

Socialist Worker

For a Workers Republic and International Socialism

Promises, promises from the...

ANGLO-IRISH HYPOCRITES

THE QUESTION of whether the Anglo-Irish Agreement is "working" dominates political debate in the North and seems set to be a central issue in the forthcoming general election in the South.

From the socialist point of view it is the wrong question.

The purpose of the Agreement—negotiated between two right-wing, anti-working class governments—is to make a number of political adjustments in the way capitalism runs Ireland. The intention was to isolate the IRA by a combination of increased repression and minor concessions to the Catholic minority—and at the same time to re-assure Protestants that "Ulster" would stay British as long as they wanted it to.

If this scheme "worked" — so Thatcher and FitzGerald hoped — it would produce political stability for the first time in almost two decades. And that's something that the Tories and the Coalition, faced with a deepening recession and mass unemployment North and South, are desperately anxious to achieve.

But it's not something workers should aspire towards. It would be achieved at the expense of the working class. Continued mass unemployment, dire poverty and vicious repression would still be the lot of tens of thousands of workers while the bosses, North and South, would be strengthened.

In the event, the Agreement is not "working" anyway. The strength of sectarian, Loyalist reaction has prevented the British coming through with the promised reforms and the Anglo-Irish "process" has ground almost to a halt.

Once again an attempt by Britain to reform the sectarian State which they themselves established, armed and financed, is foundering.

Meanwhile the trade union movement calls officially for unity with



The hypocrites: Spring, FitzGerald, Thatcher, Hume and Haughey.

the bosses themselves against the increase in sectarian violence which the Agreement has triggered, while most "left" groups in the North do a Pontius Pilate act by condemning sectarian Loyalist killers and the IRA

equally.

Socialists should steer clear of all Hillsborough hypocrisy. Sectarianism must be attacked at its root, and it is rooted in the existence of the Northern State itself which has

defied all efforts at reform. Attempts by the ICTU or anyone else to avoid this reality are doomed to failure.

Only by fighting for a British withdrawal and a united socialist

Ireland can the "Northern problem" be solved in the interests of the working class.

And to do that we need a revolutionary party based clearly on the interests of the working class.

Black hole robs workers

INTEREST RATES have risen by 4% in recent weeks. For an average worker with a £20,000 mortgage, his/her interest repayments will rise by £60 a month. Higher interest rates also mean higher prices and higher inflation.

Why is this happening? One thing is for sure, it's not the fault of the working class.

In fact, vast sums of money are being moved illegally out of the 26 Counties. In the four months to the end of September £500 million disappeared. Earlier in the year, £900 million had vanished.

This represents one half of the entire national savings.

The disappearance of this money has created a major problem for the Coalition in raising money simply to operate the State. Normally they borrow from the Irish rich by selling government stocks. Up to a month ago, these parasites got nine and a half

percent return on these stocks.

Since, obviously, this wasn't big enough to keep the money at home, the Coalition raised interest to a whopping 14 percent. But even that wasn't enough to satisfy the greed of the rich. Financial journalist Ken O'Brien wrote: "Such is the lack of confidence in lending to the Irish Government that the Dept. of Finance cannot find the money at home to finance the £2,000 million it needs a year."

Instead, the Coalition has had to turn increasingly to the international bankers in Tokyo, New York etc.

This flight of hot money should not be confused with the activities of multinationals which have for long been expatriating profits to create what economists call a "black hole". We now have Black hole mark 2 - the creation of our own brand of Green Tories.

The reason for the flight of money is complex. Some are

shifting it around to take advantage of another devaluation of the Irish punt. Prices for the working class will rise with another devaluation - but the Irish speculators will make a fortune.

But the money is also being moved to put direct pressure on the government. Last year the Coalition introduced a very modest DIRT tax. Up to then, private speculators were entitled to make a fortune in untaxed interest from the banks, building societies and others in total secrecy. The tax won't cost them much - but it would have revealed who some of the speculators were. From January to August of this year a huge drop of £500 MILLION occurred in bank and building society savings, much of it obviously flowing abroad via Black hole mark 2.

The flight also shows up a very simple message from the Irish rich to FitzGerald: 'your time is up'. The fact that they

refuse to loan the government money even at huge rates of interest shows a lack of confidence in the Coalition's ability to drive down working class living standards.

It is now Haughey's turn to have a go: and in Cork last month Haughey promised to abolish the DIRT tax once he re-gains office.

Socialists should learn a very simple lesson from these events. The real power in this country is the rich. No parliamentary government can control their activities. Even though the money was moved out illegally by breaking exchange controls, economists are now calling for the abolition of the exchange controls themselves.

It is continually the same message: get on your knees to the wealthy and give them more. Some day they might even 'provide jobs'.

The only way we stop these parasites is through the revolutionary movement of the working class. Parliament can never control their greed.



Did you ever wonder about state visits? Yes! State visits, where kings, queens, presidents and other assorted dignitaries fly to strange and exotic places, make speeches, eat and drink the local produce and lay wreaths on tombs of soldiers they never knew and care less about. It can't be that they just like doing that kind of thing.

For those of you who have been wondering about these

strange affairs, we can reveal that it has all to do with Trade. Take Elizabeth Windsor's trip to China for example. As part of her going away presents she expects to have contracts for a \$1 billion steel plant, a sewage scheme for Shanghai, a thermal power plant and a port development.

Nice holiday souvenirs.

Three card trick

CONTRACT labour firm Irish Construction Development Services (ICDS) went bust in July owing three-quarters of a million pounds. This was after the IDA had approved £1.58 million "international services programme" and had already sunk £361,731 in capital, training and employment grants.

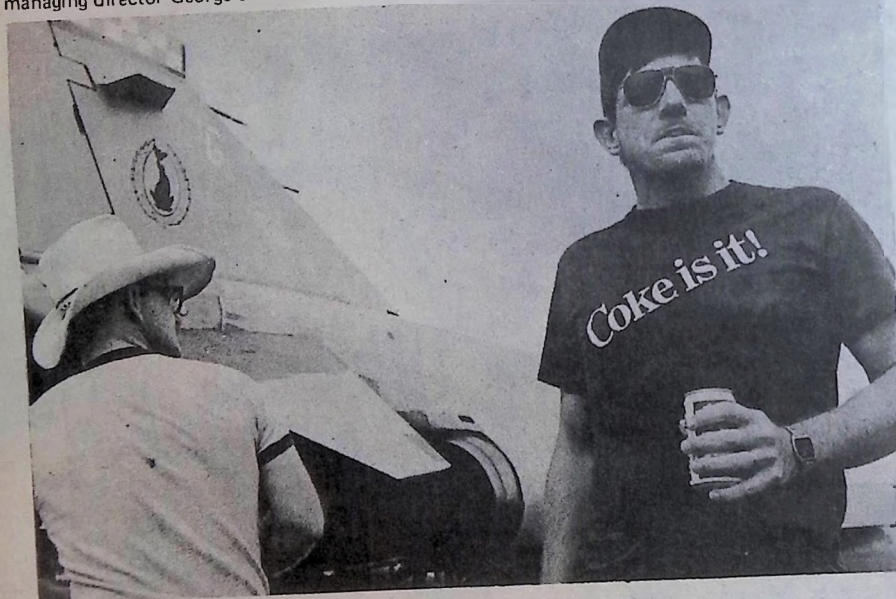
Bad news all round. Except, that is, for ICDS's founder and managing director George Lee.

He managed to buy a subsidiary, ICDS Construction, which trades in Holland, and to take over two lucrative contracts formally held by the bankrupt parent company, all for a knockdown £25,000.

But didn't the liquidator object to this rip-off of creditors' assets? No, the liquidator, David Hughes of KMG-Reynolds McCarron, was himself nominated by ICDS (managing director George

Lee!)
Nice one George.

"A confidential report by the National Economic and Social Council, yet to be published, says that 20 percent of the workforce will be unemployed by 1990, emigration will continue to rise and the Government will find it hard to balance the books" - Business and Finance, 14th August 1986.



International links exposed!

The American undercover operation against Nicaragua was revealed with the shooting down of Eugene Hasenfus in a Contra supply plane. Hasenfus admitted that the CIA had helped to organise the Arms supplies.

One of the CIA gun runners is Max Gomez. Mr. Gomez is not without some very important friends. One of them includes the U.S. Vice President, George Bush. Bush had met him in El Salvador. According to Bush

'His role was to help El Salvador put down an insurrection - put down a Marxist Revolution. It is the policy of the U.S. government to support that. This man having served in Vietnam is an expert at that.'

Now the Contras have also won some Irish friends. A recent report in the Irish Press showed that Hasenfus plane was chartered by one General Singlaub. Singlaub is a fanatical right winger who runs an organisation called

The World Anti-Communist League. The League recently brought over two Fine Gael T.D.'s, Alice Glenn and Brendan McMahon on an expenses paid all-in trip to Taiwan and Dallas. Now Glenn and McMahon have decided to set up an Irish branch of the League.

Next time Glenn lectures us on the dignity of human life and the family, remember her connections with General Singlaub, supporter of the murdering Contra gangsters.



CLINICS THREAT

A DECISION will be handed down this month in the case taken by SPUC in the Dublin High Court against the Well Woman Centre and Open Line Counselling. SPUC wants the clinics closed down because they include abortion referral in the range of options offered to pregnant women seeking advice.

The legal case argued was highly complex but at one point the judge unwittingly put his finger on the central issue, when he asked whether it was not true that women would go to back-street abortionists if these clinics didn't exist.

He was right. Women who are pregnant and don't want to be have always gone to great lengths to get abortions. Better off women have gone to private hospitals or Harley Street clinics. It's working class women who have had to resort to the back street.

Abortion is totally illegal in the 26 Counties. Well Woman and Open Line have given Irish women access to the cheapest and safest abortions available. It's overwhelmingly working class women who will suffer if the clinics are closed down.

For as long as abortion is illegal under Irish law, Irish women must have the right of access to the cheapest and safest abortions available elsewhere.

FEED THE BANKS

After all the hype and noise of Live Aid, at last the truth of the situation is filtering out. But don't expect to see banner headlines, television interviews, records or whatever, for these are facts which those in control would not consider newsworthy.

In the 1985 famine emergency, voluntary and governmental aid totalled £2,500 million. Yet in that same year the famine stricken countries paid the Western banks, financial institutions and governments a cool £5,000 million in debt repayments.

Self-Aid indeed!



PEACEKEEPER

Justice on this island can be a strange animal indeed. Consider these two cases which were tried on the very same day.

Case 1: One legged man assaults a woman in Dublin as she was depositing money in a bank night safe. Sentence - 12 months in prison

Case 2: Four able bodied members of the Black Watch

Regiment armed with a screw driver and pickaxe handle set off from the Crossmaglen army base with the objective of 'doing over a local.' Their victim was stabbed in the back, punched and kicked as he lay on the ground. Sentence - ordered to pay victim £600 compensation.

Some justice! But then the four were peacekeepers!

WALL'S BRICK



Arthur Walls

Ryanair has given 10% of its shares to their staff. The purpose of this exercise is clear - to encourage them to be good little girls and boys. At a booze-up to celebrate

this Mr. Arthur Walls, chairman of the company, made a speech clapping himself on the back for this wonderful gesture. He went on to point out that the staff had not had to 'do anything to receive the shares.' Mr. Walls must surely be aware that to get the shares the staff had to work for Mr. Walls and Ryanair. In fact, the company would cease to exist if they stopped working. The staff are only getting a small fraction of what is due to them - the rest goes to line the pockets of Mr. Wall and his cronies.

