



# socialist republic

incorporating UNFREE CITIZEN

NEWSPAPER OF PEOPLES DEMOCRACY AND MOVEMENT FOR A SOCIALIST REPUBLIC NO. 4 VOL. 1

## SMASH CASTLEREAGH



The British reaction to Amnesty International's report on torture in the six-counties reaches the limits of hypocrisy even for the British. They banned TV comment on the report while mounting a propaganda campaign against Amnesty. They stood logic on its head to argue that the small number of cases investigated didn't prove torture - ignoring the fact that they refused Amnesty further information and the simple point that to find conclusive proof of torture in only 76 cases suggests a truly massive and systematic background of torture. The farce was complete when Mason and his friends announced with straight faces that they were holding a private inquiry into themselves.

The British aren't very convincing. After all they're two time losers. It wasn't so long ago that they were found guilty at Strasbourg and lied to the court, saying

that they hadn't done it and they wouldn't do it again.

Most Irish workers see this and see Mason's inquiry as a whitewash but you have to read the fine print to see its extent. The private inquiry will not examine evidence of police brutality at all. Allegations will be examined by the North's discredited Department of Public Prosecutions and they will present a general summary to the inquiry.

The use of systematic torture in the North is a fact. It's a daily fact of life for those in the ghettos. It's been established by a whole series of probes, documented statements and independent inquiries like the one in Dublin recently, all leading to the Amnesty report. We can't afford to let the British off the hook with their private cover-up that doesn't even examine the question of torture.

We must unite to press home our advantage. Our aim shouldn't be clouded by arguments with the British about whether torture exists. We should have the clear aim of forcing an end to torture through the following demands:

- \* End seven-day detention.
- \* Scrap the emergency laws.
- \* Close the torture centres.
- \* Scrap the Diplock courts (80% of convictions before these non-jury courts are based on confessions made at the torture centres)
- \* Release all those sentenced on confessions extracted by torture.

\* Political Status for the victims of this massive political repression held in the H-Blocks.

Many organisations have made statements about the torture but getting them to co-operate in action will be difficult. The opportunities are there however. In Britain trade-unionists have at last begun to move against the blatant censorship. There's the real chance of a broader based sympathy in the future.

In the South Fianna Fail's lack of action on the report on brutality in the 26-counties mean they are condemned with the British since the British cover-up is a carbon copy of Fianna Fail's. The Southern Inquiry is so blatantly corrupt that it is concentrating on ways of reducing prisoners' rights. Whatever strong words the Fianna Fail government use to condemn the British over Castlereagh they too stand in the dock. Dublin has its own Castlereaghs as the treatment of the IRSP

defendants shows only too clearly. And it has its own Long Kesh as the Amnesty report highlighted.

Torture and repression are vital to defend the exploitative system maintained in this country by British Imperialism and its servants on both sides of the border. They are instruments of imperialist rule. Striking a blow against these instruments will be a major advance on the road to ending British occupation.

But to secure that advance we need unity. We need the united action of all those who oppose torture and repression. The efforts of TUCAR in the trade unions, Relatives' Action Committees, the Association for Legal Justice and all other anti-repression bodies must be co-ordinated to build a massive campaign to shut down the torture centres and to finally sweep Mason and his torturers into the oblivion they deserve.



### AMNESTY REPORT SPELLS OUT TORTURE

## S.L.P. CONFERENCE - A STEP BACKWARDS

In the last issue of Socialist Republic we discussed the formation of the Socialist Labour Party (SLP). We welcomed its formation as a valuable contribution to the development of working-class action in the 26-counties but warned that an over-emphasis on parliamentary activity and lack of clarity on the national question represented dangers for the formation of a real working-class party. Recently the SLP had its first policy conference. How has it developed and what direction has the conference mapped out?

#### REFORMISM

One of the problems with reformist parties like the Labour Party is the absence of effective party democracy. The parliamentarians hold control, ignore conference decisions and define party policy to suit themselves. Regrettably, this tendency exists in

the SLP. This was clearly shown by Dr. Noel Brown's pre-empting the conference discussion on the national question when he made a major personal statement on the issue. (For comment on the speech see inside pages). At the con-

ference itself the leadership absented itself from major debates - their attitude suggesting they didn't feel themselves bound by the conference decisions.

Over 200 delegates attended the Dublin conference, debating policy documents on the oppression of women, agriculture, the national question and the economy. A large number of amendments were put to each document and with a crowded agenda debate tended to be become rushed at times. It became clear during the conference that this reflected

political confusion and disagreement within the party. This was most apparent in the debate on the national question and on the economy when the question of how the party should relate to socialist and non-socialist forces became a contentious issue.

#### NATIONAL QUESTION

An amendment to the document on the national question, calling for a constituent assembly over all 32-counties and deeming the call for

contd. on page 4

# BELFAST HOSPITAL ROW: SECTARIAN ATTACK ON WORKERS RIGHTS

Loyalist politician Robert Bradford recently added another chapter to his book of attacks on the anti-Unionist working-class when he attacked workers in the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast, using the 'privilege'

Loyalist politician Robert Bradford recently added another chapter to his book of attacks on the anti-Unionist working class when he attacked workers in Belfast's Royal Victoria Hospital, using the 'privilege' of the Westminster Parliament to name them as supporters of the IRA. This follows on from his campaign to force cut-backs in the West Belfast Pologlass housing scheme. He got away with it then because of the lack of reaction from the anti-Unionist working-class, but this time it may be a different story.

Bradford's activities are very like those of American Senator Joe McCarthy in the mid-50s. He established a reign of terror where anyone with left-wing sympathies

was blacklisted and barred from all forms of employment. It's also reminiscent of the system of discrimination in the North - universal under Stormont and still a dominant factor in industry - which kept socialists, republicans and the mass of 'disloyal' Catholics on the dole. In fact one of the victories of the mass movement in the North has been to considerably weaken this system in the Royal and this is probably the main reason for Bradford's attack.

In this attack on workers' rights the British Labour govt. has been tail-ending the loyalists all along the line. When Loyalists mounted a campaign about security they spent enormous sums erecting a 'security barrier' to keep local people out - while continuing to cut back money spent on hospital services - and this in an area with the highest infant mortality rate in Western Europe.

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this case points only in one direction - against the workers.

The British use of parliamentary 'privilege' in this case points only in one direction - against the workers. When left-wing MP's named intelligence agent 'Colonel B' they were reprimanded and papers publishing the name were prosecuted. Yet Bradford is free to set up Irish workers and the recording of the names is rebroadcast by the media.

There has been a heartening reaction to this intimidation from the men involved and from their union. Within 24 hours one man had gone to the RUC and challenged them to produce evidence against him. John Coulthard of NUPE, acting on behalf of the men, challenged Bradford to repeat the allegations and helped the men to issue a writ for slander.

