perfectly clearly that murder is not a crime from which people are deterred. That is why all the evidence shows that capital punishment makes no difference to the murder rate at all.

In USA some states have abolished capital punishment, some have not. There is no significant difference between the two.

These executions must be opposed on the grounds that legalised murder will not stop murder, that hanging is a most barbaric act.

The hangman Pierrepoint in a report to the Royal Commission in England in 1950 told how awkward a hanging can turn out to be.

There have been cases, he said, where the rope was fractionally long and the prisoners head came off.

And on every single occasion the hanged person's stomach salits and his bowels spill out beneath him.

In this particular case a lot of unanswered questions remain.

What were heavily armed gardai in plain cloths doing in the area? Wasn't it they who started shooting first?

Why was the case heard in a juryless political court?

Wouldn't the case stand up in any half way fair court of law?

Strumpet city

A NEW community journal recently hit the streets of Dublin. Going under the name of *Strumpet* it would appear to be the brainchild of people who have been politically active both inside and outside TCD in the last few years. It is an extremely professional production and good value at 30p.

However, if you are thinking of going out and getting a copy you will encounter difficulties. In a rather idealistic introduction to the new venture, readers are told that *Strumpet* will not be on sale in shops or from newspaper stands. This is apparently to create a unique relationship between seller/producer and buyer.

The magazine contains some excellent articles among the variety of topics covered—a very informative article on the army. The contradictions in what

army leaders actually agree should be the case on issues in the army and the reality are clearly brought out. This is cleverly done by interviewing both the army press officer and an ordinary soldier. The net result makes a mockery of the style of the present recruitment drive.

Recent developments in the underground drug scene are monitored in an article which points to the trends of big business and harder drugs. The heroin problem has increased dramatically in the last couple of years resulting in large numbers of addicts among working class children. It argues that drugs are a political issue and no longer just a question of some well-to-do kids smoking pot.

On the question of what the journal is trying to achieve, you are inclined to get the impression that the people involved will face a major problem very

much of their own making. That is the difficulty of sustaining such a venture with the very loose type of format and organisation claimed on the opening piece.

The fact is that an organisation or party is necessary in order to ensure success on the issues raised rather than merely focusing attention on them. Granted they may see their function as the latter and at this they are doing an extremely good job. Unfortunately, the notable exception was that of addressing trade unionists, the most potent force for change in society.

Nevertheless, *Strumpet* is of very high quality and a really good read. If you come into contact with it—buy it!

A subscription can be had for a cheque /PO for £2 from *Strumpet*, 19 Westland Row, Dublin 2.

Irish economy

by DES DERWIN

IN a dependant, open economy like Ireland with import prices—which Irish labour costs do not affect—rising faster than export prices, the ailments of the world economy are magnified here.

RATE OF PROFIT ON GROSS HOLDINGS OF INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND FINANCIAL COMPANIES IN JAPAN.

YEAR	BEFORE TAXES
1963	12.5%
1964	12.8%
1965	11.9%
1966	12.4%
1967	14.0%
1968	14.7%
1969	14.3%
1970	14.7%
1971	14.2%
1972	13.0%
1973	10.9%
1974	11.9%

[Source: OECD McCracken report, June 1977]

What is the race? The race identified by Marx is "the Accumulation of Capital". But the accumulation of capital itself means further drops in the long-term rate of profit.

So it is really a crazy system going nowhere.

You may well ask, how such a crazy system has held together for so long, especially in the boom years after the 1939-45 war when when such an eminent Marxist as Leon Trotsky had predicted its final collapse in a sea of working class socialist revolution.

Well, one explanation for this is that a booming arms race carried on even when the war was over generating jobs and incomes and stabilising the system.

This "permanent arms economy" had the effect of drawing out of the economy vast amounts of wealth—in the form of hugely expensive missile systems and the like—to be stockpiled.

This reduced the build up of value in the system and slowed the tendency for the rate of profit to fall.

One specific part of the Irish inflation equation is often overlooked, the deliberate decision to join the EMS and the resulting drop in the value of the Irish pound.

Imports to be paid in dollars, and (including oil) and in sterling (including coal) have to be paid for with more punts.

Apart from the industrial and agricultural recessions, the most talked about prices is the crisis of state and government finances.

The financial crisis is related to the recession, the underdevelopment of Irish industry, the population bulge and how the government deals with these. Security spending is also a factor.

To finance the deficit between government income and expenditure last year money was borrowed to the extent of 14% of gross national product.

The economists are screaming for spending cuts and predicting the direct intervention of the inter-

the crisis

national money-lenders. The academics and the politicians agree on one thing: it is CURRENT expenditure (the daily running of the public service, schools, health, welfare, public sector pay) that they want to cut.

CAPITAL expenditure (grants to private industry, big projects, infrastructure) and the borrowing to finance it are tolerable because they hold out the prospect of a profitable return in the future. What galls them is that CURRENT spending takes up half the borrowing.