It seems to us that Mr. Walls, to avoid making such rash statements in the future, should attend a few SWM educationals on basic Marxism.

WE THINK

SF, Marxism and Leinster House

THE evident majority in Sinn Fein for ending abstentionism has been presented as a victory for the "New Left" within the Republican Movement, and a defeat for the "Old Right".

There is an obvious sense in which this is true. By any normal political criterion the supporters of change such as Gerry Adams, Rita O'Hare and Martin McGuinness stand farther to the left than, say, Sean Mac Stiophain or Ruairi O Bradaigh. The move towards Leinster House has been accompanied by a move away from a mystical reverence for the symbols of traditional Republicanism and is part and parcel of a greater concentration on real day-to-day social and economic issues. Any serious socialist must welcome this change.

Nevertheless, the contention of Mac Stiophain and O Bradaigh that by ending abstentionism Sinn Fein runs the risk of becoming "just another Leinster House party" has a grain of truth which troubles even some of those fully in favour of the change. To put this in perspective it is necessary to look briefly at the history of the abstentionist tactic.

Abstentionism developed as part of the strategy promoted by Arthur Griffith as early as 1905 and adopted by Sinn Fein going into the 1918 Westminster election. Republicans elected in that poll refused to take their seats and those not in prison met instead in Dublin and constituted themselves as "Dail Eireann".

After the Treaty of 1922 those Sinn Feiners who held firm to the Republican ideal boycotted Leinster House on the ground that Leinster House wasn't the Republican

parliament they had sworn allegiance to. At that time there was considerable doubt whether Leinster House would manage to establish itself as a viable parliament at all. The North was in chaos, the anti-Treaty forces controlled considerable areas of the 26 Counties and tens of thousands of people gave no recognition to the new Treaty institutions.

POPULATION

In that situation Republican calls on the population at large to see Leinster House as an empty charade were not unrealistic. But within a short time—certainly by 1924—the pro-Treaty forces, with the help of British guns and murderous repression, had crushed resistance and firmly established Leinster House as the effective parliament of the 26 County area.

Ever since, and increasingly, the traditional Republican argument that recognition of Leinster House is a form of "treason" has been based not on any analysis of the political realities but on a spiritual appeal to history. The arch-opportunist De Valera was one of the first to see the writing on the wall.

It is not history, but people, which confers "legitimacy" on parliaments. And the overwhelming majority of people in the 26 Counties have long come to accept Leinster House. From the revolutionary socialist as well as the Republican point of view this might be a pity. But there it is.

Looked at like this the question whether a party takes seats in a parliament is a question of tactical judgment, not a matter of principle.

And the question whether a party will "sell out" its principles as a result of taking seats depends on what those principles are based on.

To argue in 1986 for continued allegiance to the First Dail might seem pretty daft. But historically abstentionism has succeeded in doing one important thing. It prevented the Republican Movement being incorporated into the corrupt politics of the bourgeois State. And O Bradaigh has a point when he argues that, down through the decades, those who did peel off from the Republican Movement to enter Leinster House crossed over to the side of the establishment as soon as they darkened the door.

QUESTION

The question is: why did this happen? It's not good enough to argue—true though it is—that some of those involved (De Valera being the most obvious example) were disgustingly unprincipled individuals to begin with. Much more important was the fact that, frequently, there was little dividing the Republican Movement from the Leinster House parties *except* the question of Leinster House's "legitimacy". So once they accepted that, they were well on the way to accepting the lot.

And that immediately poses the most important question of all: is there something about the politics of the present Republican leadership which will prevent them going the same way?

Again, this has nothing to do with the personal integrity of the people concerned. The relevant truth is that the present Republican leadership, notwithstanding the



Gerry Adams canvassing in Dublin's slums

significant shift to the left in recent years, of which the dropping of abstentionism is part, is still seeking a 32-County State before it contemplates moving on towards socialism. Obviously, Fianna Fail goes along with the first "stage" in this process. That's what provided a basis for Gerry Adams's suggestion a year ago of talks with Haughey about how to proceed towards a united Ireland.

Whether abstentionist or anti-abstentionist, what Republicans do not have is a socialist attitude to Leinster House.

REPRESENTS

Socialists aren't much concerned about the exact historical circumstances in which the institution emerged. What matters is what it represents now.

Leinster House is simply one of the mechanisms by which the capitalist ruling class runs the Free State. It is perfectly possible for socialists to enter such a parliament in order to undermine it and the class society it represents. The Russian Bolsheviks sat for a time in a capitalist parliament.

But it is not possible to undermine Leinster House with non-socialist politics. And it is not possible to undermine it even if you do have socialist politics but believe

—as the Republican leadership does—that the time is not yet ripe for clear-cut socialist struggle.

A socialist presence in Leinster House would be there to represent and to amplify the voice of a movement outside based on the working class, seeking to give leadership to the working class in its day-to-day struggles and openly proclaiming its ultimate aim of overthrowing the rule of the capitalist class which at a political level is organised through the same Leinster House. Only that perspective can guarantee that those who enter a capitalist parliament will not be tugged eventually into becoming part of the capitalist process.

It is because the Republican Movement does not analyse Free State society and its institutions in clear class terms, and doesn't base itself openly and specifically on the working class interest only, that the dropping of abstentionism—welcome as it is as a reflection of the move leftwards—does have dangers for those Republicans who genuinely want to be part of a full-hearted socialist movement.

In a phrase, the problem is not which attitude to abstentionism is properly Republican. The problem is located in Republicanism itself.

The Socialist Workers' Movement will welcome any opportunity to debate these ideas with Republicans.

Phoney work for jobless youth

WE DON'T want Youth Training and Government Schemes. We want real jobs now!

These are the feelings of young people in the Six Counties today. But they are being pushed aside and ignored.

In the last financial year there were 34,465 people on government schemes. The majority of these were teenagers. These schemes are aimed at young people not because the government are concerned about youth unemployment but because they realise that young people are the most vulnerable section of society when it comes to accepting low paid jobs. Young people from working class families cannot afford to remain at school, therefore they leave to find work. Unable to find employment they are faced with years on the dole and have no choice but to join the Y.T.P. They are paid £27.30 per week. A person on such low

wages cannot have a home of their own and is forced to live with their family whether they like it or not. The ruling class have therefore created a way of controlling and oppressing young people.

Under the Youth Training Scheme, employers can employ seventeen year olds and be given a grant of £25 per week for each person for one year. It is claimed that a training plan is set down for the employer to follow in training the young person. As someone in this situation I can say that that is a total lie. Employers are not interested in the education and training of young people. They simply use them as cheap labour and in most cases replace them in one year when the grant is no longer paid. Most employers pay little more than the standard £25 per week. Even if they wished to pay a decent wage the terms of the grant state that no one can earn over £50 per week. This amount

includes overtime and bonus and is subject to national insurance. No trainee is allowed to do less than 38 hours per week, which means that those trainees doing the minimum hours for £25 per week are being paid just under 66p per hour.

The cost to the government last year to run all the training and Government employment schemes in Northern Ireland was £78 million. Compared with creating real jobs, this is a very cheap way of taking people off the dole queues and reducing the official unemployment figures.

CLAIMED

It is claimed by those who support the Y.T.P. schemes that unemployment in the 16-19 age groups has fallen. In July 1981 24,079 people in this age group were unemployed in Northern Ireland.

In July 1986 that figure was officially 17,615.

This figure is deliberately misleading because if you include the people who are now in Y.T.P. schemes this figure would show a large increase in teenage unemployment. In all other age groups unemployment has increased at a staggering rate.

Young people know that Y.T.P. is a con and is of no benefit to them. They should all support any campaign to change the schemes and improve them. But they must realise that youth unemployment and Y.T.P. schemes are not just individual problems which can be reformed and made better for young people. They are symptoms of something which seeks to exploit and oppress all working class people regardless of age: The Capitalist State. LIAM MAILEY



Nothing on offer

THE TRADE union leadership has yet again refused to challenge the sectarianism of loyalist workers.

The Northern Ireland Committee of the ICTU has called a special delegate Conference for Sat. 25th Oct. to which they have invited 150 community groups as well as affiliated trade unions. The theme of the Conference is opposition to "violence, intimidation and sectarianism"

We go to press just before the Conference but the 'Statement of principles' issued by NICCTU makes it clear that this Conference is NOT about opposing the sectarianism of loyalist workers and fighting for working class unity. Instead the 'Statement of principles' is little more than a collection of pious moralisms and empty rhetoric.

No distinction is made between the sectarian violence of UVF/UFF thugs against those who just happen to be Catholics and the violence of the IRA against the forces of sectarianism and of British imperialism. On the other hand, the violence and intimidation of the UDR, RUC and British army are not mentioned at all, despite recent reports of widespread intimidation of the nationalist community by the British army and the RUC.

The whole emphasis of the Statement is moralistic. Paramilitary violence is condemned without any examination far less condemnation, of the conditions which bred that violence.

It's certainly far easier for the NICCTU leadership to pretend that the Provos have promoted sectarianism; it saves them from squaring up to their loyalist members and placing the blame for IRA violence where it lies — with the sectarianism and intimidation of the Orange state and its British masters.

One has only to look at the history of the Six County state to confirm this. In 1919 over 11,000 Catholics were driven from the shipyards, engineering firms and linen mills of Belfast. Hundreds of

NICTU CONFERENCE SKIRTS REAL ISSUE



Fails to confront Loyalism

Catholics were burnt out of their homes in Belfast; in Banbridge and Dromore the attacks were so bad that ALL Catholic families fled the two towns.

By the 1930s there were again 200 Catholics working among the 4,000 strong workforce in Harland and Wolff. The day after the 12th July holiday in 1935, those Catholics were expelled and Catholic girls forced out of the linen mills around York Street and the Crumlin Rd.

The Provos were established in 1970. The sectarianism and violence in the Six Counties in 1986 does not come from them. It comes from the same place that it came in 1919, 1935, 1939 and 1969 — that is from the Orange state and British imperialism. This is a fact which is totally ignored by NICCTU's campaign.

Skirting the issue of the loyalism of the protestant working class is not in the interests of working class unity. But then the statement does not mention the working class at all, far less the notion of unity of that class.

It does not appeal to Protestant workers to recognise that their interests do not lie in loyalism — which is in their bosses' interests — but in unity with their Catholic fellow workers.

Rather than arguing clearly what the class interests are and how those interests can be advanced, the Statement uses the arguments frequently used by politicians and bosses against workers. "Intimidation is industrial suicide" reads one of the posters. "Grave concern has also been expressed at the negative impact on customer confidence and export orders due to the present unrest" says the Statement.

NICTU appeals to the Churches "to bring home to their members the inhumanity of violence" and sectarianism. Employers and their organisations are asked to "do all they can to promote a positive response in their places of work" and the government — yes, the government — is seen to have a role in ending violence by giving a "positive commitment to"...a Bill of Rights!



NICTU is right about the need for a campaign to fight sectarianism and intimidation. But that fight *must* begin in workplaces like Shorts or Harland and Wolff where there is continuing massive discrimination against Catholics. There has never been such a campaign in the trade unions. Instead we had the "Better Life for All" campaign in the 70s. Almost ten years after that campaign the Boilermakers Union was found guilty not just of condoning discrimination against Catholic workers but of themselves operating sectarian recruitment procedures which were keeping Catholics out of jobs in the heavy engineering industry.

Unity among workers is absolutely necessary if we are ever to defeat the boss class. But that unity cannot be built by simply ignoring the viciously sectarian ideas which bind loyalist workers to their Unionist-bosses and keep them divided from their Catholic fellow workers.