But these activities are not enough in themselves to beat back Bradford and T.U.

officials have too weak a record in fighting repression to be left in charge of the fight. Rank and file activity on the streets is an urgent necessity. RVH workers have in the past organised to fight health cuts and unfair dismissals. They should take advantage of their own organisation and rank and file contacts through TUCAR (See Pg. 5) to force a declaration from their employers that they will respect the democratic rights of the workers and that no worker will be victimised for their political beliefs. This sort of organisation could push the trade union movement into active opposition to repression and also prevent further erosion of the health services that Belfast workers depend on. The British govt. and the bosses are already attacking the workers and are ready to appease Bradford. The workers must depend on their own strength to defeat him.

# IRISH TROOPS IN LEBANON

"We view the Arab question through a rifle's sight" - that is the famous declaration of the Israeli general Abraham Yoffe some years ago.

After expelling the Palestinians from their homeland in 1948, the Zionist regime at first considered the Palestinian problem merely a diplomatic nuisance, which its delegates to the United Nations had to deal with whenever an Arab state raised the refugee question.

Since 1965, however, confronted with the armed and political struggle of the Palestinian national movement, the rulers of Israel have been determined to eradicate the problem - which has grown into an international question - through the rifle's barrel. And it was this "final solution" that Israel sought to achieve by means of the recent "purifying operation" in Southern Lebanon.

## BLITZKRIEG

The 25,000 Israeli troops who invaded the Lebanon in March were supposed to be "retaliating" against "terrorist bases" after a Palestinian commando operation which resulted in the death of 14 people. The ferocity and ruthlessness of the Israeli troops soon showed that this claim was pure hypocrisy. Just one week after the invasion the number of refugees in the Lebanon was estimated by the United Nations at 265,000, not counting the 100,000 made homeless because of the Lebanese civil war in 1975-76. Far from making any effort to concentrate only on 'military' targets, the Israelis made a special effort to hit refugee camps. For the first time in the Middle East the Israeli bombers dropped cluster bomb units which scatter shrapnel indiscriminately across a football-field-sized area. The appalling results of this were clear from the news-

paper reports and television reports of what happened to the affected areas. Even the United States govt., traditionally an unconditional backer of Israel, was forced to make criticisms of its 'blitzkrieg'.

However, it was not concern for 'Human Rights' which motivated the U.S. administration in its subsequent proposal for the replacement of the Israeli's with a U.N. 'peace-keeping' force. They realised quicker than the government in Tel Aviv that the invasion was not going to achieve its aim of - in Israeli Premier Begin's words - "cutting off the evil arm" of the Palestinians. Instead what had happened was: 1) the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) regrouped north of the Litani River; 2) Israel was getting bogged down in a military commitment which could drag on indefinitely and fatally undermine its ability to survive; 3) Israel was rapidly losing international sympathy and gaining the type of unwelcome publicity the U.S. received during its occupation of Viet Nam.

Hence the setting up of a UN 'peace-keeping' force. It's principal advantage from the imperialist point of view is that it has a greater ability to present itself as neutral. Just like the 'neutral' British troops who came onto the streets of Belfast and Derry in 1969 to replace the 'extreme' RUC and 'defend' the Catholic ghettos from Orange attacks, their real role has gradually become apparent. They have gone only to Lebanese territory and not to Israel where the blitzkrieg was launched; they are only trying to disarm and demobilise the Palestinians; they are trying to rebuild a National Lebanese army in co-operation with the extreme right-wing Phalangists in order to put down the Palestinian resistance.



All of this means that it is the duty of all anti-imperialist organisations in this country to demand the withdrawal of Irish troops from Lebanon and opposition to any UN involvement there. Not alone does the 26-county regime collaborate with imperialism in this country in order to frustrate the desire of the Irish for national

independence but it is now helping Israel to crush the Palestinian national resistance. There can be no ambiguity on this question. We say:

**IRISH TROOPS OUT OF LEBANON!  
SUPPORT THE STRUGGLE OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE!  
DEPEND THE PLO!**

## DENIS MURPHY - AMNESTY REPORT NEW DEVELOPMENTS

F.D. member Denis Murphy is due to come to trial at the end of June. As this paper is being produced it is becoming clearer and clearer that the British intend a major piece of political victimisation.

Denis was arrested in March 1977 after a massive army raid on the Dermot Hill estate where he lives. He was subsequently charged with four separate arms and documents offences. The number of charges in themselves show a political decision by the RUC to aim for the highest possible sentence. This aim is even more clearly shown in the most serious charge, 'possession of a weapon with intent to endanger life.' This charge is normally put when someone is captured in personal possession of a weapon which

is loaded and ready to fire. The evidence in Denis' case is that he did not have the weapons on his person and that they were unloaded and 'broken down' - yet the judiciary have accepted that this charge go forward as the central element of the Trial. We see this as clear evidence of victimisation.

But there is nothing unusual in this victimisation.

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# CONTRACEPTION ACTION PROGRAMME

## LEGALISE CONTRACEPTION NOW

No restrictive legislation on Contraception:  
This was the call made from the platform of a public meeting on Contraception in Dublin South East on the 24th May.

The meeting was one of a number of different activities organised in Dublin in the past few months by the Contraception Action Programme and the S.L.F.

The following article deals with aspects of the proposed legislation and suggests ways in which a national campaign against any restriction in the distribution of contraceptives can be built.

### THE BISHOPS

On the 4th of April Catholic Bishops made a major statement on Contraceptive laws. The media have presented this as an increasing Liberalisation because they have graciously accepted that the state no longer has to follow their dictates in framing laws. In fact this is sheer dishonesty and hypocrisy by the bishops. The constant pressure being maintained by them is quite clearly designed to influence the forthcoming legislation. Their position must be seen for the reactionary one that it is.

They say: "the present legal situation regarding contraceptives is indeed unsatisfactory. Contraceptives can now be imported without legal restriction. They can now be obtained in many places by young unmarried people". They are in favour of "some minimum amending legislation" which they say "would bring about a better situation than we now have". It's clear from this that they want the strictest possible controls placed on the distribution of contraceptives and especially a law making them available only to married couples.

Minister for Health Haughey has nothing to say about the bishops campaign. His silence demonstrates clearly that the Government is not prepared to confront the Catholic hierarchy on the issue.

### A RIGHT FOR ALL

A law making contraceptives available only to married couples would have the most reactionary effects. In effect it would be an ultimatum to all unmarried people especially the youth of the country. They would either have to live their lives according to the rigid moral code established by the bishops or suffer all the social ills of, illegitimacy, backstreet abortions and women left abandoned to bring up children.

