

WORKER THE WORKER

FOR WORKERS POWER AND INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM

Poland

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With unemployment soaring

& prices hitting the roof,

we can't afford another

National mis-Understanding

NO PAY

RESTRAINT



A National Understanding—100,000 unemployed

Picture: Derek Spiers (IFL)

AS WE go to press, talks are under way for a new "National Understanding." The employers are looking for a pay pause, to be followed by a single figure pay increase.

The Unions are looking for a phased increase of 20% over 18 months.

No doubt a settlement will be achieved splitting the difference, with promises from government of concessions on social policy to sweeten the medicine.

Haughey may promise—as the government did last time—to take action to create jobs and tackle unemployment, perhaps some hope of a fairer tax system will be held out.

But we have seen it all before. The last National Understanding gave the crowing trade union bosses the boast that in return for pay restraint the trade union movement had now got a voice in government, could influence social policy and could set its sights higher than "merely" bargaining over pay and conditions with the employers.

Well it was an empty boast. While the trade union movement was making sacrifices for the good of the bosses, prices hit the roof and unemployment grew by leaps and bounds.

Another aspect of "social policy" that was to be influenced was tax—and it was. Those on high incomes found their burden was reduced at the expense of the rest of us for increases in VAT hit hardest the poorest and sent the cost of living soaring still higher.

The tinkering with the health service charges have proved to be cosmetic—all top show.

In fact not one single benefit remains for the sacrifices pay restraint has meant to working people.

The deepening world crisis—slump in markets, raging inflation, currency fluctuations all leading to the severest difficulties for capitalists trying to make profits—have set the Irish boss class and their government on a course of making workers pay for the crisis in an attempt to restore profitability to Irish capitalism and multi-national capital operating here.

But so is every other Western government—all hopelessly trying to dump the depression on to someone else.

By appealing to their vanity, fear and privileged position, the government have managed to gain the co-operation of the "leaders" of the working class in their attack on the workers.

Because trade union bosses have one foot in each camp—one in the workers camp because only the memberships of their unions and their loyalty and subs give them the power to negotiate, one in the bosses camp because they are so divorced from the conditions of the workers and spend more time fixing things up in the company of bosses—they are very useful to the government in its task.

Their position make the trade union bosses very weakened willed and more concerned to defend their authority than lead a fight for the interests of their members. They are therefore easy prey to the bosses and government.

All that has happened before, is happening again and will go on happening until workers take the initiative and impose rank-and-file control in their unions.

Without a doubt the most important issues for working people at the moment are prices and unemployment. We cannot allow ourselves to have to fight with one hand tied behind our back, shackled to wage restraint and Congress "social peace" procedures.

Our response to redundancies must be Occupy and force the nationalisation of such undertakings to take its fortunes out of the "marketplace".

Our response to inflation must be Make the bosses pay!

For all this we have need of our own strength and rank and file organisation and no need whatsoever of any National Mis-Understanding.

Rank & file challenge pages 4&5

POLAND Up The Workers!



Strikers perch on a wall at the Lenin Shipyard, Gdansk, as passers-by read their slogans

AS WE go to press, hundreds of thousands of Polish workers are continuing their strike for free trade unions and other reforms.

So newspapers in the West are reporting them in a way they would never do here—from the point of view of the strikers.

But already they are beginning to sense the potential of the strikes and to revert back to form, urging the

Polish workers 'not to demand too much'.

Socialists in Ireland have no need for such double standards. Workers struggle is workers struggle, East or West. And the Polish workers are giving us an inspiring example of it.

We can only hope they take it further.

FULL REPORT ON POLAND
PAGE 3

COLD WAR HOTS UP-OFFICIAL

People of whom it could never be said that they are cranks are saying that the war game between "East and West" is coming dangerously close to the kind of confrontation which nobody can win. The historian E.P. Thompson puts it very carefully: "I have come to the view that a general nuclear war is not only possible but probable, and that its probability is increasing. We may indeed be approaching a point of no-return when the existing tendency or disposition

But from time to time the lunatics who run the world do really appear to put all our futures in jeopardy. In the Cold War of the 1950s, this produced the slogan: Socialism or Barbarism. Socialists, as well as vegetarians and Quakers, joined the annual nuclear disarmament marches to Aldermaston in Britain. Many people were won to socialism through the experience of that campaign. You can hardly have failed to

massive row about the National Executive's commitment to support a nuclear disarmament demonstration in October.

The case was put in even more dramatic form by an anti-nuclear campaigner who spoke at several workshops during the Carnsore Point rally Tony Webb, who has been working full-time in anti-nuclear organisations for a couple of years, insisted with very obvious conviction that a nuclear war was going to be triggered in the Middle East in the next few years.