NICTU's latest campaign fails even to begin the fight for class unity in this country.

LETTERS

Write to PO Box 1648, Dublin 8

MARXISM '86 A GOOD START

I was in Dublin for Marxism '86 with some friends. I didn't expect such a high standard of organisation, maybe because this was the first time any thing like this was held in Ireland.

I got into all the meetings which ranged from the civil rights movement right down to the politics of rock. All of which I enjoyed a great deal. All the speakers were great especially the women. If I might say so, they made their points clearly and got on with it. Some of the men were inclined to ramble off.

There was no problem with kids because there was a creche

for the weekend which I thought was a good idea. My only complaint was that the food stall was too small and because of that people were inclined to bang into each other.

The entertainment at night was great. The £6.00 registration was great value for money. I don't think any one could complain about the whole thing. I learned a great deal over the weekend. The Socialist Workers Movement did well to start this in Ireland.

Joan O'Sullivan
Waterford City

FASCISM IN DUBLIN

MY SELF and some mates read your paper. It's revolutionary and good to read.

Why no articles on the rise of Fascism here. The NSIWP have become very active here. I know of some skinheads who've been passed fascist cards and stickers, loads of houses have been leafleted here. Anti Arab graffiti is all over parts of Rathmines and I hear that Arab and Asian shops in Rathmines and town have had racist stuff posted to them. I've seen skinheads

with "White Power" cards in town.

The nazi NSIWP are scum bags and should be written about accordingly. Any thugs who put a Jewish Kosher butcher out of business in Clanbrassil Street or who send 3-4 skinheads into an Asian shop in South Circular Road have to be organised against. It's just not on. Workers must unite to stop this. These vermin must be scrubbed from society.

Gerry Molymaux,
Rathmines.



KINNOCK'S ROAD TO COMPROMISE

in the framing of party policy. Left-wingers who did remain critical were given short shrift. Eric Heffer was kicked off the NEC and Derek Hatton, Tony Mulhearn and other Liverpool Militants expelled by a massive majority.

The conference confirmed that the Left is caught in the classic Catch 22 situation. It believes that a Labour Government would be a major step towards socialism. But in order for Labour to be elected maximum unity must be achieved behind a "credible" lead. So the left has had to ditch any radical policies—and even some of its radical personalities.

Thus the Labour Government which is finally elected turns out not to be such a major step leftwards after all.

In British Labour, the process is already under way. The jobs target of a new Labour Government has now

been reduced to one million jobs in two years. There are no plans to re-nationalise all the assets privatised by the Tories. Only British Telecom and British Gas will be brought into an ill-defined form of "social ownership", with full compensation being paid to the shareholders.

NICARAGUA

Kinnock attacked the US role in Nicaragua and pledged the removal of US nuclear weapons from Britain. But he also guaranteed to keep Britain in NATO and that other US installations would remain "for we are allies and we discharge our obligations". On the basis of these very watered-down versions of Labour policy, the party's right wing is busy trying to convince

the ruling class that it can be trusted to run capitalism in a "responsible manner". For example, the villains of Sellafield, British Nuclear Fuels Ltd., were allowed an information stall at the conference—but the sacked miners were kept out!

All previous Labour Governments have promised to move towards socialism but have ended up simply doing capitalism's bidding. Every British Labour Government has left office with unemployment higher than it had been when it took over. Kinnock is signalling to the bosses in advance that this routine won't change. Socialists in Britain and Ireland are wasting their time digging into parties dominated by such electoralism. They should get out now and help to build the revolutionary alternative.

—DAVID McDONAGH

THE LABOUR Party is likely to win the next general election in Britain.

Certainly, delegates at the party's conference in Blackpool last month were in confident mood as they rallied behind Kinnock in a determined display of unity.

The Left kept quiet about any criticisms it might have had of Kinnock. Ken Livingstone was not going to allow "frustrations" to prevent Labour being elected. David Blunkett called for "realism"

POVERTY IN IRELAND

When profits mean more than people

IF YOU think that revolutionary socialism is a nice but loony, unrealistic idea, it is well worth considering the particularly nasty looniness of capitalist reality.

Under capitalism we live in a country where hundreds of old people die of the cold each winter while coal lies stockpiled in merchants' yards; a world where over ten million children die every year of starvation while thousands of tons of grain are burnt to keep the prices up or lie stored in EEC mountains; a country where thousands are homeless while building workers are unemployed.

The reality of capitalist society all over the world means that the mass of working class people are forced to live unfulfilled and frustrated lives full only of anxiety about where the money for tomorrow's dinner next week's rent or next month's electricity bill will come from.

We are encouraged by government, Churches and Bob Geldof to think of hunger and deprivation as "Third World" phenomena. But here in Ireland, small as the country is, there are millions living in what even the ruling class has to acknowledge as poverty.

In the South, official estimates indicate that over 30 per cent of all households live in poverty—that is over one and a quarter million people. In the North, the figures are even worse—in 1982-83 almost 50 per cent of incomes to households there came from welfare payments—about three quarters of a million people living officially in poverty.

In fact, when we look at who owns the wealth in this society, it soon becomes clear that since five per cent of the population owns 70 per cent of the wealth, the remaining 95 per cent of us cannot but be poor in relation to them—most especially if we happen to be elderly, unemployed, or in low paid jobs.

In June 1984, there were 127,383 claimants of non-contributory old age pensions in the South and 55,750 pensioners in the North. The Vincent de Paul survey "Old and Alone in Ireland" showed that 50 per cent of the elderly who live on their own have no bath or shower, 60 per cent

have no hot water tap and a third do not even have a kitchen sink.

Old people cannot shop around for bargains and need constant warmth, yet the real value of pensions has fallen drastically over the last five years and both the Coalition and the Tories have offered nothing but a few pence of a rise for this year. Small wonder that old people fear the advent of winter and wonder if they'll get to see the spring.

Unemployed workers have not fared any better. Unemployment in the North in July 1986 was five times that of 1974—129,600 this year as compared to 27,300 in '74. Fifty-six per cent of unemployed men and 31 per cent of women have been out of work for a year or more. In the South the latest official figures now show a quarter of a million on the dole.

Both these figures are wild underestimates. North and South, the governments have done everything to bring down the figures, from simply doctoring them, to cutting people off the dole, to encouraging the unemployed to "get on the boat" as once Norman Tebbit told us to "get on your bike".

We are told by the media that those on the dole lead lives of luxury—driving big cars to the dole office, going on continental holidays, etc.

In fact, in the 26 Counties, a married man claiming for his wife and four children receives £97.00 per week. That's it. Any other payment—rent allowance or "exceptional payments" are completely discretionary.

What that means in effect is that you go to the community welfare office and beg for a couple of pounds extra to cover the rent or electricity bill. If the Welfare Officer has had a fight with the boss or has a hangover—that's your tough luck. As one unemployed activist put it "you pour your heart out to them, tell them the most intimate details of your life and they have the power, at the stroke of a pen, to make you happy or miserable".

In spite of automatic entitlement to rent allowance in the Six Counties, financial misery is every bit as bad. A married man claiming for wife and four children gets c.£64. and most or all of the rent is normally paid too. But the recent "reforms" introduced by Norman Fowler will mean a cut of at least £25 million in

funds available to claimants in the North. For example, those on Supplementary Benefit

(SB) used to have 100 per cent of their rates paid by the DHSS. They will now have to find 20 per cent of the rates themselves.

The abolition of Child Benefit and Family Income Supplement will, according to the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG), mean the loss of £2.54 a week to unemployed married couples with children claiming SB.

The children of these families will also lose their entitlement to free school meals. The end of the single payment scheme means that women, married or single, will no longer be able to get automatic special payments for a cot or pram or even nappies.

All in all, the CPAG estimate that the unemployed will lose £11.6 million a year, single parents will lose £1.5 million and pensioners will lose £12.3 million as a result of Fowler's new rules. The Tory propaganda about these changes said that the idea was to reallocate resources towards those with children but this is nonsense. In the Six Counties, families with low incomes are set to lose £3.3 million a year and total family incomes in the North are about to be cut by £9 million a year.

Children do suffer perhaps most of all from the iniquity and inequality of the capitalist system. In June 1984 there were 189,590 children in the 26 counties dependent on welfare. In fact, the Economic and Social Research Institute's report of 1982 "The distribution of income in the Republic of Ireland" stated "The problems posed by poverty are obviously being experienced most actively by members of households in which young children are being raised."

To a large extent this stands to reason. Kids need space and dry, warm accommodation. They need proper food and clothes that are warm and not worn out and they need education. All of these are provided in this society not on the basis of need but of ability to pay. Too many working class families North and South are unable to pay. In the year 1977-78, there were 42,000 families in the South with an income of less than £50 a week. As recently as 1982-83, one third of families in the North had an average income of less than £75 a week.

On the other hand, the Earl



of Iveagh earned £343,000 in 1984 as a director of Guinness a director of the Intasun Travel Company could earn £778,000 in the same year, while Tony O'Reilly earns well over a million pounds a year from his various "jobs". Michael Smurfit was recently able to invest £1.2 billion in a takeover in the States.

But for working class families, low income leads inevitably to poor nutrition with children suffering from vitamin deficiencies. North and South the rates of infant mortality and stillbirths are among the highest in Western Europe. Doctors and midwives say that these deaths can be blamed almost entirely on the low standard of living for the mass of the working class.

Working class kids simply aren't as healthy as better-off children. This is simply explained. They don't eat as well and their housing tends to be sub-standard and poorly heated. There are 35,000 families on the housing list in the 26 Counties, about 26,000 in the North. Despite all the hype about improvements to the housing stock in the North the latest Housing Executive survey in 1984 showed that 10.4 per cent of houses were still unfit for habitation and another 1.3 per cent lacked basic amenities like bathrooms.

Five per cent of students leave school in the South before the official leaving age, 19 per cent leave at 15, the first legal opportunity. Official figures on the students at University College Dublin in 1985/86 showed that only one per cent came from an unskilled, manual working class background; only seven per cent from any kind of working class background. In the North despite the much heralded grants system only 14 per cent of students are working-class.

Many parents simply can't stand to see their kids going without and get into debt trying to provide. This time of

the year is always particularly bad for working class parents. Back-to-school means money for uniforms and books in the South likely to set you back £100 for a child going to Secondary School. Even in the North where "free" education includes books, uniforms and "extras", as well as school meals, are all too expensive. Then Christmas is on us with demands for the latest toys and hire purchase, the credit union or money lenders seem the only way unless relatives can help out. In a recent survey of the long-term unemployed in Derry, 82 per cent of households were found to be in debt. The recent "money-lender" scandals in Galway and Cork were just tiny hints of the anxiety and fear with which many working-class families live because of what they owe.

Why is it that the mass of working-class people, those who after all produce the wealth in society, are forced to live in such conditions, constantly on the edge, keeping the ends barely meeting? It's certainly not because there is not enough wealth in society for everyone to live more than comfortably.

Quite the opposite. The world can produce enough food to ensure that no-one anywhere needs to go to bed hungry. There may be tens of thousands on the housing lists in this country but there are also thousands of building workers unemployed and hundreds of thousands of bricks piled up waiting to be used. The materials are there to build the houses; the labour is there; the need is there. The only thing that stops the houses being built is the law of capitalism that says that profits come before people.

This example holds true right across the board. The material wealth is there to provide everyone with all the necessities and most of the luxuries of life; there are millions of unemployed workers willing to work to

make such provision a reality. But the capitalist system is based on inequality, it depends on keeping the working class poor while the bosses grow ever richer. Because of this, any amount of trojan work to alleviate poverty can be no more than a tiny drop in the ocean of class oppression.