By its very nature such legislation would produce a situation whereby the distribution of contraceptives even to married people would be limited. As shown from countries in the past it would be impossible to operate and would put severe psychological pressure on women to prove that they are married.

The passing of such a law would have effects in areas well outside the immediate issue of contraception. It would mean that the Catholic hierarchy maintained maintained a dominant position in the 26 county state. It would have the effect of entrenching some of the most reactionary views prevalent in Ireland on sexuality and parti-

cularly Female sexuality. The official view would depict sex not as a natural relationship between people but as a rigidly controlled method of producing children. This would entrench the idea of women as mainly child bearers without the right to an independent life, and would weaken the fight for women's rights to control their fertility. It would strengthen the laws discriminating against women and confirming their secondary position in society and push back the fight for equal pay and equal opportunities.

### NATIONAL CAMPAIGN

If we are to succeed in preventing the introduction of restrictive legislation a national campaign against any such measures and for contraception for all who seek it must be built now.

The Contraception Action Programme has the ability of drawing together large numbers of people from women's, political and trade union organisations, as well as people outside. Support should be sought from as many as possible, and to ensure that the resolutions passed by trade union bodies and others are put into practice in a real way. C.A.P. should send a delegation to visit such bodies. The Labour Party, the DUV, the SLP and and executive committees of all the unions, and all organisations who are pledged on paper to fighting for contraception facilities to be available to all who seek them must be approached for financial, political, and organisational support.

This is a vital requirement to building a mass national campaign. C.A.P. should also call for a national demonstration and rally in September or early autumn before the bill is to be introduced in the Dail.

Propaganda through leaflets, stickers, posters etc is important. We should also discuss ways of giving the campaign a feminist dimension and bring to the fore the specific needs of women. Particular consideration must be given to involving students in third level education and youth in the campaign.

The struggle for the basic democratic right to contraception for all is a vital part of the fight to end Church domination and control over our lives. A campaign that can win such a demand through a national mass mobilisation would be a big step forward for Irish women.



Women attending the C.A.P. public meeting in Ballyfermot neighbourhood centre

### DEBT ACT CLAIMS VICTIM

The North has one of the worst housing records in Europe and the recent cuts in Belfast's Foleglass housing scheme show that it's not likely to get any better. But life for those housed in one of the 'instant slums' thrown up by the housing executive is no picnic. This was clearly demonstrated by the recent massive protests by the residents of Divis Flats in which they called for the immediate demolition of the Flats. The intensity of these shocking housing conditions was tragically illustrated by the suicide of 41-year-old Rosaleen Anne Nolan, found hanging in the closet of her Turf Lodge flat on the 24th of May.

Mrs Nolan had repeatedly asked to be re-housed. She was responsible for a one parent family, had a mentally handicapped daughter and one girl at school and was herself an epileptic. The condition of the flat was reported as follows:

"The walls were often soaked when the toilet of the flat above overflowed and a broken drain in the front garden left a constant pool at her door which carried the dank and dirty water into her hall."

The conditions for this tragic death could have occurred in many parts of Ireland or Britain. But there is one

element in Mrs Nolan's death which is unique to the six-counties. For some time before her death the family's standard of living had been pushed below the poverty line by the draconian 'Payment for Debt Act', which allows the state to take money on social security payments. (See letter on back page.)

Mrs Nolan lived solely on the meagre supplementary benefits payments she received. She fell behind with her rent, which meant that she came to the attention of the N.I. Office's Benefits Allocations Branch - a misnomer if there ever was one, for the dept exists to take away money from people in debt.

Mrs Nolan was never brought before any court or found guilty of any crime, but she was killed by a state bureaucracy that exists to punish the working-class for the 'crime' of poverty.

This death comes as directly from imperialist exploitation as does British Army brutality. Any successful united action against imperialism must include action on these day-to-day struggles for survival by the working-class. The Divis Flats residents have shown that such a mobilisation is possible. It's up to the political parties, women's and community groups to build on this.

### DEFEND DENIS MURPHY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE TWO.

It's normal for anti-imperialists to be charged with the most serious offences and

receive the maximum sentences. What is unique about Denis' case is that he is basing his defence at the trial on the right of anti-imperialists, under attack by both state forces and loyalist paramilitaries, to hold arms in their own defence. We in F.D./M.S.R. unreservedly support that right and will be active in

the campaign in support of Comrade Murphy.

Meanwhile the petition in support of Denis has drawn support both nationally and internationally. Signatories include: The members and supporters of Comite Irlandais in Paris, the members of the panel of the International Tribunal held in Dublin, prominent trade unionists and supporters of civil liberties in the South, and over 200 Irish emigres in Coventry.

### SUBSCRIPTIONS

From now on subscriptions to the SOCIALIST REPUBLIC internationally and in the twenty-six counties will be dealt with from our Dublin office. Subscriptions to Britain and in the six counties will be dealt with by our Belfast Office. See addresses on page eight.

# A step backwards

## S.L.P. CONFERENCE

### CONT'D FROM PAGE 1

a United Ireland a progressive one was defeated. In opposition a motion reading 'A united capitalist Ireland would be reactionary even if were possible since it would require the smashing of one section of the working-class. We must therefore make it clear that the only united Ireland we want is a united socialist Ireland.' Socialist Republic believes that this decision represents a step backwards for the SLP. It sounds like a very socialist and left-wing position but in practice it means that their support for the central political issue in the struggle is ambiguous and conditional. If a united Ireland not controlled by the socialists would automatically be reactionary why do the British oppose it so determinedly? How are we to win to a Worker's Republic if socialists aren't to the forefront in calling for national independence and the right of Ireland to self-determination?

Unfortunately things didn't improve in the debate on activity. Motions calling for united activity with "all forces prepared to fight repression" were defeated. The conferen-

ce did agree to work for a united front against repression, but only with "working-class, anti-imperialist forces". Leaving aside the considerable problem of who defines which organisations fit this definition, this means that in effect the SLP will only engage in united anti-repression work if it approves of the other groups involved. For example: would the SLP have refused to support the Murray Defence Campaign because the Liberal editor of 'Hibernia' supported it? Do they not support the Independent Inquiry into brutality (reported elsewhere in this issue) because a catholic priest helped organise it?

It's clear from the debate that the majority of the delegates lacked the experience to force such problems and that some at least are committed to a politically sectarian position of abstention from any real work in these areas. PD/MSR believe in the necessity of broad based unity against repression. We believe that it is only in action and in debate with other forces that the socialist programme can win the support of Irish workers. A refusal to carry out such work amounts to a failure to fight for the socialist programme.

### ECONOMY

The same approach was evident in the debate around the document on the economy. A motion for building a broad current in the unions around issues such as equal pay, union democracy, support for weaker sectors, etc was defeated. One reason was because this would mean the involvement of at least some trade union officials. The opposing proposal was 'for a 'rank and file' movement whose only policy would be 'more militancy'.