NATO's cruise missiles, which are mobile and which are located at secret venues, are part of the paraphernalia of "limited" nuclear war. On their drawing boards and computers, the NATO chiefs - dominated by the Pentagon - have worked out a scenario for a nuclear exchange between their side and the Warsaw Pact countries which would be restricted to Europe. But few independent observers accept that it would be possible to end the game after one rally; Anyway, the war lords in America and Russia are working on even more massively destructive nuclear weapons. The Americans are said to be preparing to launch a network of computer-controlled satellites which will send off long-range missiles ON WARNING. And we have had a couple of scares in recent months from supposed computer failures to indicate the threat that represents.

I suppose many people have believed, like myself, that the more of this hardware there is around, the greater its potential to destroy us all, the less likely it is to be used. After all, the geniuses who spend trillions developing these weapons do presumably realise that no amount of civil defence and underground bunkers would save us from the effects of full-scale nuclear warfare. And what have they to gain from that? But maybe this assumes a rationality which isn't there. All of this gives added weight to the campaign to stop a nuclear power programme being introduced into Ireland and to prevent uranium mining taking place here. For, no matter how hard the advocates of nuclear energy try to pretend to the contrary, the spread of nuclear energy technology also aids the

proliferation of nuclear weapons technology. The two are inextricably linked. It would be a small blow against nuclear madness-but a significant one, nonetheless-if we could resist the designs of the EEC and multi-nationals and keep the country nuclear-free. You don't have to be hung-up on arguments about alleged sovereignty and neutrality to see the value of this. The Trade Union Anti-Nuclear Campaign was set up six months ago to commit the trade union movement to block any proposal to build a nuclear reactor and to call a halt to uranium exploration and thus prevent uranium mining. At the Carnsore Point rally, TUANC organised a number of workshops on aspects of the problem, focusing in particular on the way in which an economy geared to private

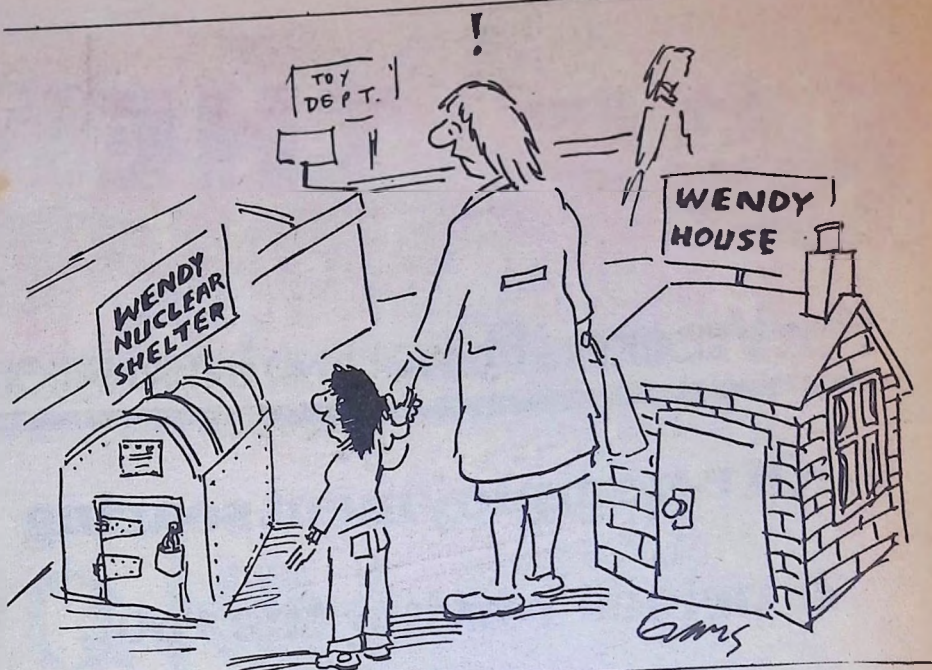
enterprise, private housing and private transport systematically wastes resources, including energy resources, and seems to leave the way open for the nuclear "fix." At its final workshop of the week-end TUANC came under attack from a group of anti-nuclear activists who also claim to be socialists. They said that it was of no consequence whether workers were in unions or not, that the unions are part of the state, and that TUANC had spent its time trying to impress top officials. The first two propositions are profoundly reactionary, the third is quite simply wrong. But no amount of evidence that the first instinct of workers who want to protect themselves at the work-place is to join a union, that over three quarters of the places of large employment were unionised, that the unions were under threat from the state of having their room for movement restricted, could convince them.