This does not mean that we shouldn't fight for a better deal for the working class, unemployed or employed. In the 26 Counties, for example, we should push through our unions for implementation of the improvements suggested in the Report of the Commission on Social Welfare—like a £60 a week allowance for all social welfare recipients. Unemployed groups in the South should organise for a boycott of Hussey's proposed new "pass" scheme.

STRENGTHENING

In the North, the strengthening of the idea that workers can only expect low wages must be fought. Trade unionists should oppose the use of low-paid temporary YTP or ACE workers for jobs which would otherwise be permanent union members at the union rate. Real job creation must be demanded North and South instead of the mock jobs and "half jobs" of the various government schemes.

In the end, however, the only way that poverty and inequality can be ended is by ending the system which breeds and feeds on inequality. Once the capitalist system has been smashed and the working class has taken control of the wealth that we produce then we can start to build a society where production is for need and not for profit. A society where each of us can use the skills wasted by capitalism to produce even more wealth to ensure that poverty can be forgotten forever.

—GORETTI HORGAN

General

THE DEFEAT of the British General strike in 1926 marked the end of a period in which, at various times and to various degrees, British workers had shown a militancy which threatened to overthrow the capitalist system itself.

During the 1914-18 war, half a million strike days had been lost per year. In the engineering industry a powerful rank-and-file shop-stewards movement had led mass struggles.

In 1919, in the immediate aftermath of the war, there was an explosion of militancy as demobbed soldiers poured home seeking the "land fit for heroes" which they'd been promised. In that year 34½ million days were lost in strike action. A hundred thousand engineers struck on the Clyde for the 40-hour week. Railwaymen forced the employers to concede the 48-hour week and a wage rise. In the same wave, 40,000 engineers struck in Belfast. Secret cabinet documents talked about "unreliable" troops, "the unchecked spread of Bolshevism" and fear of revolution.

In January 1919, the Miners Federation of Great Britain resolved to demand a 30 percent rise, shorter working hours and—as a means of getting rid of the old coal owners and preserving these gains—nationalisation of the mines. When the demands were rejected the miners voted six-to-one for strike action.

The miners were part of the Triple Alliance, which linked the

MFGB with the National Union of Railwaymen and the Transport Workers Federation. The strength of the Alliance was that it entitled one union to call on the others for support when needed. Its weakness was that it operated at leadership level, and thus opened the way for the government to buy off one union leadership and isolate the others.

But in the midst of all the militancy things looked good for the miners in February 1919. A contemporary historian noted: "Presented with this ultimatum in the latter days of February the government found itself in a hazardous position. All the advantages were on the side of the miners. Coal stocks were at famine level, London having only three day's supply. At the same time the other members of the Triple Alliance were in consultation with the miners, and had themselves tabled demands for which they were in negotiation. In short, Mr. Lloyd George and his colleagues were confronted with the alarming prospect of a general strike fraught with revolutionary implications."

Prime Minister Lloyd George's government bought time by announcing a Royal Commission under Lord Sankey to look into the miners' demands. Many of the militants in the pits recognised that the Sankey Commission was just a ruse to delay the inevitable confrontation until a more favourable time for the government. But MFGB leaders Robert Smillie and Frank Hodges were able—after much campaigning—to convince a

majority of the miners to wait for Sankey's findings.

REPORT

SANKEY'S REPORT—issued on June 23 1919—recommended nationalisation of the mines with some measure of workers' control. Sankey had recognised that some concessions had to be made to the miners, otherwise rank-and-file militancy would have swamped the moderate union leaderships.

On August 18 Lloyd George turned down Sankey's findings. By that stage it was seven months since the miners had voted overwhelmingly for action, and the mood in the mines, although still relatively militant, was not as confident as it had been.

Rank-and-file confidence is not like a loaded revolver which leaders can keep in their pockets for months and then fire at will.

The reaction of the union leaderships to the government's hard-line position was to postpone action again. Under the guise of "seeking the support of the whole movement" the leaders of the Triple Alliance suspended voting on action until after the TUC conference. And in August the TUC conference delayed yet again by deciding to wait and convene a special conference later if the government wouldn't budge in the meantime.

The government didn't and the special conference was called

in December. It decided to play down talk of strike action in favour of an "educational campaign" to convince the public of the benefits of nationalisation. In March 1920 the TUC buried the idea of an all-out strike for nationalisation completely. The militancy of early 1919 had now been dissipated. The endless delays and high-level manoeuvres out of sight of the men in the pits had caused demoralisation to set in. And worse was to come.

From the Summer of 1920 the economy nose-dived. Unemployment rose to a quarter of a million in the autumn, then to 700,000 by the end of the year. It doubled again by the summer of 1921, reaching more than 17 percent of insured workers. This was accompanied by a bosses' offensive to drive down wages and roll back concessions workers had won in the previous two years.

In March 1921 the miners were locked out. The bosses demanded wage cuts and the replacement of the national wage agreement by district deals. The MFGB invoked the Triple Alliance. But on April 15—"Black Friday"—Jimmy Thomas of the NUR and Robert Williams and Ernest Bevin of the transport workers repudiated the Alliance. The miners fought on alone for three months but eventually had to capitulate.

MINERS

The defeat of the miners was part of a terrible rout suffered by the working class of Britain in 1921/22. By the end of 1921 6,000,000 workers had taken wage cuts. Cotton workers had taken a 22 percent cut after a lock-out. Engineering workers too, whose strength and organisation had shone out like a beacon during and after the war, were smashed after a lock-out. Workers paid a very high price for the betrayals of the Triple Alliance and TUC leaders.

The bosses' offensive was the response of capitalists trying to make workers pay for the crisis. And as the crisis deepened the bosses demanded that workers pay even more.

By July 1925 a new Tory Prime Minister, Baldwin, was back telling the miners' leaders that there'd have to be more pay cuts: government subsidies were to be withdrawn from loss-making pits and the difference would have to be made up out of miners' wage packets. Baldwin went on: "All the workers of this country have got to take reductions in wages to help put industry back on its feet."

This broad-based offensive threatened not only the living standards of workers but the power, prestige and privileges of the union bureaucrats as well. If the whole movement was smashed there would be nothing left for the leaders to lead.

The TUC declared that sympathy action would be called if the government carried through the attack on the miners' wages.

The battle lines were drawn at the end of July when the mine owners declared that they would end the 1924 agreement, cut wages, abolish the national minimum, go over to direct deals and maintain "standard profits"—no matter how low wages had to fall to achieve this. In response, the TUC announced that the movement would refuse to handle coal.

Baldwin recognised that the government needed time to prepare for an all-out confrontation with the whole union movement. So he conceded yet another Royal Commission to look into the mining industry. In the meantime he temporarily restored the subsidy to the mine owners who in turn suspended their lock-out notices. The subsidy was to end on April 30 1926.

WAR

IN THE nine months leading up to the general strike the government prepared for industrial war—while the TUC leaders tried desperately to find ways of avoiding war.

The government built up coal stocks; introduced a Special Powers Act; arrested leading communists while creating a "red scare"; and established an emergency scabbing operation. Meanwhile the TUC tried repeatedly to cook up a deal which might enable them to call off the strike they had threatened and made virtually no preparations.

The Royal Commission reported, proposing wage cuts while talking vaguely about nationalisation at some time in the distant future.

The MFGB rejected the report, under the slogan "not a penny off the pay, not a minute on the day". Faced with the prospect of having to deliver on its threats, the TUC was now frantic. Secret contacts were made with all manner of "respectable" personages in an effort to devise a face-saving formula. But the government stood firm.

The subsidy ended on April 30, the miners were locked out and the General Strike was on. From the very outset the TUC made it clear that the union side was not to take its gloves off. Not all workers were called out immediately. They were to come out in "waves", so as to give the government every chance to make concessions before full-scale confrontation developed.

In the first "wave" two million workers joined the million miners who had been locked-out. The second "wave" brought another half million into the battle—on the ninth and last day of the strike.

The strike was a model of passivity. The TUC urged workers to go for walks in the country, attend church services, wear war medals, play sports etc. Football matches were even organised between strikers and the police! All local initiative was outlawed:

all strike action through picketing... Despite a very solid... biggest head... workers in... coming out... "officially"... engineers... anyway... government... outfit ran... transport... to get only... passenger tra... less than... trains. By the... only 40 of... were running...

In spite of... it was clear... strike went... chance was... police develop... out of the... bureaucrats... passing to... in the local... pressure was... leaders to... the principle... the MFGB... now terrified... of their own... off the strike.

DEMORA

It was a sh... performance... was made to... victimisation... the opportuni... militants, sm... enforce wage... miners, isolat... until starved... autumn.

The demora... crushing. In... the strike trad... slumped. The... in the driving... in, of "busine... collaboration... lasted a gener... leaders had de... couldn't do... back in the bo... militant work... had the boss... was now cowe... even defendin...

All of the... the TUC... as Right—had... sell-out of the... not be surpris... bureaucrats ge... prestige from... labour and cap... always act as... determined wo... They may be... struggles from... maintain their... they always lo... for a way of ge... back to work... That's their job...

The traged... there existed... in the rank-an... organisation... challenge the... leadership of... This is the les... largest for work... Ireland as much... K.F.V.



Strike-bound at Chiswick bus depot.

General Strike

...t decided to play
...rike action in
...ducational
...vince the public
...of nationalisation.
...the TUC buried
...ll-out strike for
...completely. The
...rly 1919 had now
...The endless
...-level manoeuvres
...the men in the pits
...moralisation to set
...was to come.
...ummer of 1920
...ose-dived.
...t rose to a quarter
...the autumn, then
...the end of the
...ed again by the
...21. reaching more
...nt of insured
...was accompanied
...ffensive to drive
...nd roll back
...orkers had won in
...wo years.
...921 the miners
...ut. The bosses
...ge cuts and the
...of the national wage
...district deals. The
...ed the Triple Alliance.
...15—"Black Friday"
...omas of the NUR
...Williams and Ernest
...transport workers
...ie Alliance. The
...t on alone for three
...ventually had to

MINERS

...t of the miners was
...rible rout suffered by
...class of Britain in
...the end of 1921
...orkers had taken
...otton workers had
...ercent cut after a
...ngineering workers
...strength and
...had shone out like a
...ng and after the war,
...ed after a lock-out.
...d a very high price for
...t of the Triple
...TUC leaders.

...es' offensive was the
...capitalists trying to
...ers pay for the crisis.
...crisis deepened the
...anded that workers
...ore.

...1925 a new Tory
...ster, Baldwin, was back
...miners' leaders that
...e to be more pay cuts:
...t subsidies were to be
...from loss-making pits
...ference would have to
...out of miners' wage
...alwin went on: "All
...s of this country have
...reductions in wages
...t industry back on its

...broad-based offensive
...not only the living
...of workers but the
...estige and privileges of
...bureaucrats as well. If
...movement was smashed
...ld be nothing left for
...s to lead.

...UC declared that
...action would be called
...ernment carried through
...k on the miners' wages.

The battle lines were drawn at the end of July when the mine owners declared that they would end the 1924 agreement, cut wages, abolish the national minimum, go over to direct deals and maintain "standard profits"—no matter how low wages had to fall to achieve this. In response, the TUC announced that the movement would refuse to handle coal.