In practice this means the exclusion of broader political issues from work in the trade unions. A good example has been the 'New Liberty' group in the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union (ITGWU). It's membership was united in nothing but strident criticism of the bureaucracy for not being militant enough and would split if broad political issues were raised. It has not been hard for the union leadership to isolate them by making slightly more militant speeches.

### WOMEN

The debate on women's oppression was perhaps the most successful of the con-



ference (helped by the fact that women members are able to organise independently) but even here there were weaknesses. The party did agree to call for free abortion on demand, but unfortunately there was no debate on the more immediately important issues of campaigning to change the laws relating to contraception in the South or fight to win effective equal pay.

A motion involving the SLP in broad areas of the women's movement was passed in opposition to a motion calling for a working class women's movement. This is especially significant. It's the only major area in which the 'workers only' line was defeated. It seems that some delegates had detailed experience of work in this area and were able to counterpose reality to sterile sloganeering.

### OPTIMISM

Some of the decisions taken at the conference represent a step backwards for the SLP. They cut the party off from broad-based united action by opposing it to 'workers only' movements which don't exist. In reality this is a policy for doing nothing. And yet action is a necessity if the SLP is to

Platform at S.L.P. conference



## Lessons of Strathearn Audio: NO 6 co. SOLUTION TO

Good news for the bosses! The Business Location File - a magazine which is described as reporting on "industrial development and investment" or in plain language, where a capitalist can make a quick million or two - has been singing the praises of Northern Irish workers in its latest issue. Workers in the 6 counties it claims "work harder to compensate for the bad image which is painted of their province." Atrey Neave was also striking the same note a couple of weeks ago when he compared the leaping productivity of workers in the North to the falling productivity levels of British workers.

Some sceptical people might think that all this talk of productivity is all very well, but what about all those businesses that have been affected by the "troubles" all the investment which went elsewhere as the Evros bombs and incendiaries reduced industry and commerce to rubble? Well, the same magazine has done a survey and it seems that 81% of firms here have never suffered as a result of the troubles. All in all it appears that the 6-Coos, is something of a bosses paradise.

Further proof of this has been provided by the Dept. of Manpower who have just released the April unemployment figures. These indicate that there are some 64,270 people

without jobs in the 6-Coos, at present - that's 11.8% of the working population - and some 1,475 of these are Easter school-leavers. With almost 12% unemployment the North has the highest percentage of workless of all the regions of the EEC.

So it's certainly no paradise for the worker and particularly for the catholic worker. The sectarian character of the 6-Counties' statelet has always ensured that catholic workers have borne the brunt of unemployment and that the better-paid, skilled jobs have been almost exclusively reserved for protestant workers. The April unemployment statistics tell the same old story - the highest unemployment levels are all catholic districts: Strabane 27.5%

Newry 23.5%, Cookstown 22.9%, Dungannon 21.2%, Derry 17%. For heads of households the facts are even more dramatic. Take the catholic ghettos of Belfast: Ballymurphy 52%, Clonard 46%, Falls 45%, New Lodge 45%, Short Strand 39%.

Such figures haven't really changed all that much from the old days of Stormont when the Unionist bosses made no secret of their efforts to exclude catholics from skilled jobs and ensure that catholic workers paid dearly for their opposition to Orange rule in the 6-Counties. But under direct rule discrimination is supposed to have ended, a nasty horror from the past.

Promises to this effect were heaped on the anti-unionist population after the suspension of Stormont in 1972. And if private employers could not be persuaded to recruit catholic labour then the British state would itself provide the jobs. Many people thought that the British were making good their promises when the Kennedy Way industrial estate was opened

in Andersonstown offering jobs to the hardpressed catholic workers of West Belfast. With state-managed firms like Strathearn Audio and so-called co-operatives like Antrim Crystal, both largely government financed, a brighter future seemed assured for the Falls Road unemployed.

Though firms like Strathearn never employed more than a few hundred workers there were high hopes that the number of firms and the number of jobs would multiply before long. This even the paper of the West Belfast Workers Action Council (set up last year around the strike against recognition at Eastwoods) could carry an article which talked of "a healthy future" for Strathearn and described the firm as "a shining example to industry anywhere". The same article heaped praise on the Strathearn management stating that it aimed to make Strathearn "into the best" if not the biggest of its kind anywhere in the world. That was only last summer just just a few months later hundreds of workers, more than three-quarters of the

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Matt Merrigan, of S.L.P.

gain roots in the working-class and contribute to Irish socialism. Without activity by the members the leadership will come more and more to determine party policy and to turn the party into an electoral machine.

But there is still room for optimism about the SLP's future. There are plenty of signs of a new ferment in the Irish working-class and without doubt all the issues discussed at the conference will be the focus of debate and action both North and South. We have no doubt that SLP members will be involved in this activity and will define their activity in relation to it.

It's worth remembering that the SLP is still in advance of other organisations like the Communist Party and Sinn Féin - the Worker's Party. The standing ovation given to Mrs Green of the Relatives Action Committee, the motions in support of the H-Block prisoners and political status and the condemnation of the death of Brian Maguire - all these show that the members are determined to fight repression and give us hope for the future contribution of the SLP to the socialist movement.

## Noel Browne & Republicanism

Shortly before the Socialist Labour Party met to discuss policy on the Nationalist Question, Dr. Noel Browne pre-empted discussion within the party. In a major speech he launched a massive attack on republicanism and by implication on the central position of the National Question.

"There are three strands to Irish republicanism," said Dr. Browne, "its conservatism, its authoritarianism and its callous indifference about taking human life". He illustrated this by examples taken from the history of the pro-imperialist parties - internment under De Valera and the repressive laws passed by Fine Gael.

He said that Connolly was 'grievously mistaken in believing that he could have stemmed those non-socialist and anti-socialists whom he joined in 1916 in their gardeners rush to the flesh pots of the new Irish republican bourgeois class-ridden society.' He went on to suggest that the struggle in the North was a war between conflicting religions and to say that the only way to peaceful unity was to 'create a secular pluralist society in the Republic' and that this would lead to a socialist society. He concluded, "Irish republicanism bears no relationship whatsoever to any kind of social democracy or socialism that I know of".

In the debate that followed our position was given by Brendan Kelly of the MSR in a letter to the Irish Times. On the idea that Connolly had liquidated the socialist tradition in 1916 he said, "What a flippant, shameful and ill-considered opinion! It was not Connolly who lowered the socialist standard but the leaders of the labour movement who came after him". He went on to say that workers had an instinctive belief that the severity of their social ills was caused by imperialist domination. Unless socialists

showed at least as much common sense they would never have the chance to elaborate a consistent anti-imperialist socialist philosophy.