The establishment's explanation of the financial crisis—which they blame on the "high" expectations of the masses—fits their remedy for cutting current and social spending. Paddy Geary, a UCD economist, recently described the PAYE demos and the National Understanding as a blow to government's attempts to reduce borrowing and said of the great marches of January 80 that they show how

many had been attracted to the belief in a (foreign funded) "free lunch" (Magill Jan 81).

The kitty is empty they say. But they forget who ar what empties the kitty, and they forget about the untapped kitties.

For every £1 collected in taxes 25p now goes on interest payments—that's money for nothing—to Irish and foreign bankers. Putting it another way, the entire PAYE tax revenue, every penny stopped from your wage packet is being handed to the international rich.

The 26 County state is now spending more per head on security related to the troubles than the British government. That is, money to maintain the Northern state. What about the untapped kitties? Last year the PAYE sector paid 86% of all income tax. Companies paid 1/6th of this. In 1979 manufacturing companies paid £17 in corporation tax and got £80 from the IDA plus other state incentives. So, who is having the free lunch? Cement Roadstone paid 4.2% tax on its profits and Carroll Industries paid 1%.

The Government's intentions this year, as seen from the financial Estimates, follows their intentions for last year. Their desire to axe public sector pay was frustrated last year by teachers' and nurses' militancy. But non-pay current spending (affecting the poorest sections of the population) was budgeted for a 5% increase while inflation was running at 18%. This year the target is to increase current non-pay expenditure by 3% while inflation is predicted at 15%.

Cash set aside for Social Welfare has been dropped by £17 million compared to last year.

However the coming General Election will mean a cynical "soft" Budget. Whoever gets in will unleash the slashers in a probable Autumn Budget. Take away the Election (and the strength of our unions) and the state is in a position to deliver many of the cuts demanded by the bourgeois economists. Yet the gimmicky "Investment Plan '81" involves a rise of about one half on last years CAPITAL programme.

The pressure will be on this year: on wages, jobs and the social services. When workers protect their wages by demanding more outside the National Understanding they must be supported through the trade union movement, even when denounced by union leaders. The hints of a fight back against unemployment can be seen in the sit-ins at Pierces (Wexford), C. Plast (Galway) and Massey-Ferguson (Dublin). Hospital Workers, teachers and local authority workers can resist reduced services and redundancies.

The unorganised social welfare recipient and unemployed worker could be mobilised if there was a concerted campaign on these issues by the trade union movement with which they could join in.

World slump

by JIM BLAKE

IF you've been thinking that the slump has anything to do with those few days you had off sick from work or the amount of money you squandered over the Christmas holiday, forget it.

The crisis is one of overproduction, that is, too many goods unsold, and one way of looking at that is to say that workers have been working too hard.

We live in a world where the ideas that are accepted by the vast majority are those ideas that best serve the capitalist class. And so the explanations given for the crisis, seek to blame workers—"the National Wage Settlement was much too high" or alternatively—"It all started with the Arab countries putting up the price of oil back in '73."

These events are but the surface phenomena of deeper rumblings within the international economy, rumblings which Marx identified in an apparently abstract way over 100 years ago.

Marx's "abstractions" however are becoming increasingly the object of study by more academics as "conventional" or "positive" economics fails to provide any lasting analysis.

Marx showed that there was a dilemma for capitalists in introducing new technology, plant and equipment for, in the long run, the rate of profit falls.

Yet capitalists are forced by competition with each other to constantly update this plant—known as constant capital.

The only way they could prevent the rate of profit from falling would be to increase the rate of exploitation.

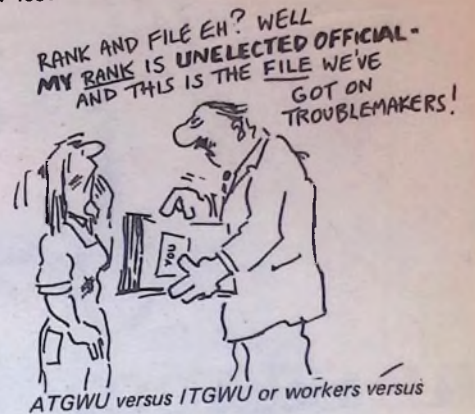
This they tried to do but wonder of wonders, workers have learnt through better organisation in unions, to resist this.

So the rate of profit falls.

Of course, it is true that Japan in 1980 for the first time ever, produced both more cars and more steel than the USA, but this only means that Japanese capitalists are relatively better ahead in the race.

THE WORKER

FOR WORKERS POWER AND INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM



ATGWU versus ITGWU or workers versus bureaucrats, page 6.

START A REAL PRICE WAR

"THIS IS madness, we are having budgets every few days." That's how Sr. Stanislaus of the National Poverty Committee reacted to the price increases in bread and flour announced on January 17.