Baldwin recognised that the government needed time to prepare for an all-out confrontation with the whole union movement. So he conceded yet another Royal Commission to look into the mining industry. In the meantime he temporarily restored the subsidy to the mine owners who in turn suspended their lock-out notices. The subsidy was to end on April 30 1926.

WAR

IN THE nine months leading up to the general strike the government prepared for industrial war—while the TUC leaders tried desperately to find ways of avoiding war.

The government built up coal stocks; introduced a Special Powers Act; arrested leading communists while creating a "red scare"; and established an emergency scabbing operation. Meanwhile the TUC tried repeatedly to cook up a deal which might enable them to call off the strike they had threatened and made virtually no preparations.

The Royal Commission reported, proposing wage cuts while talking vaguely about nationalisation at some time in the distant future.

The MFGB rejected the report, under the slogan "not a penny off the pay, not a minute on the day". Faced with the prospect of having to deliver on its threats, the TUC was now frantic. Secret contacts were made with all manner of "respectable" personages in an effort to devise a face-saving formula. But the government stood firm.

The subsidy ended on April 30, the miners were locked out and the General Strike was on. From the very outset the TUC made it clear that the union side was not to take its gloves off. Not all workers were called out immediately. They were to come out in "waves", so as to give the government every chance to make concessions before full-scale confrontation developed.

In the first "wave" two million workers joined the million miners who had been locked-out. The second "wave" brought another half million into the battle—on the ninth and last day of the strike.

The strike was a model of passivity. The TUC urged workers to go for walks in the country, attend church services, wear war medals, play sports etc. Football matches were even organised between strikers and the police! All local initiative was outlawed:

all strike orders were to come through "official channels". Mass picketing was discouraged.

Despite all this the strike was very solid. One of the TUC's biggest headaches was stopping workers in the "second wave" coming out before being "officially" called. Half of the engineers came out in advance anyway. Upper class twits in the government-sponsored scabbing outfit ran a Mickey Mouse transport "service", but managed to get only 15 percent of passenger trains into action and less than three percent of freight trains. By the end of the strike only 40 of London's 4,400 buses were running.

In spite of all the TUC efforts it was clear that the longer the strike went on the greater the chance was of dashes with the police developing, control slipping out of the hands of the bureaucrats and the initiative passing to rank-and-file militants in the localities. Enormous pressure was applied by the TUC leaders to the MFGB to accept the principle of wage cuts. When the MFGB refused, the TUC, by now terrified of the implications of their own actions, simply called off the strike.

DEMORALISATION

It was a shameful and cowardly performance. No arrangement was made to ensure no victimisation and employers used the opportunity to clear out militants, smash organisation and enforce wage cuts all round. The miners, isolated again, fought on until starved back to work in the autumn.

The demoralisation was crushing. In the months following the strike trade union membership slumped. The bosses were firmly in the driving seat. A reaction set in, of "business unionism", class collaboration and retreat which lasted a generation. The union leaders had done what the bosses could not do—they put the genie back in the bottle. The organised, militant working class which had had the bosses on the run in 1919 was now cowed and incapable of even defending itself.

All of the General Council of the TUC—"Left-wingers" as well as Right—had voted for the sell-out of the miners. This should not be surprising. Union bureaucrats get their power and prestige from negotiating between labour and capital. They therefore always act as a brake on determined working class action. They may be forced to lead struggles from time to time to maintain their credibility, but they always look for compromise, for a way of getting the workers back to work and ending "trouble". That's their job.

The tragedy of 1926 was that there existed no force with roots in the rank-and-file which had the organisation and credibility to challenge the bureaucrats for leadership of the workers' side. This is the lesson which looms largest for workers today, in Ireland as much as in Britain.

—KEVIN WINGFIELD.



Above: An armoured car escorts a food convoy through a London street; Below: Robert Smillie, Scottish Miners leader.

Strike

all strike orders were to come through "official channels". Mass picketing was discouraged. Despite all this the strike was very solid. One of the TUC's biggest headaches was stopping workers in the "second wave" coming out before being "officially" called. Half of the engineers came out in advance anyway. Upper class twits in the government-sponsored scabbing outfit ran a Mickey Mouse transport "service", but managed to get only 15 percent of passenger trains into action and less than three percent of freight trains. By the end of the strike only 40 of London's 4,400 buses were running.

In spite of all the TUC efforts it was clear that the longer the strike went on the greater the chance was of clashes with the police developing, control slipping out of the hands of the bureaucrats and the initiative passing to rank-and-file militants in the localities. Enormous pressure was applied by the TUC leaders to the MFGB to accept the principle of wage cuts. When the MFGB refused, the TUC, by now terrified of the implications of their own actions, simply called off the strike.

DEMORALISATION

It was a shameful and cowardly performance. No arrangement was made to ensure no victimisation and employers used the opportunity to clear out militants, smash organisation and enforce wage cuts all round. The miners, isolated again, fought on until starved back to work in the autumn.

The demoralisation was crushing. In the months following the strike trade union membership slumped. The bosses were firmly in the driving seat. A reaction set in, of "business unionism", class collaboration and retreat which lasted a generation. The union leaders had done what the bosses couldn't do—they put the genie back in the bottle. The organised, militant working class which had had the bosses on the run in 1919 was now cowed and incapable of even defending itself.

All of the General Council of the TUC—"Left-wingers" as well as Right—had voted for the sell-out of the miners. This should not be surprising. Union bureaucrats get their power and prestige from negotiating between labour and capital. They therefore always act as a brake on determined working class action. They may be forced to lead struggles from time to time to maintain their credibility, but they always look for compromise, for a way of getting the workers back to work and ending "trouble" that's their job.

The tragedy of 1926 was that there existed no force with roots in the rank-and-file which had the organisation and credibility to challenge the bureaucrats for leadership of the workers' side. This is the lesson which looms largest as much as in Britain, Ireland as much as in Britain.

—KEVIN WINGFIELD.



Above: An armoured car escorts a food convoy through a London street; Below: Robert Smillie, Scottish Miners leader.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

The Socialist Workers Movement is a revolutionary socialist organisation that fights for a workers' republic and International socialism.

The system under which we live, capitalism, is based on production for profit—not for human need. It leads to poverty and war; racism and sexism. It is a system that can only be destroyed by the class which creates all the wealth—the working class.

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

Capitalism cannot be patched up or reformed—it must be overthrown. That cannot be achieved through parliament as the Workers Party and the Labour Party argue. The real power in this society lies in the boardroom of big business. The structures of the present parliament, courts, army and police are designed to protect the interests of the ruling class against the workers. At most parliament can be used for propaganda against the system—it cannot be the instrument by which workers destroy the power of the rich.

We therefore stand for a workers' revolution which produces a different and more democratic society—one based on councils of delegates from workplaces and areas who are democratically elected answerable to assemblies and subject to recall at any time.

NEITHER WASHINGTON NOR MOSCOW

That kind of socialism does not exist anywhere today. Workers have no control over countries like Russia, China or Poland. They are exploited by a state capitalist class. A workers revolution is required in those countries too.

AGAINST PARTITION

The six county Orange state is propped up by British Imperialism. That state divides the working class by the guarantee of marginal privileges in housing and jobs to Loyalist workers. The struggle of Catholic workers to rid themselves of sectarianism and bigotry can only succeed by smashing that state.

The slow task of building working class unity against imperialism must be begun. However imperialism must be fought in the here and now and we support all forces engaged in that struggle regardless of our differences of programme.

We stand for:
 The immediate withdrawal of the British Army
 The disbandment of the RUC and UDR
 No to extradition and collaboration on border security

Connolly wrote that partition would bring a carnival of reaction. He was absolutely right. Irish workers confront two reactionary states. The Southern ruling class have no longer any fundamental conflict of interest with imperialism. They have become junior players in the world capitalist system. Their state props up partition—despite their occasional nationalist rhetoric.

The 'national question' will only be solved in the course of mass working class struggle against both states. Republicanism, by limiting the struggle to nationalist goals, by appealing to all classes in Irish society, can never defeat imperialism. Only a revolutionary socialist organisation that fights openly for the Workers' Republic can unite sections of the working class who have nothing to gain from a bourgeois Eire Nua.

AGAINST ALL OPPRESSION

Revolutionaries oppose all form of oppression that divide and weaken the working class.

We are for real social, economic and political equality for women.
 We are for an end to discrimination against homosexuals.
 We stand for full separation of the church and state.
 We stand for secular control of the hospitals and the schools.

THE UNIONS

Today the trade union movement is dominated by a caste of bureaucrats whose principal aim is to make their compromise with the system. They have destroyed solidarity between workers by the two tier picket system. They have failed to lead any fight over tax, wage cuts and unemployment.

We stand for:
 100 percent trade unionism
 A 35 hour week to reduce unemployment
 The election of all union officials, subject to recall
 Against redundancies. We say: occupy to demand nationalisation under workers' control
 Full independence of the unions from the state. No reliance on the Labour Courts or the arbitration schemes in the public sector

We fight for the building of a national rank and file movement that links together the best militants to provide an alternative leadership to the trade union bureaucrats.

We fight for the formation of Right to Work committees that link the unemployed to the power of the trade union movement.

THE PARTY

To achieve socialism the most class conscious sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party. The SWM aims to build such a party around its activity in the working class movement. It stands in the tradition of Marx, Lenin, Trotsky and Connolly. We urge all those who agree with our policies to come in and join the SWM.

The Anglo-Irish con

Special Report by EAMONN McCANN.

WHEN THE Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed in Hillsborough last November it was heralded as the beginning of a new era in Northern politics.

The Agreement, said its supporters, was a "process" by which, under British supervision, the grievances of the Catholic minority would be remedied, the IRA isolated and conditions eventually created in which "both communities" would become "reconciled" and willingly represented in a new, devolved administration.

In return for these advances, the Coalition agreed to put the aspiration towards a united Ireland on ice, and to signify this both in its own rhetoric and, crucially, by tightening the screw of repression on Republicans.

One year later it is clear that even in terms of its own limited objectives the Agreement has failed. The Anglo-Irish Conference which has so far met nine times, each meeting causing a new flurry of excitement and a fever of speculation among commentators, has been unable to come up with a single, solid reform. The alienation of the Catholic working class from the RUC and the British Army is as great as ever: even the Catholic hierarchy has recently been stung, or pressurised from below, into complaining against brutality and harassment in the Strabane area. Sectarian

above are "in the pipeline", and quite likely they are. But in relation to the only item directly relevant to the violence and political stability, the Diplock courts, things are different. On this, the Free State side compromised in advance by dropping the demand that one of the three judges should come from the South. But the judicial establishment in the North and in Britain rebelled against any change which might imply criticism of the way the Diplock courts have hitherto operated. As a result, the British have been unable to match the Free State compromise with a move of their own and this reform seems set to remain merely a regular rumour.

This inability of the British to deliver has been evident, too, in the broader and more immediately-relevant area of policing. A vital element of the Agreement was to be a change in police practice designed to encourage better relations between the RUC and the Catholic population. This was put to its most searching test in the matter of the Loyalist bigotry-parades through Portadown in July. It has been publicly acknowledged that King assured Barry that a deliberately provocative parade along the Garvaghy Road in the first week of July would be banned. RUC chief John Hermon refused point-blank to implement the ban, arguing that, following violence during the enforcement

anyway than at any time in the past decade—this imbalance cannot be reformed out of existence.

In housing, Catholic areas are still relatively more overcrowded than the Six County average and more likely to lack basic amenities. The latest available Housing Executive figures show that 20 percent of houses in the mainly-Catholic west of the Bann area are officially unfit for habitation, as against 10.4 percent in the Six Counties as a whole. In west and North Belfast an influx of Catholics fleeing from sectarian intimidation, taken together with a cut of around ten percent in real terms in the Housing Executive budget, has created what even the Executive itself now admits is an "emergency".