He further argued that socialists who take up the national question do not inevitably end up as republicans and gave as an example a debate between Republican News and Socialist Republic as the correct way to put forward the alternative in a constructive but principled manner.

Socialist Republic believes that Dr. Browne's speech was an illogical and intemperate slander of republicanism. The same logic could be used to condemn socialism by examining the history of the Irish labour party, of which Dr. Browne was a member for many years. We totally oppose any 'socialist' condemnation of republicanism which is used by socialists to dodge the responsibility of opposing imperialism.

This said, the speech has opened up a debate on the national question both inside and outside the SLP. We see the debate inside the SLP as being of crucial importance for the future of that party and hope to contribute to it. Outside the SLP all sections of the labour movement have been drawn into debate, even the wily leadership of Sinn Féin - the workers' party. We see this as a discussion of major importance and we will continue to contribute to it.

## CONNOLLY SOCIETY



### A QUESTION OF CULTURE

The James Connolly Society held its third meeting of the present session in the Lake Glen Hotel Belfast on Monday 7th April. Theme of the evening was "The need for an Irish Working-Class Culture" and, like the first two meetings, ("1965-70, Ten Years after the Civil Rights Marches" and "Imperialism, My the Brits are here") there was a very good attendance, each meeting averaging about 30 people.

The Culture debate was opened by a speaker from the Gaelic Community on the Shaw Road, Belfast, who gave a short history of the development of the Community and school since its inception in the late 1960's. A general theme which ran through this contribution and subsequent ones was the systematic suggestion of Irish language and culture by British imperialism. The speaker noted that reversing this process would take many generations.

A speaker from the "Black August Theatre Group" stressed the importance of an Irish Working Class Culture. He hoped that through "Street Theatre", socialist ideas could be put forward in a visual manner, and could raise people's political awareness to a certain extent, as had happened with the "Stuff the Jubilee Show".

The third speaker, Joan Kelly of the Socialist Workers Tendency, spoke of the effects Bourgeois Culture has on the working class through T.V. Radio etc. This was followed by a lively discussion from the attendance at the meeting.

The meetings so far show clearly that the Society has succeeded in its function of providing a forum for discussion among committed anti-imperialists, and as the subjects in this session are particularly relevant to the present struggle, there has been a gradual increase in the number of unaligned individuals in attendance at the meetings.

## HELP!

The Connolly Society has run into difficulties since the meeting reported above. The management of the Lake Glen Hotel have refused to allow it to hold any more meetings there and it has had considerable difficulty in finding an alternative hall. It has held a meeting on Loyalism in the Connolly bookshop, but this holds only a fraction of the audiences attending the earlier meetings. Readers in Belfast can help by checking with local organisations to see if a hall can be made available for the Society.

## UNEMPLOYMENT

workforce were made redundant, and today the total closure of the plant seems only a matter of time.

Just as the high hopes of Strathern have been dashed so too the promises of the direct rule administration have also come to nought. Interviewed on television a few weeks ago, Denis Faulker (brother of the archbigot Faulker) Chairman of the Northern Ireland Development Authority, the organisation charged with bringing new jobs to the North, admitted that he had no plans for siting any new industry in West Belfast. And what goes for West Belfast goes for all the nationalist districts of the 6-counties.

The major lesson which anti-unionist workers can draw from the never-changing monthly unemployment figures, the failure of Strathern and other pink elephants, is that there can be no solution to the problem of Catholic unemployment within the context of a partitioned Ireland. The only response which the leadership of the Northern trade unions has made is the pathetic 'Better Life For All' campaign,



Mass pickets at Eastwoods, Belfast 1977

which refuses to challenge the sectarian character of the Northern Irish statelet which itself guarantees that the most exploited and oppressed section of the population will always remain the lot of the Catholic workers.

That the trade union leadership have been able to get away with this is due in large part to the failure of anti-unionist workers to organise inside the unions around the defense of their democratic right to work, good housing and social amenities and against the structural exclusion

of Catholic workers from the skilled workforce. Unionisation is the first step to an effective fightback against the deprivation which afflicts them. It would lay the basis for a campaign of independent working-class action against unemployment and to improve our standard of living. Such a campaign would aim to mobilise the strength of the entire Irish Trade Union movement in this battle in the sure knowledge that any serious fight for full employment in the anti-unionist ghettos will aim for an all-Ireland solution.

# INDEPENDENT INQUIRY



## MASSIVE REPRESSION REVEALED

After months of preparation an independent inquiry into abuse and torture of prisoners was held in Liberty Hall, Dublin. The inquiry, held on 19th, 20th and 21st May, was organised by a group of individuals including trade unionist Phil Flynn and Piaras O'Duall. The evidence was assessed by a panel of judges made up of those involved in the struggle for human rights internationally; Judge E. Bloch of France, Paul Betserp of Belgium, Juan Bandres of Euskado/Basque and Yuan Goulet and members of Irish trade unions and professional bodies. Written and verbal evidence was taken from victims of repression and each section was presented by an 'advocate' who had been involved in anti-repression work.

There was an enormous attendance at the three-day hearing, with crowds at times exceeding the capacity of the hall. Those who attended found themselves face to face with a grim reality as detail after detail of brutality and torture were presented by the witnesses. The inquiry heard how the PTA had been used against the Irish in Britain - 3,126 people arrested for 142 charged (and most of these charged with non-political offences). How articles on prisoners are censored because of the PTA sections on supporting the IRA. And the details of brutality against Irish political prisoners, including the fact that only Irish prisoners are held on 'Special Category A' conditions, which involves sensory deprivation and solitary confinement. In the 26 counties they heard evidence of brutal torture by the Garda 'heavy gang' in tortures which forced Thomas O'Connor to jump through the second story window of a Garda station and come within inches of impaling himself on railings. They heard also of the degrading brutality and strip-searches in Portlaoise prison - and were told that the men responsible for these acts still remained in positions of authority.

But it was in the North that the full face of police brutality was revealed; Ronnie Bunting - the RUC carried the letters 'UVE' on his arm and was later fined £100 for 'making malicious complaints' about torture. Sean Mackin - attempted suicide after torture and was brought back to be tortured again. Paul Burns - reported the use of hanging and strangulation as torture techniques. Paul Armstrong - taken paralysed from an intensive care unit to the torture cell. Examples were given of the long terms of imprisonment handed out on confessions extracted using these methods and then a succession of witnesses spoke of the horrors of H-Block - how men are kept naked and continuously locked in their cells; how brutality and degradation forced the 'no wash' protest; how the men are now stretched to the physical and mental limits of human endurance,

locked in cells filled with urine and excrement and assaulted by the screws with high-pressure hoses.