There are many criticisms to be made of the trade union movement - and there is a constant need to protect it from incorporation into the state. But it is among the ranks of organised workers that socialists concentrate their activities. No matter how difficult it may be to bring political, even moral issues into the unions and no matter how much the views and activities of some anti-nuclear campaigners may add to the difficulties, the case has to be won inside the trade unions if it is to be won at all.

THE TRADE Union Anti-Nuclear Campaign has produced a pamphlet taking up some of the arguments that trade unionists raise in favour of nuclear power.

Following on the ICTU decision not to take a decision on nuclear power, it is important that anti-nuke trade unionists argue in their workplaces and at branch meetings why their union should be opposed to nuclear power.

Copies of the leaflet and of the TUANC sticker can be ordered from the address below at 10p each - special rates for bulk orders. Write for more information to TUANC, Room 1502, Liberty Hall, Dublin 1.



towards this outcome becomes irreversible." Most socialists have difficulty dealing with claims that the end of the world is close. For good reason, too; the "true history of humanity" begins when exploitation and oppression have been eradicated. And just take a quick look around you - that's going to take some time yet.

notice that the same issue has been thrown up in a new and possibly more urgent form in recent months. The Irish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament reports that its membership has grown rapidly into hundreds since it was revived late last year. The NATO threat to locate 160 cruise missiles in Britain has had reverberations through the labour movement. The British Labour Party is in the midst of a

Missiles, missiles, everywhere

TUCKED AWAY in the massive computerised rooms of the Pentagon, a number of military bosses have hit on a revolutionary new idea - nuclear wars can be won. For years, these fanatics reluctantly accepted that the unleashing of nuclear weapons would blow us all sky high. And even if the fate of the mass of people never figured much in the calculations - the bankers, bosses and all sorts of VIPs would unfortunately have to go too.

One month ago, a decision was made that the massive nuclear arsenal of the West needs to be directed at Soviet military installations rather than at cities. Why?

Each Polaris sub had more destructive power than all the bombs dropped in World War II. But that is now old hat and they must be replaced with the Trident - at a cost of £500 billion - in the land where the Tories boast of keeping the money supply under control!

monopoly. The wartime alliance gave way to inter-imperialist rivalries between the former allies. Each needed to dominate as much of the world's markets and sources of raw materials as possible and enforce, at the very least, their own acquisitions. This was the basis of the cold war and arms race.

But the fantastic levels of arms spending - although providing the economic basis for the long boom of the fifties and sixties - placed fantastic strains on the imperialist

countries themselves, putting them at a competitive disadvantage to the weaker defeated countries of the second world war. The fifties and the sixties saw the rise in the German and Japanese economies - freed by defeat from the burden of maintaining any significant arms capability. Seeking to free themselves from some part of the costs of being the leading imperialists - as well as from a desire to present themselves as peace loving people - Russia and

America tried to find ways to stabilise the world order and their positions of dominance by agreements and treaties. Detente and Salt were in part attempts to do this. But in the face of the increasing instability brought about by the world crisis of capitalism - both East and West - and the challenge of revolt from Afghanistan, Iran and the crumbling of loyalties this spirit of "peaceful co-existence" disintegrated like a sand castle before a rising tide. The advancing crisis has made the major imperialists like wounded wild beasts - and the cold war is on again with a vengeance.

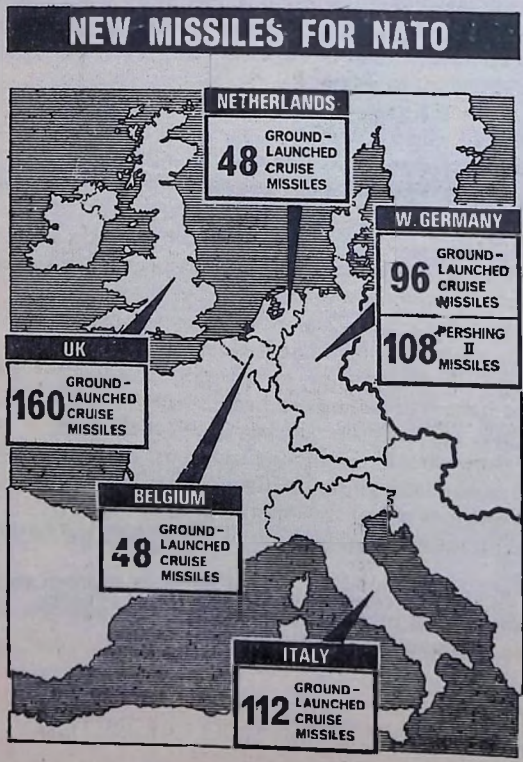
Button

Simple - "we" might get to the button first. This change in strategy has not occurred overnight but is the result of the steady hotting up over the last year. It's happened like this: Military spending by the West has been increasing steadily in real terms. America's allies have agreed to install Cruise and other Missiles directed at Soviet targets. America has reasserted her "right" to intervene militarily - Carter has stated his readiness march into areas of the middle east if U.S. interests are threatened. Perhaps the most dramatic example of the new-found enthusiasm for nuclear destruction is in Britain. Even though - on a world scale - a tiny military force, Britain over the years believed it was important to maintain a fleet of Polaris submarines.