Meanwhile Tory cuts in health, education and the social services hit disproportionately at working class Catholics who are the most likely section of the population to be dependent on such services.

The British have not managed to deliver even on the minor reforms which were specifically promised. And the position of the Catholic population generally as second-class citizens has not been altered. Desperate efforts are now being made by the SDLP to sell the Agreement to Catholics on the basis of refurbishing leisure centres and subsidising community groups and so forth with the "American money" which John Hume managed to coax from Congress.

The alienation of the Catholic working class from the RUC and the British Army is as great as ever: even the Catholic hierarchy has recently been stung, or pressurised from below, into complaining against brutality and harassment in the Strabane area.

feeling, evident in the burning out of Catholics in Co. Antrim and fierce intimidation in Belfast workplaces, has obviously increased. Reflecting this heightened sectarianism the Loyalist parties are, if anything, even farther away from agreeing to share power in a devolved administration. And the capacity of the IRA to wage war has not noticeably been weakened.

The regular claims by King, Barry, Hume etc. that the Agreement is "on course" or "on target" are simply ridiculous.

A consideration of the reforms which were publicly identified from time to time as being imminent shows the extent of the failure. For more than six months now the speculation surrounding each meeting of the Conference has been about a "package" including: recognition of the Irish language, especially in the matter of street names; the repeal of the Flags and Emblems Act; giving a vote in local government and Stormont elections to people born in the South but now living in the North; and having three judges instead of one presiding in the no-jury Diplock courts.

This would be a pretty pathetic package even if it were produced. It would make very little difference indeed to the day-to-day lives of people living in the working class communities who bear the brunt of the troubles. That is, it would not have the effect on the ground which ignorant bourgeois "experts" seem to imagine.

But the Conference hasn't been able to come up with the package anyway. It is still regularly rumoured that the first three of the items mentioned

of a previous, similar ban, relations between his force and Loyalist extremists were already under severe strain. The Northern Ireland Office backed down and Tom King announced the following day that all decisions on parade routes would henceforth be a matter for the RUC's judgment. The next meeting of the Conference accepted this fait accompli.

Similarly, the bizarre plan to have all UDR patrols which might be in contact with civilians accompanied by RUC men has not been implemented because the UDR and the RUC has been "unable" to organise themselves to carry it out.

In each of these instances the British have been unable to change the operation of the machinery of the State in such a way as to produce the reforms which both they and the Free State had agreed were necessary.

In terms of the general position of the Catholic population in the North the same pattern emerges: vague promises of more fairness in the future but not an inch of practical advance.

Average unemployment is horrendously high, but Catholics are still more than twice as likely to be jobless as Protestants. The Catholic rate at present is around forty percent. The figure in Strabane is over fifty percent and in areas including Creggan in Derry and Andersonstown in Belfast it is over sixty percent. In the (relatively) better-off Belfast areas the proportion of Catholics in the shipbuilding, aircraft and engineering industries remains under ten percent. In the present atmosphere of sectarian hatred and intimidation—and because fewer new jobs are being created

The only concrete results of the Agreement so far have taken the form of the new fortified emplacements strung out along the Louth-South Armagh border.

It would be quite wrong to imagine that the British have failed to come through on the Agreement because of bad faith. The Tories would welcome political stability and clearly they believe that stability would best be achieved through reforms which would reconcile the Catholics to the Northern State. They have been unable to achieve this objective because crucial parts of the State machinery—which the British themselves created and sustained on the basis of Orange sectarianism, and which now hold the State together—are rigidly resistant to reform. And the British, alarmed anyway by the hysterical reaction of Loyalist groups to the mere mention of change and the renewed pressure this could put on the apparatus of the State, are not going to push it.

For example, they can't take on Hermon over parade routes because the police are a vital component of the State machinery and the RUC are the only police force they have got. Any move which risked ruining RUC morale would put Britain's ability to maintain even minimal control at hazard. So whether there is reform of the RUC, and the pace of it, can in large measure be determined by the RUC itself—which is a force with much to be ashamed of and no willingness to acknowledge this by formally agreeing to mend its ways.

The unwillingness and/or inability of the British to make a reality of the promised reforms has meant that for Northern



trick

Catholics the Agreement has so far been all stick and no carrot. This in turn has hampered the Free State government in its efforts to hammer the Republicans. For example, given the lack of movement on reform of the Diplock courts, it is doubtful whether the Coalition will be able to pilot the ratification of the European Convention on Terrorism (its major extradition initiative) through the Dail in the new session. The failure of the British to clean up the RUC act (Garvaghy Road, the Stalker affair, Strabane etc.) puts political obstacles in the way of closer coordination of security operations across the border. The continued use of strip searching, supergrasses and plastic bullets makes it more difficult for the Coalition and its media propagandists to stigmatise those involved in armed struggle against the Northern State as mere criminals to be hounded at will.

It is in this context, of difficulties for the Free State parties to the Agreement, that the intervention of Charlie Haughey at Bodenstown on October 12 has to be seen. Haughey, too, wants a stable capitalist Ireland, and as good relations as possible with capitalist Britain. But he heads a party with a populist base, which represents a section of Irish capital which has fewer connections with international finance than the O'Reilly-Smurfit set which is temperamentally more inclined to strike nationalist attitudes. His political judgment—and he's not a bad judge—is that the Agreement will not lead to the triumph of constitutional politics and capitalist stability, and in a situation of continuing instability the British should be pushed harder and made to pay more dearly in reforms for the concessions and security cooperation being demanded. Haughey does not oppose British imperialism in Ireland but he does believe that Free State capitalism can strike a better bargain than FitzGerald and Hume have



attempt to expose the hypocrisy of Haughey's opposition, and that may well have been what Gerry Adams had in mind. But it also reflected the fact that there is no fundamental difference between the analysis of the Agreement offered by Haughey's wing of Fianna Fail and that of Sinn Fein. That is to say, they do not analyse it from different class standpoints.

The Agreement is "a process". And the process is a means of devising a new set of political arrangements for running capitalism in Ireland. The desire for a new set of arrangements is not rooted in the fact that the old arrangements were cruelly unfair to a section of the Northern population. What impelled the British and Irish governments into action was that those who suffered most from the unfairness—the Northern Catholic working class—had plainly resolved that they weren't going to stand for it anymore. They had taken themselves in large numbers outside constitutional politics to seek a remedy. This provided the basis of the IRA campaign, and this campaign threatened the stability of both Irish States. The threat to the North is obvious and direct. The threat to the South arises from the fact that the Northern conflict has put the phoney Republicanism of the

fundamental struggle in Ireland is between the Irish interest and the British interest: not between the interests of the working class of all of Ireland and the combination of capitalist interests presently squabbling about the best means of securing capitalist rule. This is true both of "traditional" Republicans and of those who have moved leftwards in recent years. Gerry Adams, Martin McGuinness, Danny Morrison etc. all make it abundantly clear that they do not believe class-based politics can come centre-stage in Ireland until such time as the British are defeated and a 32-County Irish state instituted. This, inevitably, leads them into political position very close to those capitalist politicians who specialise in (verbal) aggression against Britain and fine rhetoric about Ireland's dignity.

The political sins of FitzGerald, Barry, Hume, Haughey, the reason they can all be counted on to sell-out (even if they argue about the terms of the sale), is not that they are insufficiently patriotic but that they represent capitalism, no section of which in Ireland has any interest whatever in a clean break with the bigger and more powerful capitalist formation across the water.

In the long term, only a revolutionary socialist strategy,

In the long term, only a revolutionary socialist strategy, which counterposes to the schemes and machinations of the capitalists the idea of an Ireland in which the working class rules has any hope of defeating the interests represented in the Agreement.

managed. (Although he is, of course, very short on specifics as to what this better bargain would comprise or what pressures he would use to extract it: he hasn't said that he would open the gates of Portlaoise or pull the Free State army off the border if the Brits refused to budge!)

Haughey is obviously calculating, too, that a strong dose of Republican rhetoric could pay dividends in the forthcoming, general election in crucial marginals, particularly in transfers if Sinn Fein is contesting on an attendance ticket.

If the forces of constitutional nationalism are in some disarray over the Agreement, so too are unconstitutional nationalists. One of the most striking aspects of Haughey's Bodenstown speech was that almost all of it might equally plausibly have been uttered at Sinn Fein's Bodenstown gathering. This is not surprising. When Haughey first rejected the Agreement in November last year Gerry Adams immediately welcomed him "onto the bandwagon of opposition" and expressed the hope that he "would carry through his commitments when in government".

This was explained by Republicans at the time as an

constitutional parties under intense scrutiny and created new tensions within and between them, while at the same time providing an unconstitutional pole of attraction for the large numbers of disaffected workers suffering the effects of a deep economic recession and not fanatically opposed to the notion of bringing down the political system which can't provide them with a decent life. The point of the Agreement is to defuse this explosive situation by re-incorporating into constitutional politics the bulk of alienated Northern Catholics. "Ending the nationalist nightmare" as Peter Barry put it—meaning ending his own nightmare of Irish capitalism crumbling under the pressure.

In short, the purpose of the Agreement is not to attack inequality in the North but to defend capitalism in Ireland both North and South.

Marxists approach this situation from the standpoint of trying to identify where the working-class interest lies and then devising a strategy for advancing that interest. There is a crucial and unbridgeable difference here between Marxism and Republicanism. It is central to Republicanism that the most basic divide in society is between nations, and that the

which counterposes to the schemes and machinations of the capitalists the idea of an Ireland in which the working class rules has any hope of defeating the interests represented in the Agreement. And only a revolutionary socialist party, intervening in day-to-day struggles with this perspective in mind and with tactics drawn from it, will have any hope of making this strategy successful, and of ending the rule of capitalism, the never-ending source of workers' political ills.

The main problem with this perspective is, of course, that the forces of revolutionary socialism in Ireland are quite tiny. It is understandable, indeed inevitable, that many who genuinely wish to be involved in the struggle for socialism will be drawn towards organisations (like Sinn Fein) which are big enough to be "credible" and able to make an impact in the here-and-now.

But unless we begin with an understanding of the class nature of the Agreement, and unless we base ourselves openly and only on the class which alone has an interest and a potential to defeat the forces represented in the Agreement, we are indulging in a mass illusion rather than grappling with the hard reality.

SWM NEWS

EIGHT JOIN UP AT SWM WEEKEND

200 PEOPLE turned up to hear some of the discussion during the weekend of MARXISM IN IRELAND. For three days many joined in the discussion and debate that was organised by the Socialist Workers Movement. Meetings were held on a variety of subjects, ranging from Nicaragua to South Africa, from Marx and Materialism to the politics of Jim Larkin. The atmosphere was at all times lively and friendly.

In the final rally, Eamonn McCann and Kieran Allen spoke on the future for the left in Ireland. They argued that while the working class had suffered defeats—our rulers also had problems. Major struggles were on the cards. It was necessary now

to build a revolutionary socialist organisation with clear politics. They called for firm opposition to the Anglo-Irish Agreement and defence of all those facing repression.

The theme of MARXISM IN IRELAND was the possibility of building a sizable Marxist organisation. This would have no truck with the sell-out politics of the Labour Party—or the illusion that it could be changed. It would build an alternative to the nationalist politics of Sinn Fein. It would stand full square for the Workers' Republic.

Immediately after the final rally, eight people signed up to join the Socialist Workers Movement.