Because of the censorship and self-censorship of the press the evidence presented had a devastating effect on those unfamiliar with the details of state repression - including the judges. Even those involved in anti-repression work saw for the first time the breadth and scale of repression. The inquiry should be a lesson to all those who attended. They should learn that a united fight-back against repression is not a matter for organisational wrangling or petty political sectarianism, but an urgent necessity involving our very survival.

Despite a press boycott the inquiry was a massive success. It was the biggest gathering of those opposed to repression to be held in the South for many years. It collected together an enormous body of evidence and produced a clear and unambiguous verdict (see below) establishing the facts of repression and establishing the root cause of these as the British presence in Ireland. Unlike the many white-wash inquiries held by the British this verdict is a weapon which can be used by anti-repression groups. It is the duty of all those involved in this work to study the report and publicise it as widely as possible.

But it had weaknesses as well. It was organised by a group of concerned individuals rather than by a united front of political organisations and this fact accurately reflects the weakness of the anti-repression movement and the lack of any real unity, especially in the South. Another weakness was that the witnesses were organised in a rather 'ad-hoc' way - a series of public meetings to reach witnesses would have helped build the inquiry and made it even more successful and would have formed the nucleus of an all-Ireland movement. Because the inquiry was mainly concerned with establishing the facts of repression it was not able to investigate the causes or to propose methods of fighting back.

## VERDICT: BRITISH PRESENCE THE CAUSE

A member of PD/MSR, John McAulry, presented the evidence in the session on prison conditions. He also spoke towards the end of the conference. In his speech he pointed out that the verdict was itself a weapon which could be used against the British presence. But this was not enough. We need activity which would draw the mass of the Irish people directly into action against repression. For this reason the committee responsible for the inquiry should continue in existence and be enlarged. It should publish the verdict and detailed reports of the evidence. It should list the witnesses and advocates who had taken part and use them as speakers at public meetings up and down the country. Above all it should organise a future action conference to examine the causes of the repression and organise

united mass action. We in PD/MSR see this as the outline of an action programme for building the movement around the Tribunal and will give active support to the future work of the Committee.

In its conclusion the panel found that the framework of repression was directly linked to the British presence in Ireland. It called for immediate action on the following points:

- \*On H-Block conditions
- \*On the systematic harassment of the minority community in the North
- \*On the Special Criminal Court and Garda brutality.
- \*The ending of discrimination against Irish prisoners in Britain and their return to Ireland.
- \*End to restrictions on the right of access of doctors and lawyers to those in custody

## SOCIALIST REPUBLIC - OUR AIMS

Socialist Republic is the joint paper of the Peoples Democracy and Movement for a Socialist Republic and is the first major step towards the merging of the two groups. There is not at this point final agreement between the two organisations on all areas but there is principled agreement on fundamental matters of central importance. This principled agreement is the starting point for the fusion and the basis of the paper. We hope the following outline will stand over the next issues until the fusion is complete.

We are agreed that the central political question for the Irish people is the political, economic and military domination of Ireland by imperialism and that the central task of the Irish revolution is the solution of the national question through the ending of partition and the achievement of political and economic independence.

We are united in our rejection of the 'two nations' theory. In our rejection of the claim that any lasting solution to the oppression of the Irish people can be found in a 6-county framework, and in our rejection of any 'right' of the loyalist minority to continue partition.

We are Marxists and believe that a Social Revolution is necessary to overthrow Capitalism and Imperialism, that the Capitalist State must be smashed and replaced by a Workers state and that only the organised working-class can provide the motive force for doing this.

We believe that a crucial area of capitalist oppression is the oppression of women, and that this is especially so in Ireland given the history of clerical power here. We believe that a fundamental precondition for ending this exploitation is the socialist revolution. We don't believe that women should wait for this or see the question as a side issue. Thus we support the right of women to organise independently to oppose their exploitation.

As Marxists we believe that the working class has the ability to successfully challenge and defeat imperialism. It produces the wealth of society without being able to own or control that wealth. It is potentially stronger than any other class because of its ability to organise politically on a mass base, combining its economic power and its strength of numbers.

We accept the analysis of the capitalist state put forward by Lenin. We don't accept that the state is neutral and therefore don't believe that electoral victories or parliamentary reforms will bring about the revolution, though they can play a propaganda role in educating the workers.

We believe that workers have the right to defend themselves against the violence of imperialism. However we do not accept the ideology of militarism - the belief that armed groups can substitute themselves for the masses and win freedom for them.

We believe in the building of an organised and experienced leadership in a Marxist Party based on the Leninist theory of Party Organisation.

We are Internationalists and believe that Irish workers should actively support struggles throughout the world and learn from them. The M.S.R. are members of the 4th International, an international Trotskyist organisation. P.D. has not such a clearly defined position, although we informally agree on the theory of permanent revolution, and on the fact that the Russian Revolution has degenerated.

This is one of the major issues around which discussion will take place during the fusion process and within the fused organisation. The Socialist Republic will report these discussions as well as other aspects of the fusion process. In future issues we hope to carry articles explaining the aims of the paper in depth.

Socialist Republic aims to do more than report and comment on events as they occur. We see the paper as a weapon in the struggle. It will use the combined experience of the members and supporters of the two organisations to analyse struggles in the anti-imperialist ghetto, the trade unions, and in the student and women movements. It will use this analysis to put forward a strategy for militant fighting in these areas, to link the struggle in one area with that in another and build a framework around which socialists can organise. It will also provide information on workers throughout the world and provide a platform for debate within the anti-imperialist movement. All these elements will be directed to one end - the destruction of imperialism and the building of a Socialist Republic.

## STRATEGY FOR EUROPEAN WORKERS ?

RECENT EVENTS ON THE CONTINENT, THE DEATH OF ALDO MORO IN ITALY, ASSASSINATED BY THE RED BRIGADES, AND THE RIGHT WING VICTORY IN THE FRENCH GENERAL ELECTIONS ARE OF GREAT SIGNIFICANCE TO THE EUROPEAN WORKING CLASS. THEY ILLUSTRATE TWO ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES FOR REACHING SOCIALISM OFFERED BY THE LEFT. IN FRANCE THE PAIR OFFERED WAS THROUGH THE ELECTORAL VICTORY AND CONFRONTATION WITH CAPITALISM WAS TO BE SHELVED UNTIL THE ELECTION WAS WON. THE DEFEAT OF THE LEFT HAS NOW LEFT THE WORKING CLASS IN THE LURCH. IN ITALY THE RED BRIGADES ARE ATTEMPTING TO CARRY OUT THE REVOLUTION BY PURSUING MILITARY ACTIVITIES AIMED AT INDIVIDUAL CAPITALISTS AND THE POLITICAL ESTABLISHMENT. THE GROWTH OF THEIR ACTIVITIES DESERVE TO AN EXTENT FROM THE ELECTORAL DEFEAT OF THE ITALIAN LEFT LAST YEAR. THERE ARE MANY LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FROM BOTH COUNTRIES.