What has happened? For years every sort of politician had to pretend to be FOR peace and progress. Detente, Salt II, peaceful co-existence was part and parcel of political jargon. Now - according to themselves - Afghanistan has changed all that. But what are the facts? The military build-up began long before Afghanistan. The decision to put Cruise missiles in Europe was taken before the Russian invasion. And of course Afghanistan was

Detente

never part of America's "sphere of influence" to use imperialism's own cynical jargon. At the end of the second world war, at Yalta and elsewhere the victorious Allies parcelled out the world between them on the basis of the military conquests that had been made. The leaders of the victorious imperialisms swapped territories and designated "spheres of influence" determining the fate of millions of people as if playing



Revolution

This century has been characterised as an era of imperialism, war and revolutions - it is now clearer than for a long time that only working class revolution can provide the basis of world peace and freedom from a crippling arms race.

KIERAN ALLEN & KEVIN WINGFIELD.



POLAND:

MAGNIFICENT! We are sure all Worker readers will agree with our feelings about the Polish workers' strikes. But when we add that they are a magnificent struggle against capitalism then we are sure there will be a few raised eyebrows.

Because most people on the left in Ireland still believe that the sort of society that exists in Poland and the rest of Eastern Europe is somehow different from the capitalist West.

Not that many still believe that it is actually socialist.

After all, it is only too obvious that there is no workers' democracy in Poland.

And it is also pretty obvious that the Polish state and economy are controlled by a small, privileged bureaucratic group. Not only are the money incomes of these bureaucrats

many times that of the average Polish worker, but the difference is made even greater by their privileged access to housing, luxury goods and so on. By any commonsense use of the word this group of top bureaucrats and managers are Poland's 'ruling class'.

But what makes that ruling class tick? That's where many people on the left start thinking that things in Eastern Europe are different. Because, of course, the overwhelming bulk of industry in Poland and its neighbours is owned by the state. The economy is supposed to be 'planned'.

But, as we are all agreed, it is a small privileged group who control the state (and therefore the economy) and it is this same group who do the 'planning' (which, by the way, is generally pretty chaotic).

What is the goal of this 'planning'?

The needs of the mass of the population? Hardly. These are always being sacrificed to the 'needs of the plan' and only get satisfied as a by-product of it or to buy off discontent.

Is it the simple desire of the rulers to line their own pockets? Well, of course, that is never far from their minds. But the desire to line your own pockets doesn't necessarily lead to the building of steel mills and car factories.

No. A ruling class only does that when it is forced to do so. And what forces the Polish bureaucracy is the same thing that forces the huge capitalist monopolies of the West—the fact that they live in a world economy in which you accumulate or go under.

At first that necessity was imposed on the rulers of Eastern Europe mainly by military competition. Now, increasingly, it is through direct economic competition.

And it is that necessity which makes the ruling classes of Eastern Europe capitalists no more different from the managers of ICI, than they are from a nineteenth century mill owner.

Their 'plans' for their own national economies are subordinated to the imperative of the world economy, in exactly the same way as the corporate 'plans' of the directors of General Motors.

But along with capitalism goes crisis. The ups and downs of the Polish economy have been increasingly geared to the world economy.

The crisis in Poland today is not something happening 'out there, in the Eastern bloc'. It is the crisis of a capitalist regime in the face of a world recession.

That makes the magnificent strikes in Poland doubly relevant to us.

UP THE WORKERS!

POLAND'S workers have thrown up the biggest challenge to that country's rulers for years. Those same workers were instrumental in bringing down the last Polish government, of Gomulka, in 1970.

After six weeks of strikes over economic demands from one end of the country to the other, the movement was provided with a national focus recently by the huge Lenin shipyard in Gdansk.

That city was paralysed by a general strike, coordinated by a joint strike committee covering 21 factories. A few days later a hundred factories from other parts of the country had sent delegates to join the Gdansk Committee.

What began as scattered protests over food shortages and rising prices has grown into the biggest workers action seen anywhere in Europe since the general strike against de Gaulle which paralysed France in May 1968.

Poland's ruler, Gierk, has immense apparent power. He has a large security police with guns and armoured cars that makes the SPG look puny. He has a network of secret police that has often in the past made people afraid to express their real feelings even to their closest friends. His prisons have swallowed up many opponents of his regime. Others—including leaders of previous strikes—have felt compelled to flee to exile.