BOOKMARKS

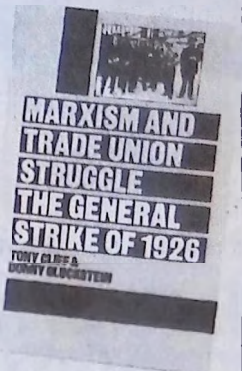
SWM's Bookservice

The Socialist Workers Movement offers for sale a number of important books and pamphlets on topics of interest to socialists. For a complete list write to Bookmarks, PO Box 1684 Dublin 8. Some outstanding recent releases include:

NEW RELEASE! The General Strike of 1926—Marxism and Trade Union Struggle

By Tony Cliff and Donny Gluckstein
In 1926, British workers launched the most serious attack ever on their bosses. For nine glorious days they held out the possibility of radical change.

This book does more than tell the story of 1926. It begins with a substantial analysis of the nature of trade unions (and the officials) in capitalist society.
£6.25



The Revolutionary Ideas of Marx

Karl Marx is one of a handful of people who fundamentally changed the way we see the world. His ideas are so revolutionary that the arguments and re-interpretations began even before his death.

This book rescues Marx from the distortions he has suffered at the hands of friends and enemies alike; to present Marx's basic ideas in as clear and straightforward a manner as possible.
£3.95



THE GREAT STRIKE

The story of the great British miners' strike of 1984-5. Why it happened and why it was beaten. By Alex Callinicos and Mike Simons. £3.95

NICARAGUA: REVOLUTION UNDER SEIGE

What is really happening in Nicaragua? Has mass involvement in the overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship been translated into mass democracy? What will be the political effects of the economic blockade and the military threat? By Mike Gonzalez. £2.50

WOMEN AND THE STRUGGLE FOR SOCIALISM

Socialists believe that the working class should run society. We oppose all forms of oppression which seek to divide the working class. Women are oppressed under capitalism. They also form half of the working class. Their liberation is therefore inseparable from the struggle for socialism. By Norah Carlin. £1.20

TO ORDER YOUR BOOKS BY MAIL:

Cheques and Postal Orders to be made payable to SW Books. Send your order to PO Box 1648 Dublin 8.

REVIEWS

The Mass Strike



Rosa Luxemburg—still relevant today.

IN 1905, the Russian workers launched a mass strike movement. It began when a priest, Fr. Gapon, led a peaceful demonstration to the Tsar to beg for reforms. But the police mowed down the demonstrators. This was to spark of a near-

revolution as workers threw up soviets. One year later Rosa Luxemburg wrote a marvellous book on the experience: **The Mass Strike**, recently republished at £1.95 by Book marks. JOSHUA CLARKE reviews.

What do secret police agents, 'democratic socialists' and ivory-tower revolutionaries have in common? As a rule, not a lot. But on the single issue of mass upheavals they do agree on the overriding importance of 'leaders' in making revolutions. There is a good consensus among them that activists who are clued into the word of god can turn mindless, well-behaved servants of capital into mindless, axe-wielding bearers of destruction.

Rosa Luxemburg took a diametrically opposed view. She has often been accused of taking the wrong position that workers can spontaneously erupt into activity, brushing aside their more cautious leaders. One of the reasons why she underestimated the role of leadership was that she was faced with the bureaucratic monolith of the Second International. Who wouldn't wish to see workers rise up in defiance of the leaders of this so-called International who submitted to the patriotic madness in their own countries from the start of the bosses' First World War? But facts are stubborn things and we should still supplement her book with a reminder of the disastrous retarding influence of bureaucrats and the marvellous accelerating influence of revolutionaries in time of revolutionary upheaval. Especially as one of the great merits of this book is the emphasis it puts on the concrete conditions necessary for a mass strike and the degree to which they are sufficient to make it a reality. Her strength lies, as Tony Cliff's introduction says, "in her complete confidence in workers historical initiative". She was not afraid, as trade

union leaders are, that "premature" acts by the rank and file will destroy the organisation that has been built up painfully and slowly. On the contrary, she realised that "a year of revolution had given the Russian proletariat that 'training' which thirty years of parliamentary and trade union struggle cannot artificially give to the German proletariat." Experience on the picket line, the demonstration and barricade can teach more about the class struggle than any number of pamphlets, posters and speeches—no matter how important these are. When capitalism lurches into or out of slumps and boom and the living conditions of workers change dramatically, the level of struggle automatically picks up, regardless of what the "all seeing leaders" do. But the ultimate scope of this struggle is still affected by the stance of those leaders—particularly in terms of political gains.

Socialists can only be disgusted by the attacks made on the "political strike" by the likes of Barry Desmond. Rosa Luxemburg shows how economic struggles inevitably raise political questions like whose side the cops are on. An accumulation of such questions especially if there are revolutionaries around suggesting answers, can result in mass strikes adopting political aims. An atmosphere of political tension can unleash economic struggles among workers who may never have been organised before. In this way a mass strike can involve a chain-reaction of ever-increasing intensity, which—as Rosa Luxemburg foresees in this book—heralds the death of capitalism.



MONA LISA—turning the old thriller plots upside down

Illusions in the image

NEIL JORDAN'S third film, 'Mona Lisa' opened recently in Dublin. It is set in London's prostitute world, between the downmarket King's Cross bridge pick up point and the high class Ritz Restaurant, where the high class 'hooker' Simone, played by Catherine Tyson, does her business.

George, a simple, bumbling and emotional figure brilliantly played by Bob Hoskins, acts as her chauffeur. He gradually falls in love with her. A search for Simone's ex-hooker friend leads George into the Soho sex market. The ugliness of this world seen through George's innocent eyes is a powerful indictment of the meat market of Soho.

The film is somehow a search for goodness, for some redeeming quality amid the oppression and the sordid dealings of the sex market. George in his love for Simone and in his affection for his daughter; Simone in her search and love for her former hooker companion.

'Mona Lisa' is, however, badly cliched. Hoskin's performance rises well above the cliches but Tyson at times fails badly. This makes the relationship with George very unconvincing. This may be due to acting ability but the script is mainly at fault. Her character is never fully developed. Her background is never presented. She is always the upmarket hooker.

The drama of the story is the typical thriller format, with no surprises. The thriller element is incidental to the development of the relationships. The result is an unhappy mix.

It is, however, quite a good film. The exchanges between George and his friend, Thomas, are great. Thomas' business ventures are amazingly funny. Some of the sequences are great to look at. The film is, however, marred by its fairy-tale quality. It finds redeeming qualities in its main characters but fairy tales don't make much sense in the exploitative world of Soho.

THE CLOSEST THING TO SOCIALIST COMEDY

BEN ELTON looks more comfortable as an accountant or estate agent than a comedian. He dresses in suit and spectacles and looks as outrageous as a cigarette. And yet Ben Elton lays claim to wanting to be as shocking and outrageously funny as he possibly can.

OUTRAGEOUS

He's not too far off the mark, for Ben concentrates his repertoire on subjects such as sexism, racism and middle class snobbery—outrageous enough I should think, in a world of Benny Hill, Brendan Grace and Jimmy Tarbuck. Ben was doing a gig in Dublin recently and for all those unfortunate enough to

miss him, take heart, he'll be back in a new series of "Saturday night live" not to be missed! This is the programme that sprang Ben Elton from the fringes of obscurity to great heights. His approach, for example, to taking the piss out of comedians that constantly use sexist jokes to titillate the audience reinforces the idea that they are just idiots, not comedians.

CONFORMED

Yet comedy under capitalism like all other jobs of work, has developed and conformed to the ruling class ideas, media control and ultimately censored tailoring of material that smacks of anything rebellious. The days when comedians, like

court jesters, pandered to the ruling class are still with us.

For instance, recently, in a "Woman's Own" interview, Jimmy Tarbuck rebuked any up and coming comedians for having a go at the Royal Family but then Jimmy Tarbuck is a royal court jester of the most idiotic kind.

COURT JESTER

Ben Elton Breaks from the tradition of "court jester", with a style of quick patter that makes you sit up, concentrate and laugh at the contradictions of day-to-day life in capitalist society.

Ben Elton objects to being introduced by the media as a "left wing comedian", because the other lot aren't introduced

as "right wing comedians". I find that funny in itself. It's fantastic to have such a talented comedian on our side. But for how long Ben can stay on the side of the working class depends on how much his developing comedy can be muted.

And that could well be a forgone conclusion. Yet for today, left wing comedy like Ben Elton's is the closest thing to socialist comedy we've got to date.

And as Emma Goldmann pointed out many years ago if socialism means we can't dance then she don't want any part of it.

And like Emma Goldmann, we all want to dance and laugh in freedom together.

—EAMONN LEWSLEY



JOIN US!

I would like more details about the Socialist Workers Movement

NAME

ADDRESS

Send to SWM, PO Box 1648, Dublin 8.

Cork ESB linesmen sold out



Gardai scabbed on ESB linesmen, now it's the army.

LAST YEAR, ESB linesmen in Cork went on strike to protect their jobs and conditions. Their battle was an inspiration to all trade unionists.

Here, an ESB worker and member of the Socialist Workers Movement looks at the lessons of the strike and brings us up to date.

THE ESB strike in Cork in which 180 linesmen, drivers and general workers struck for 22 weeks ended in defeat. This was mainly because there was a failure to spread the strike to the power stations, especially at Aghlada and Marina. It was not for lack of effort on the part of a determined strike committee who did genuinely make attempts to spread the strike

in this way.

A second reason for the failure was the sabotage by the National President of the ATGWU, Jimmy Tinkler who was clearly on the side of the ESB management. The fight to preserve jobs and conditions had already been conceded by Tinkler in all other areas of the country.

For merely defending jobs and

conditions strikers were vilified by "Irish Times" editorials as "selfish" and by the "Cork Examiner" as "despicable pickets".

After a chain was thrown across some power lines totally unconnected with the strike, three members of the strike committee were arrested under the Offences Against the State Act and held for several hours—despite the action being condemned by the Strike Committee.

MINISTER

Dick Spring, Minister for Energy, sent in the Gardai to protect scabs and rubbed salt in the wound by saying that this was being done "in the interests of the trade union movement".

In the face of this campaign of hate, Tinkler kept holding secret ballots to try to force a return to work. He walked out of the meeting when there were two clear majorities for continuing the strike and sabotaged attempts by Matt Merrigan to get official backing.

Eventually he managed to swing a narrow majority for a return to work with two items: a £500 interest-free loan and a no victimisation clause.

So after nearly six months of struggle against a combination of stubborn management and a treacherous union bureaucracy, many of the strikers, in debt and unable any more to afford even the necessities of life, voted for a return. At least there would be no

victimisations, they thought. This was to be proved cruelly wrong.

A few weeks after the return, the manager, Ken O'Hara sent out threatening letters to many of the men about their "behaviour" during the strike—as if a strike is some kind of picnic. Then he sent letters to five men informing them that they had been suspended with pay. Suspension with pay in the ESB is nearly always followed by dismissal.

A lot of ideas on how to fight this were bandied about and a strike was called for but with the experience of one strike defeat still fresh, this motion was defeated. A court injunction was suggested but Jimmy Tinkler decided to defend them through the union. A clear-cut case was presented to the Industrial Council.

MESSAGE

The Council voted in favour of the men and this seemed a clear message for the union to stand and fight. However, Jimmy Tinkler returned to the Council for "clarification". Again they voted in the men's favour.

However, Tinkler decided he needed further clarification. This time the Council decided in the Board's favour. Jimmy Tinkler then says he always accepts the Council's decision and did not seek any further clarification. Tinkler's method of operation has become known as TAB—"try again balloting"; if at first you don't get

the required result, try again.