# FRENCH ELECTIONS

The defeat of the Left in the March elections was received with great disappointment by Socialists both in France and around the world. For the French working class it was particularly demoralising, having been held back by the Communist and Socialist Parties from engaging in any major economic struggles to defend their living standards, on the pretext, that such problems would be solved 'after the election victory'. Why did the Left lose? Every opinion poll predicted their victory. The crisis on the French stock exchange and the devaluation of the franc also indicated a Left victory. The parties of government in France were in disarray, wide layers of the French population were demanding social change - in other words the scene could not have been more favourable to the Left.

### INFIGHTING

Unfortunately it must be said that the fault for the election defeat rests squarely on the shoulders of the union of the Left. The campaign for a Left victory opened up in the strangest of circumstances. It began with the Communist Party launching an attack on its ally, the Socialist Party. The main problem, it was said, was over the level of nationalisation that the new Left government would embark on. Both parties accepted the Common Program-

e's demand for the nationalisation of only nine major companies, leaving 85% of industrial production in private hands. The dispute arose over how many of the nine's subsidiaries would be included. In 1972 the C.P. indicated that according to their 'scientific criteria' 1150 would be included. By September 15th of last year it was down to 1008. A week later, still applying the same 'scientific' standards, the C.P. had reduced the number to 729. The S.P. had originally wanted only 69 included but in the interests of compromise increased that to 250. This may rightly seem all rather tedious particularly if you remember that all these firms are to be nationalised with compensation and that two of the motor car giants, Peugeot-Citroen and Chrysler-Simca are not even included.

This dispute became very bitter and effectively the Union of the Left broke up. The C.P. refused to say whether they would support S.P. candidates in the second decisive round of the elections, indicating that they would only back them if the C.P.'s own vote was high enough on the first round. Indeed much of the pre-election period was taken up not with a united assault on the austerity measures and right-wing programme of the government but with the sectarian infighting of the

United Left. In other words instead of the French working class being presented with a clear alternative to the present economic and social crisis of French society they were treated to a Union of the Left that seemed more interested in stabbing each other in the back than in winning the election. The result became more and more predictable as the election dates came nearer. An analysis of the results indicates just how irresponsible was the activity of the two main working class parties.

### RESULTS

Both the C.P. and S.P. concentrated on proving their 'respectability' in the period leading up to the elections. They formed an alliance with the 'Left Radicals' a small middle class party to the right of them. (Since the election the Left Radicals have been on the verge of a split with one section ready to join the right-wing government parties). They fought the revolutionary left tooth and nail and opposed their policy of mobilising on the streets and in the factories.

The election results show how disastrous this policy was. The Left Radicals got less votes than the Revolutionary Left or the Ecologists. And the results as a whole show clearly that the oppressed majority of the French people voted for major social change and that they would have responded

to a policy of mobilising on these issues.

### POSTURING

What lay behind the much publicised polemic between the C.P. and S.P.? Since the beginning of the Left alliance the C.P. had continued to lose support to the S.P. The last few years has also seen the growth of a strong revolutionary left. The basis of the C.P.'s 'left stance' was to win back its leading position from the S.P. and to squeeze out the forces of the revolutionary left. As such it was a sectarian manoeuvre and not one based on a principled defense of the interests of the working class. Overall both parties refused to show the working class any lead. This is even more obvious in the period since the elections. The only thing that both the S.P. and C.P. are agreed upon is the need to meet and negotiate with President Giscard. Such posturing only serves to reveal the nature of their "principled" differences before the election. The demoralisation of the French workers will pass and with it will come a new period of upsurge and struggle in France, with or without the leadership of the Communist and Socialist parties. The close on one million votes for the French revolutionary left show that if their policy of mass mobilisation of the workers and their allies that will head the way in future European upsurges.

# ITALY: THE DEATH OF MORO

Press reaction to the killing of Aldo Moro, the Christian Democrat leader kidnapped by the Red Brigades, has been predictably hysterical. In death the most cynical and intelligent capitalist politician has become the Mr Nice of Italian politics.

This touching humanitarianism would be more convincing if it had applied to all those killed in Italy recently - student demonstrators murdered by police for example.

Nevertheless, if the kidnapping of Moro and the sight of the Italian state being made monkeys of for two months was a show of strength by the Red Brigades, the final killing was a sign of their weakness and lack of perspective.

Recovering from their hysteria the bourgeois media tried to find 'sociological' explanations for the Red Brigades. They came up with the standard cliché: children of bourgeois homes revolting against their parents. They then give this a Mediterranean flavour with a few remarks about political instability, rural poverty the legacy of fascism, and so on.

But the Moro kidnapping has far more specific roots in Italian politics. It took place on the very day when the new government, backed by the Communist Party (PCI), was to have been inaugurated. Moro himself was the architect of centre-left conditions, and his corpse was left in a space between the

two major party headquarters. The symbolism was deliberate and obvious.

The government agreement signed by the PCI includes an austerity programme that makes the Social Contract look mild and gives the police sweeping new powers of search and arrest and almost unlimited use of firearms. The Red Brigades grew up in a decade of class collaboration by the traditional party of the Italian working class, as well as utter chaos on the far left.

The Red Brigades were disgusted by what they saw. The irony is that their solution only makes things worse. If the PCI was worried that it would have problems selling the new government package to its supporters it can rest assured. The Moro affair has reawakened an unchained and alienating national unity, strengthened the



Members of the Red Brigades in jail awaiting trial—many socialists will be joining them in the repression now growing.

government, and legitimised a quasi-military police presence on the streets. The growing opposition to the PCI within the unions has been isolated and only the most courageous dare to march on the streets.

The whole affair has been a massive defeat for the Italian working class. What's more, this is a conscious strategy on the part of the Red Brigades. Instead of projecting a political alternative to the reformist leaders, they direct their energies towards provoking a strengthening of the state in order to 'redicalise' the working class. This can only spell disaster.

But we still refuse to join the PCI and the Italian state in their witch-hunt. However disastrous the Red Brigades' policies, we utterly condemn the bourgeois spectacle of their leaders cowed and chained together by the capitalist state.

The party leaders chose this course rather than negotiating for Moro's release. They deliberately and cynically provoked Moro's death. Moro himself made this point in his letters which have not, for the most part, been published. They are the ones who must have his death on their consciences.

# WORKERS LEAD FIGHTBACK

The last month has seen a new anti-repression organisation take to the streets in Belfast. On two successive Thursdays the red banner of the Trade Union Campaign Against Repression (TUCAR) led hundreds of striking workers down the Falls Road in demonstrations against repression. The immediate focus for these protests was the death of Brian Maguire by hanging in the infamous Castlereagh torture centre.