Behind Gierk's own forces stand those of the second most powerful state in the world—the Russian army which battered Budapest in 1956, which silenced Prague in 1968 and which is currently ravaging Afghanistan.

Yet when he speaks on Polish television, Gierk can do little more than plead with the workers to return to work and (a familiar tone for Irish workers) make sacrifices in the 'national interest'.

As we go to press, it is too early to tell whether Gierk will be successful in his attempts to split the workers movement by buying off some sections and threatening others with Russian intervention. Poland's workers are

deeply sceptical of the promises of rulers—they heard exactly the same talk in 1956 and 1970, and lived to see the return of falling living standards and crude repression.

The refusal of the shipyard workers to return to work recently, even after the strike committee had recommended that course of action, shows how deep their scepticism runs. Instead the workers moved on from making economic demands to raising other, political issues—the right to form their own independent trade unions, the freeing of political prisoners, the ending of special shops for those with bureaucratic connections or wealth.

But none of this means that the Polish regime is bound to be destroyed. It takes a huge mental leap for any group of workers to pass from fighting for economic demands to understanding that they themselves can run society in its entirety. Such understanding comes usually at the end of a series of bitter mass struggles and betrayals, not the beginning.

The minds of many Polish workers are still befogged by the false ideologies preached by rulers East and West. For instance, the fact that the Pope's picture was hung from the walls of the occupied shipyard shows that many—probably most—workers still believe the church leaders to be on their side. Yet in the past the church has shown itself



Shipyard workers in Gdansk at a meeting outside the yard.

only too willing to offer support to the regime in return for privileges for itself. In 1957 it went so far as to urge workers to vote for Gomulka's nominees in the relatively free elections of that year.

Again, the flying of the Polish flag over the occupied factories shows how powerful is nationalism as a factor in the workers' minds. The nationalism is perhaps natural, given the memory which workers have of domination by Germany and domination by Russia. But it has also been encouraged by some of the most vicious, bureaucratic sections of the regime as a

way of getting workers to see all Poles, exploiters and exploited alike, as having a common interest.

Same

The nationalism today has the paradoxical effect of encouraging workers not to go 'too far', for fear of Russian intervention. It makes it difficult for them to understand that there are workers throughout Eastern Europe—in Hungary in Czechoslovakia, in East Germany, above all in Russian factories like Togliattigrad, Gorki and

Karma River (themselves recently on strike) who face the same problems as the Polish workers.

There does not yet seem to be any dissident group that cuts right through these confusions by insisting that the workers must take power into their own hands through a social revolution. Instead, the most known dissident group, the KOR with its workers' paper Robotnik (The Worker), urges a mere reform of the existing system.

The regime's room for manoeuvre is much less than in the past, because of the economic crisis East and West. But it will try to

play on the confusions of the workers with nationalistic talk, deals with the church, offers to allow selected workers to sit on management committees, by opening the tap of reform today in order to shut it all the more effectively later. In all this it will be backed by the Western states, who are rushing bank loans to keep Gierk afloat. Nor can it be ruled out that Brezhnev will out of desperation move his troops to crush the movement—despite the 'act that this could destabilise his empire even more.

Yet, even if many of the strikers do not fully realise

it, they have already thrown one thing into clear relief: there is a power that can tear apart the most oppressive and most exploitative regime. That self-organisation of those whose labour creates the wealth, with those who can turn factories where exploitation takes place into citadels directed against exploitation.

It is the duty of socialists and trade unionists everywhere to show solidarity with that power—against Gierk's manoeuvres, against the price rises he is imposing for the Western bankers, if necessary against the Kremlin's troops.

National Understandings the rank

Fighting unity needed

THERE ARE those at the head of the Trade Union Movement who are well aware that National Pay deals have served to increase their power and influence over rank-and-file trade unionists.

For the very reason that practically no ordinary member of—say—the ITGWU, ever comes into contact or has any control over the likes of John Carroll, gives the likes of Carroll the chance to blow on radio and television about workers feeling this way or that way about the percentage required this year

Years of wage restraint have weakened the fight-spirit and unity of thousands of trade unionists.

Many have become apathetic as a result, and this gives the bureaucrats who support the deals greater confidence and fine excuses.

Starting off with 20% and getting a "realistic" settlement for workers increases the power of trade union bosses because they know they have hammered home into the minds of many rank and file members the idea that National Pay deals are inevitable.

The collaboration between the trade union leadership and the bosses did not originate with National Wage Agreements—but wage agreements of this sort have served to increase the power of the trade union leaders who now see their role as that of pressuring the state into granting "social reforms."