The five men must now face trumped-up charges by the ESB management for things supposedly done during the strike. It appears that some of the engineers and electricians were offended by the word "scab".

Other charges refer to phone calls made to people who on picking up the receiver were able immediately to identify the caller. Anyone with any experience can tell you voices can not be identified even by experts with any kind of certainty, yet men stand to lose their jobs on such flimsy evidence. There are other equally ridiculous charges.

The magnificent fight that ESB strikers put up show how workers are prepared to take on the bosses even against the worst odds.

Secondly it demonstrates how the bureaucracy of the unions can work to defeat strikes. In Tinkler's case it is clear that a lifetime of "doing deals" without any reference back to the workers corrupts in such a way that he ends up firmly on the side of the bosses. He hopes to be rewarded on his retirement by some plum job in the Labour Court. He has helped to force Matt Merrigan on the left wing of the bureaucracy into early retirement.

Finally, when ESB strikers went to Waterford to seek support and solidarity for their strike they were adopting a winning strategy. It was probably too little too late. With more action like that they could have spread the strike and beaten the ESB and Tinkler.

ITGWU tax campaign options

THE membership of the ITGWU is being asked to vote on a programme of action on tax and jobs drawn up by the headquarters in Liberty Hall. Following the national ballot a decision will be taken at a Special Delegate Conference in November on the union's campaign for job creation and tax equity. This procedure was suggested by Union General President, John Carroll at the conclusion of the debate on tax and jobs at the recent Annual Delegate Conference in Connolly Hall, Cork. The conference accepted his proposal and agreed to the withdrawal of a number of motions calling for various forms of action—some of which included strike action. This manoeuvre was subsequently ratified by the National Executive Council of the union.

Members were asked to vote on the following five options:

- Option A. That the Union continue with the present campaign of lobbying and demonstrations;
- Option B. That the Union hold a national half-day strike on a date to be fixed by the National Executive Council;
- Option C. That the Union hold a national 24 hour stoppage on a date to be fixed by the National Executive Council;
- Option D. That the Union hold a series of 24 hour stoppages—one each week from December up to the week of the 1987 Budget; and
- Option E. That the Union hold a national week long stoppage in December or January.

Workers who remember the previous tax campaign will be

rightfully sceptical that the union bureaucrats can lead a successful struggle forward to achieve tax equity. Upwards of half a million workers struck and took to the streets to demand tax reform a number of years ago. The strength was there to force the bosses to pay up from profits and ease the PAYE burden on workers. But the union leaders threw it away. They blamed their own rank-and-file for not electing the right government. They are incapable of leading a struggle forward by deepening and developing the use of the political strike weapon. They are unwilling to confront the state with this action.

Why? Because the union leaders believe that politics must be left to the TDs in the Dail. They reject any tradition

that would undermine the authority of the Dail by determined political strike action.

So how should socialists view the present campaign by the ITGWU bosses? First, we should be clear that workers' activity and confidence is not like a revolver that can be kept unused for years in the bureaucrats' pockets and then taken out and fired at will. This ballot is more the result of a manoeuvre by Carroll rather than a feeling of militancy within the rank-and-file. There has been no real campaign beforehand.

Second, a bureaucratically-led campaign on tax and jobs will lead to compromise and eventual sell-out. To believe that they

will push forward with worker demands whatever the outcome of the ballot is to place hope before experience.

Only rank-and-file activity can go beyond the limits set by the union bosses and fight successfully through the industrial power of workers.

However, we should not abstain from the ballot. Socialists should use every opportunity to put their arguments.

So any proposal that opens up prospects for activity must be supported by all socialists.

Therefore, because a national work stoppage lasting a full week offers potentially a chance for the rank-and-file of the union to become involved to a greater extent, we ask workers who decide to cast their vote to support Option E.

Social workers strike against spending cuts

STAFF in the Social Services sector in Belfast walked out of work on Friday 10th Oct. in protest at Government cuts in public spending.

Three thousand workers took part in the half-day strike which closed day-centres and social services offices in both Protestant and Catholic areas (including the Falls and Shankill Roads). Workers were joined on the picket line by many of the day centre users who will suffer if the cuts go through.

The areas which will be hit by the proposed £½million

reduction in services are North and West Belfast where over 21,000 people are unemployed. NIPSA said that the cuts would mean a reduction in the number of acutely ill patients who can get hospital treatment by 27,000 each year, and the loss of day centres and cutbacks in home help services. At the same time attacks on trade unions within the social services in the North continues with the setting up of a new committee on mental health which excludes the participation of union representatives.

Yet again it has been shown that the health service is far from safe in Margaret Thatcher's hands. Nor is it safe in Garrett FitzGerald's: as the ongoing drive towards greater privatisation of health care in the 26 counties proves.

The Social Services strikers in Belfast have shown the way to fight the cuts and defend the health service. It is a lead which must be followed by all public sector workers who want to defend jobs and services.

— LINDA MOORE

HOTEL WORKERS STICK IT OUT

Over 100 workers at the Shelbourne Hotel are on strike over wages and union recognition. The Number 4 branch of the ITGWU is involved.

The present dispute has its roots in a lock-out in 1983. This lasted 3 months and ended on the company's terms. A confident management forced through a redundancy package. They followed it up by a brazen manipulation of the earnings system which went to make up the wage packets.

Management robbed from the service charge pool to supplement a cut in the basic wage. Staff taken on after the lock-out got less from the service charge than was appropriate in order to supplement the wages of the older staff.

The present dispute was sparked off by management offering, last March, a 6% increase on the basic. It was rejected. But the 6% was nevertheless imposed, without any reference to negotiations. It is this sort of arrogance in not consulting the workforce that is the main bone of contention.

A militant and forceful strike is now necessary. This will need the full participation of all the striking members. This could achieve, not just the limited aim of forcing the company to negotiate, it could also turn the tables

and put the workers back on the offensive.

At the moment, the slogan used on the picket imitates the company logo of 'The Most Distinguished Address in Ireland'. Their slogan is 'The Most Distinguished Picket in Ireland'. The pickets are certainly confronted by a daily flow of 'distinguished scabs' and bosses who patronise the hotel.

The strikers have attempted to politely inform these people of the issues involved. This approach appears to work, according to the strikers. But for how long? It is not in the interest of any boss to see any group of workers victorious. Sustained pressure to embarrass these distinguished scabs will be necessary.

Workers should also put a real effort into having the hotel blacked. They should not just leave this up to the officials. To get effective blacking you need forceful argument from the strikers with shop stewards from the delivery firms.

This strike will be won not just by publicity campaigns - welcome and all as they are. It will demand the tried and tested methods of effective blacking, levies from the wider branch and strong pickets. This may not win 'public opinion', but it does win a strike.

Mick Berry.

Socialist Worker

CORK CORPORATION Army scabbing stiffens strikers' resolve

Report by
CORK SWM

SOCIALIST WORKERS MOVEMENT
PUBLIC MEETINGS

The Anglo-Irish Agreement—The Socialist Alternative

speaker: EAMONN McCANN

Dublin: Wednesday 12th November. Venue to be announced.

Waterford: Thursday 13th November. Venue to be announced.

Kilkenny: Friday 14th November. Venue to be announced.

Derry: Monday 17th November, Gweedore Bar, Waterloo St. 8 pm.

Belfast: Wednesday 19th November. Conway Mills, Falls Road, 8 pm.

Dundalk: Thursday 20th November. Venue to be announced.

CORK PUBLIC FORUM

Oppose the Anglo-Irish Agreement with EAMONN McCANN, JIM LANE, DES WILSON Saturday 15th November. Venue to be announced.

All meetings start at 8 pm. See posters and leaflets for details.



Pickets being removed by Gardai from in front of the Cork Water Works

ARMY SCABS have once again been brought in to try to break a strike. Cork Corporation water-works were taken over by the army within weeks of the start of the strike by Corporation Workers.

The 600 ITGWU members have been on strike since 21st September, over parity with Dublin Corporation. They are demanding £20 a week travelling and meal allowance in line with Dublin workers.

The chance to strike together with Dublin Corporation workers was unfortunately not taken up. The Cork Corporation workers voted at the time against action. The Cork city authorities noted the unwillingness to strike together and made an insulting offer of £4 instead of the £20 being demanded.

It was this derisory offer which, a striking shop steward told Socialist Worker 'provoked a decisive 2 to 1 majority in favour of strike action'. The use of army scabs has served to make the strikers even more determined to beat their bosses.

The Cork workers have looked for solidarity from other Corporation workers, in Cork, Waterford, Galway and Limerick. Unfortunately, these groups have so far taken no action, adopting the same attitude that Cork workers had to the Dublin Corpo Strike and hoping that the Cork Workers can win on their own.

The strikers are fiercely determined to stay out until Christmas if it is necessary. However, if they are to win, it will be vital to spread the strike to all sections of Cork Corporation.

Ballylumford power strike

THE POWER of the working class was brought home to everyone in the Six Counties in the middle of October. The strike which began at Ballylumford Power Station on Tuesday 14th October brought the whole of the North to a standstill. Factories stopped, shops were closed and restaurants couldn't cook meals. Anyone who thought "the working class is dead" got a rude re-awakening.

The workers at Ballylumford had not been known for their militancy in support of working class interests. Their power is traditionally used for sectarian, anti-working class purposes. In 1974, 1977, 3rd March last and probably this November, they have led viciously sectarian strikes.

Because of their past record, many workers were afraid to support their strike in October. But this strike was different. It was about protecting their rights as workers and

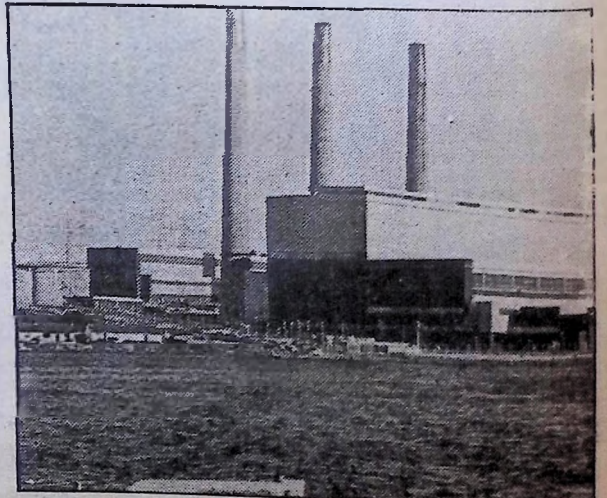
about health and safety at work. An underlying reason for the strike was a recent report that the Northern Ireland Electricity Service was to be used as a test case by the Tories for the privatisation of the electricity service in Britain.

The privatisation plans include the conversion of all NIE power stations to coal or lignite—all except Ballylumford that is. A new station is to be built near the lignite mines which would vastly reduce dependency on Ballylumford which at present produces 60 percent of the North's electricity.

The militancy learned by the Ballylumford workers in their reactionary strikes was put to good use this time in defence of working conditions. If working class unity is ever to be achieved in the Six Counties, it is vital that we support Protestant workers who are engaged in real

workers' struggles. That support gives us all the more right to condemn their abuse of workers

industrial power when and if they use it for sectarian reasons around 15th November.



SUBSCRIBE!
READ SOCIALIST WORKER EVERY MONTH

I would like to take out a subscription to Socialist Worker for a year and enclose £5

NAME

ADDRESS

Send to Socialist Worker, PO Box 1648, Dublin 8