Coming behind price increases in petrol, oil, coal and gas and just ahead of rises in milk poultry, cheese, electricity, bus and train fares and meat, many workers must now be realising how bad a deal the National Understanding was.

The National Misunderstanding gives wage rises of 15% + £1.00 for 15 months between October 1980 and November '81 inclusive.

The worker on £68.33 in September will receive 17.4% altogether, and he/she on £181.50 will get 16.2%.

Prices went up by 18% in 1980 - a twelve month period, while the National Understanding has to tie us over a 15 month period with prices zooming at similar rates.

Fuel, food and public transport price-hikes hit the poor, low paid and unemployed the most.

The non-pay clauses of the monumental mis-Understanding would make great material for joke books.

But the laugh is on the unemployed: Congress leaders negotiated such clauses as clause 7 which provided for 31,000 new jobs last year and allowed for 24,000 job losses - a net job gain of 7000 for 1980.

RESTRAINT

We delivered wage restraint. Did it affect unemployment and prices?

No, because wages have little to do with inflation - a sickness of the capitalist system - despite the constant assertion by our "betters" that we are living "beyond our means."

Take the petrol and oil rises, which will lead to further rises on almost everything else.

The oil giants have raised prices by 6-11p a gallon on petrol, with at least another 4-5p on the way.

In 1979 the international profits of Texaco rocketed by 101% from £444million to £848m; Shell by 181% (£1086m to £3051m) BP's by a staggering 256% from £444m to £1621m.

The (still unsettled) claim that led to last year's oil strike would have increased the price of a gallon by a mere 1/4p. The price of petrol cannot be blamed solely on the oil sheiks. North sea oil is sold at world prices, as will Irish oil.

One of the major factors in the latest oil and petrol increases was the weakness of the Irish Pound.

The subsidiaries pay for their oil in dollars. The lower the Punt falls against the dollar, the more punts the companies have to pay for a barrel of oil.

But what causes a weak punt? Two things, both entirely out of the control of Irish workers. One was the decision to join the European Monetary System - EMS and break the link with sterling, which is strong against the dollar.

Did you vote to join the EMS? No, indeed. "Democracy" doesn't extend to important decisions like that!

But what causes the punt or sterling or the dollar to go up and down in value like that?

The second thing is the international bankers, speculating on money, constantly buy and sell different currencies raising and lowering their values according to these gambling fluctuations.

In January of last year, Kellogg's ceased the manufacture of corn flakes here, chopping 200 jobs with scarcely a murmur from the unions, to achieve "economies of scale" by centralising production in Swansea.

It was merely a profit-boosting exercise, but while it cut costs for Kellogg's the price of cornflakes has leapt by 28% since then for the Irish shopper.

This was a direct result of the shift when the Prices Commission granted Kellogg's British wholesale prices plus a 13% surcharge to compensate for depreciation of the Irish Pound.

MONOPOLY

Coal is now £90 a ton outside Dublin. When the coal monopoly Coal Distributors Ltd, was established it did not lead to "economies of scale" either but to a monopoly of coal supply and coal doubled in price between 1972 and 74.

That's only part of the story. The Sunday Tribune recently described how the coal, which is all Polish, gets to Dublin.

"All orders have to go through Hamiltons of London, a private



Smurfits have announced that they do not intend to pay the second phase of the National Understanding to some of their workers. They have also closed the Bush television factory with a loss of 165 jobs, while Shyster Smurfit has bought out the Alton Box Co. in America for over £15M, as well as the phone service in Ireland.

firm which acts as sellers agents for the Polish exporting company, and presumably gets its rake off.

"And the Polish coal is first bought by each of the Big Five (Irish) companies which in turn sell it to Coal Distributors".

Most of the coal is carried on ships owned by Hamiltons! As the Tribune also says:

"At a time when Poland is desperately short of even food supplies surely a direct government to government deal could be done on bulk coal supplies to this country?"

But apparently the Government would rather leave the monopoly and middlement to fleece us while they blame wage claims for inflation.

What can we do about price rises? Our strongest and most direct defence against inflation is our organised ability to lodge and fight for pay claims to compensate for the price rises.

But that is exactly what national pay deals are designed to prevent. The recent rush of prices make it inevitable that groups of workers will seek rises in breach of the National Understanding.

The employers - who consider the NU "too high", and the trade union leaders will resist any action to back these claims.

A real fight back can only develop if sections on strike receive solidarity from the wider trade union movement, whether or not the strikes are official.

The demand of the Dublin Trades Council, among others, for a subsidy on food and fuel prices, needs to be backed up by more than speeches.

An active campaign by that body

could provide a focus for protest by pensioners, consumers and women's groups and along the way show that the trade union movement is the best ally of the shopper.

The big supermarket chains have just begun a "price war" Not to control prices, but to wipe out their competitors so that the victors will have a free hand to charge as they please.

Only action by OURSELVES, the working people can ensure that our living standards are not eaten away by rocketing prices.

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