Many workers have come to believe that this is a type of New Unionism. An atmosphere of "realistic" leaders negotiating workers wages for twelve or eighteen month periods has been accepted by many workers.

Each time the Congress committee goes into negotiations, workers feel powerless and begin to believe that there is no other way to gain increases from the bosses.

It is no accident that in May when the Special Delegate Conference of the ICTU decided to start talks with the Government and employers on a new deal, those unions that swung the decision were the most bureaucratic unions with very little democracy or with no control by the ordinary members over their leaderships.

The ITGWU bureaucracy needs no introduction—Ferenka, Alcon and a host of other disputes has shown up the leadership—ITGWU cast 65 votes in favour of entering new talks.

FWUI, IUWC, and INTO combined 67 votes which carried the decision to enter talks—this is not to say that the unions who voted against are exempt from the kind of bureaucratic structures these unions have, but these unions, because they have such a powerful, entrenched bureaucracy and the biggest share of the vote, constantly swing the decision in favour of talks with bosses and government

10 years of pay deals

1970 was the year that changed the industrial wage negotiation system. The economy in the Republic was booming in the second half of the '60s, growing at an average rate of 6%. Inflation was creeping up but as long as production stayed ahead, the capitalists were happy. The workers weren't doing too bad either. Industrial jobs were increasing rapidly. And wages were going up though they lagged behind inflation. Eventually the craftsmen decided that they wanted a fair slice of the action. The winter of '68-'69 saw a bitterly fought and militant strike led by rank and file craftsmen. Not only did they win a massive 25% wage increase (in the context of an inflation rate of 8%) but they nearly smashed the F.U.E. into the bargain.

General workers rapidly followed the lead of the craftsmen and in 1970 were earning increases of 16% on average. But with industrial growth slowing to 2½% in 1970, the employers screamed blue murder and the Fianna Faul Government (not that the Coalition would have acted differently) came to the rescue of the capitalists. Initial appeals to patriotism fell on the deaf ears of a working class that was beginning confidently to demand a decent standard of living. So the Government threatened a statutory income freeze unless the unions agreed to limit wage rises. They did. And we have been stuck with National Wage Agreements ever since.

But why did the unions give in to Government threats? To start with, the militant tactics used in the Craftsmen's strike split the bureaucracies of the general and craft unions.

The Trade Union Bureaucrats are at once at an advantage when the whole dilly-dallying process begins. The reason is simple, and should be spelt out.

The initiative to claim and fight for higher wages is taken away from the rank and file on the job and in union branches and is vested in the trade union leaders working through the Employers—Labour Conference. Any claims are then wrapped up in slow frustrating procedures. Claims for improved conditions or anomalies are referred to the Labour Court with the whole emphasis from union bureaucrats and bosses being on procedure and arbitration.

This emphasis has strengthened the control of the bureaucracy over the rank and file and strengthened the power of the full time official who quite often when claims are put forward is the only one who knows what's going on.

The demoralisation felt by many workers as a New Deal comes into being and there is no way out except unofficial action which the media and the bosses will pounce upon, leads to National Pay deals becoming self-perpetuating.

National Pay Deals were first introduced and supported by many trade union bureaucrats because they knew which side their bread was buttered, and that was to act as peacekeepers between workers fighting to increase their living standards and the bosses attempts to curb that fight.

Now the trade union bureaucracy needs these deals as much as the bosses. A real breakthrough by workers fighting outside the National Pay deals or their equivalent would have the effect of showing these people up for what they are—a roadblock against workers interests.

We must begin to argue at every section meeting; every branch meeting; on the shop-floor; in the pubs etc, how negotiations by the Congress bureaucrats are one big manoeuvre designed to make workers pay for the crisis of the system itself—a crisis not of our making.

We have had ten years of Wage Deals and Understandings—and it's got us nowhere.

It is time to pick up the pieces again and weld together a militant, fighting unity.