Maguire, who played a leading role in organising last year's "Workers Against Repression" march died while under interrogation by the RUC Special Branch. Shortly after Maguire's death the badly decomposed body of 19 years old Jake McMahon was fished out of the River Lagan. McMahon was last seen alive four months before in Masgrave barracks where he also was 'questioned' by the RUC Special Branch.

These summary executions provoked a storm of protest throughout the anti-unionist districts of Belfast. It also angered Maguire's fellow workers at Strathern Audio who downed their tools as soon as news reached them. Along with the Strathern workers TUCAR organised a march on the following Thursday. Some 1,500 people set out for Transport House to demand that the trade union leadership take action to halt the increased repression. But the march never reached Transport House as its way was blocked by the British Army and the RUC.

Following this blatant denial of democratic rights both TUCAR and the Relatives Action Commi-

as resolved to organise an even bigger march the following week. The next week some 3,000 people joined the demonstration and this time succeeded in reaching Transport House. The sight of so many anti-unionists marching past Belfast's City Hall enraged both RUC and loyalists alike. For those on the march it was a victory over Britain's repressive policies. For the first time in many years the City centre resounded to chants of "SS RUC" and other anti-repression slogans.

At the rally outside Transport House speakers made it clear that the trade union leadership would no longer be allowed to get away with their weak alliance about RUC and British Army atrocities or their shallow demands for a "Bill of Rights". An official of the National Union of Public Employees condemned the hypocrisy of the trade union leadership who condemned torture and repression throughout the world but were struck dumb about the same things in the North of Ireland. Welcoming the setting up of TUCAR he said that the fight was now on to get the trade unions to oppose torture and repression and appealed for support for TUCAR's demand for a trade union based enquiry into



Maguire's death and the situation of the political prisoners in H-block.

Support for this demand has also come from the Dublin and Derry Trades Council as well as the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union and the Socialist Labour Party. North and South of the border, TUCAR is pressing ahead with the organisation of workers within the unions and workplaces. It has a long way to go but the response to the recent demonstrations provides a solid base on which to build. As Joe Edwards from TUCAR's National Executive told the Transport House Rally:

"We are in Belfast city centre and this is a victory for us. We will be back time and time again until our demands are met. We are sick of torture and repression; there will be no more Brian Maguire's,

no more dawn raids on working class homes and no more bodies fished out of the Lagan." All workers should support TUCAR to make sure that this is the case.

The recent attack on Royal Victoria Hospital workers by Bradford makes clear how necessary it is for workers in the North to organise in their own defense. TUCAR offers this possibility and already exists as a 30-counties' organisation. It's up to workers to join TUCAR and work to bring the Union officials back in the fight against repression.

Belfast TUCAR meets each Saturday at 4:00pm in the Workers' Resource Centre, 12, Broadway. A crèche is provided.

## Defend the Black Taxis

The declaration by the British government that it intends to "eliminate" the black taxis of West Belfast as part of their new transport scheme for the city is but another of a long series of attacks on the working-class of the area. In apology the government cynically claim that the taxis, by depriving the bus company of its most profitable routes, show no 'social responsibility' towards the other city routes. So the Northern Ireland Office intend to deprive hundreds of people of their livelihoods in an area where unemployment reaches 50% in order to subsidise the middle-class Malone and Breda bus services. A fine sense of social responsibility!

Imperialism has shown that it can do nothing to ease the social problems of West Belfast (except build some new unemployment offices) and is unwilling to try in a period of economic depression. Instead it proposes to build a new road scheme which will make capitalism more efficient if the 'up-turn' in the economy ever comes and it attacks the living standards of the working-class through the so-called public services using, for instance, the Payments for Debts Act. The aim of the government is to service and protect the capitalist system and structures while it is ailing. In the event it is the working class who have to pay.

The black taxis are far from a perfect example of socialism in action but they nevertheless show that it is possible to run public services better that they are under control of a capitalist government. It is in the interest, economic and political, of the working class to defend the black taxis.

**Those interested in contacting  
PEOPLES DEMOCRACY /  
MOVEMENT for a SOCIALIST REPUBLIC**

can do so at:  
38 Clanawley Road Dublin & Connolly Bookshop Ph.623472  
Avoca Pk. Andersonstown Belfast.

## BRIAN MAGUIRE INQUEST

As we go to press we have received information that Brian Maguire's inquest is to be held very shortly. Our information is that engineering consultants have said that it is possible that Brian could have committed suicide - i.e. that a sheet could have gone into the slot in the ventilator and that it could have borne the weight of a man. The British plan a massive propaganda exercise to turn this possibility into a certainty. They plan to call as witnesses almost the entire staff of Castlereagh. Star witness will be Rawlinson - the man brought over from the British police to mount an 'independent' inquiry.

## Payment for Debts Act

Dear Sir

In 1971, following the introduction of internment, a large section of the population withheld payment of rents and rates as a protest. The response of the Northern Ireland Government at Stormont was fast and within two months a piece of temporary emergency legislation was passed - The Payment for Debt (Emergency Provisions) Act (NI) 1971. Despite the fact that the rent and rates strike has been over for some considerable time, the temporary Act still remains.

In 1976 it was extended by the Labour Government at Westminster to cover anyone who owed more than £20 rent or rates. The Act applies only in Northern Ireland. People in Northern Ireland do owe rent and rates but no more than people in Great Britain do. Now the Act is to be extended again following a debate in Westminster. Shortly it is to be used against those who cannot pay their gas and electricity bills.

In Northern Ireland unemployment averages at 12% of the working population. Wages are lower than in Great Britain. According to a Child Poverty Action Group survey one third of the population are below the poverty line. According to a Northern Ireland Housing Executive survey one fifth of the houses are unfit for human habitation. Coal is dearer. Gas is dearer. Food is generally dearer.

Under the Payment for Debts Act money is deducted by the Benefit Allocation Branch at Stormont from those receiving benefits. Those already on the poverty line have rent deducted together with arrears and a further 50p. collection charge. They lose their entitlement to rent rebate and almost always are refused Exceptional Needs Grants. Naturally greater poverty ensues.

Those working are not exempt. An order can be made to take public debts due by employers straight from their wage packets before they have ever been paid, and without the debt having been adjudicated on by any Court.

Many more criticisms can be made against this Act. If you feel that this repression should not be increased please inform your M.P. before the forthcoming debate or raise the issue in your Union or Community Group or other interest group. The Act as it is causes almost unendurable hardship. It is to be extended. This will allow people less money than is necessary for survival. In this situation of degrading treatment or punishment or torture?

Yours Faithfully  
PAIDRIGIAN DEWAE  
NORMAN SILVER