DERMOT BYRNE

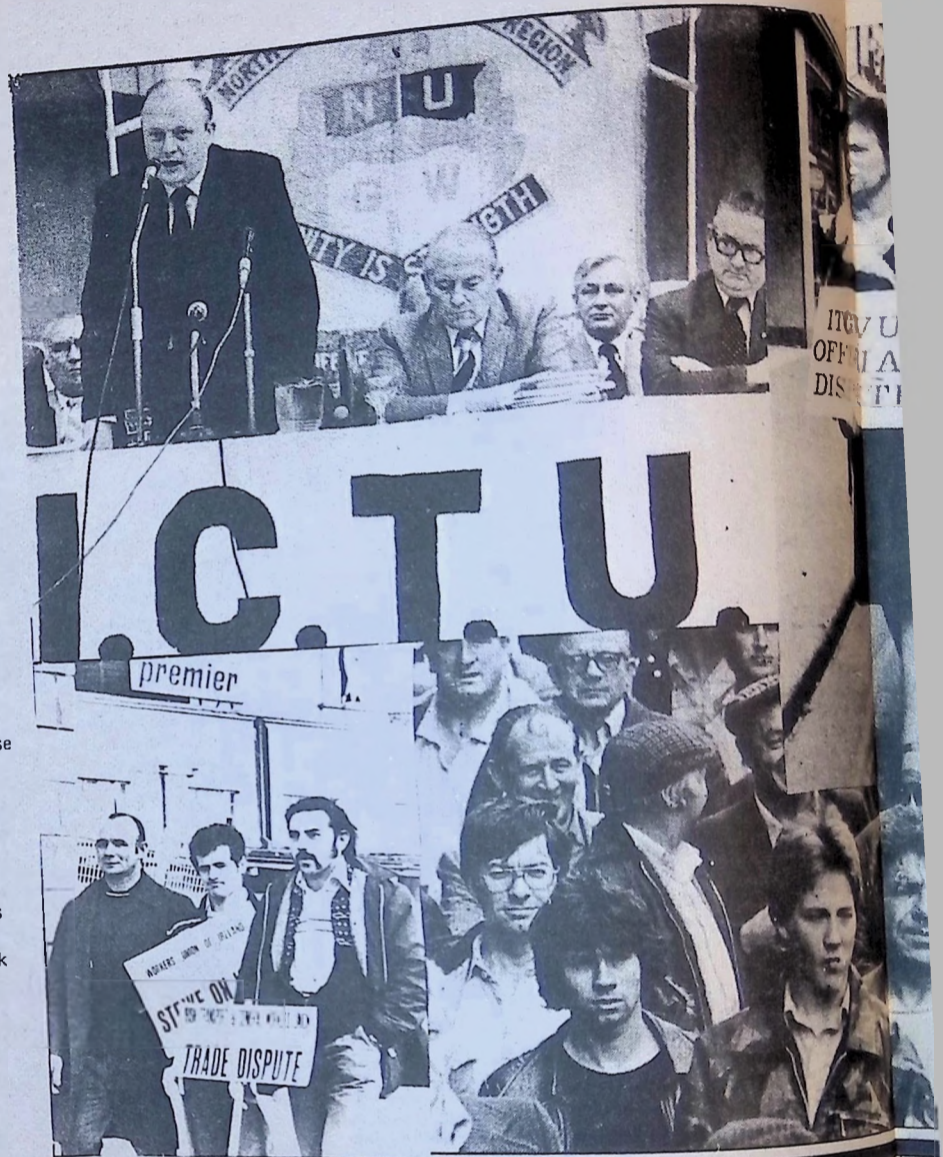
But more importantly, all union officials must have been worried by the militancy of the rank and file craftsmen. A Government and employer backed agreement gave the bureaucracies some security against the rank and file. Secondly, national agreements were not new in 1970. Since 1946 there were twelve pay rounds, five of which were nationally negotiated as opposed to key bargains being won by particular sections and followed by the rest. Thirdly, the actual amount of the 1970 agreement (17.9%) was very sizable and workers were not yet used to the wage cutting effects of double-figure inflation.

Since then there have been seven more NWAs. In total the NWAs have added 17.9% to average industrial wages (up to the 1978 Agreement). But inflation has been 22.2% in the same period. So workers have lost 43% in real wages over the 9 years.

But the real effects of the NWAs in cutting real wages have been hidden by a number of factors. These include clever Government juggling of tax allowances, distorted figures for inflation, high rates of inflation, and worst of all, unions have had to negotiate productivity agreements, thus selling jobs to maintain reasonable wages. Finally the Labour Court and union officials operate the NWAs to the letter thus discouraging fight backs.

With all this to fight against it's going to be a long haul back to shop steward controlled negotiations.

TOM O'CONNOR



Photomontage,
photos Derek Spiers.

DO WAGES REAL

EVERYBODY knows that inflation is raging—wages lose a fifth of their value in a year at the present rate. But who is to blame? Is there anything we can do to stop it happening? Are we just chasing our tails like a mad dog when we seek compensation through wage rises.

The bosses say it is our fault and the trade union leaders believe them when they tie us up in wage restraint—but what are the facts.

First of all, there is nothing particular about Ireland in all this. All over the world inflation is higher now than it was ten years ago.

Also, all over the world, bosses are telling workers that their wage demands are greedy and cause inflation which will rob that country—any country—of its ability to sell its goods on the world market and will cause unemployment unless workers accept less.

And again—all over the world—unemployment is rising, goods are not being sold on the world market and workers are being called on to sacrifice for the good of the country.

As far as the capitalist is concerned, he must produce his pro-

duct at the lowest cost in order to undercut his competitor.

All his competitors think exactly the same thing—all are trying to cut costs in order to out do one another.

Again, as far as the capitalist is concerned wages are a PART of his costs—but just a part. Interest charges—that's the money lender's cut—raw materials, and machinery and plant are all costs too.

Televisions

So is fuel and foreign exchange and if the value of currencies change to his disadvantage, this too is a cost.

After all the costs have been met come the profit. If the income from sales remains the same, then if costs go up, profits go down.

Now in the normal run of things prices go up and down. If business is brisk, the market will bear an increase in prices. If there is a lull in business, prices will fall.

Also the relation of prices varies as costs varies—over the past twenty years, televisions have got cheaper in relation to the price of food.

But inflation is a GENERAL rise in prices, or, to put it another

Understanding and the ch the rank and file

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Photomontage,
photos Derek Spiers.

on the building...

IN JANUARY 1979, Waterford building labourers were on a weekly wage of £60.78 for 40 hours. At this time it was described by the Chairman of the Building Group of Unions as an "Income of Shame."

Building workers in Waterford didn't have to be reminded of that fact—many of them were ashamed of their pay packets because it was less than that of their daughters working in local industries.

The difference in average earnings between building workers and workers in manufacturing industry was around £15.00 even though the hours worked were almost the same—44.4 hours in building, 44.5 hours in manufacturing.

We soon realised that unless we were prepared to take drastic action we would have no hope of increasing our earnings because of the restrictions of the National Wage Agreement.

Our attitude was "Why should we—working in a dirty dangerous industry exposed to all the elements and with little or no job security—be forced to accept low wages when the bosses were making huge profits (There was £40m. of development going on in Waterford at the time).

So we banged in claims for around £20 extra per week. We knew that they would not come across with the money and had prepared for a strike.

We also knew that the only way we would win was by united militant action. We got agreement from all the different trades to respect any pickets placed. We also

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But this was still £9 short of our original target. A few months later and after the acceptance of the National Understanding we went for the other £9.

After a four day strike on the same basis as the other we won what was called a standing bonus and Dublin Area differentials which totalled around £7.

By the end of 1979, including nationally negotiated increases, labourers in Waterford were earning just over £100 per week for 40 hours.

So, while nationally, trade unionists generally lost out under the National Understanding—pieces 20%, wages 16%—because our response was to hell with restrictive agreements hit the bosses where it hurts them most, we actually made—with the help of these two unofficial strikes—large gains in real earnings. And Waterford building workers are now among the highest paid building workers in the country.

DO WAGES REALLY CAUSE INFLATION?

EVERYBODY knows that inflation is raging—wages lose a fifth of their value in a year at the present rate. But who is to blame? Is there anything we can do to stop it happening? Are we just chasing our tails like a mad dog when we seek compensation through wage rises.

The bosses say it is our fault and the trade union leaders believe them when they tie us up in wage restraint—but what are the facts.

First of all, there is nothing particular about Ireland in all this. All over the world inflation is higher now than it was ten years ago.

Also, all over the world, bosses are telling workers that their wage demands are greedy and cause inflation which will rob that country—any country—of its ability to sell its goods on the world market and will cause unemployment unless workers accept less.

And again—all over the world—unemployment is rising, goods are not being sold on the world market and workers are being called on to sacrifice for the good of the country.

As far as the capitalist is concerned, he must produce his pro-

duct at the lowest cost in order to undercut his competitor.

All his competitors think exactly the same thing—all are trying to cut costs in order to out do one another.

Again, as far as the capitalist is concerned wages are a PART of his costs—but just a part. Interest charges—that's the money lender's cut—raw materials, and machinery and plant are all costs too.

Televisions

So is fuel and foreign exchange and if the value of currencies change to his disadvantage, this too is a cost.

After all the costs have been met come the profit. If the income from sales remains the same, then if costs go up, profits go down.

Now in the normal run of things prices go up and down. If business is brisk, the market will bear an increase in prices. If there is a lull in business, prices will fall.

Also the relation of prices varies as costs varies—over the past twenty years, televisions have got cheaper in relation to the price of food.

But inflation is a GENERAL rise in prices, or, to put it another

way, a fall in the value of money. It is a sign of crisis—and because it is a world occurrence it is a sign of world crisis.

In years of boom, wages rise due to increased demand for workers. Capitalists can afford to pay these increases because they can sell their goods and it is profitable to employ more workers—even if they have to pay more for them.

But in times of slump the pressure is to keep down wage costs—to cut back real wages.

In the crisis struck world of the eighties holding down wage increases to 10 or 15% represents a real cut in wages. This is the reason that workers are blamed for inflation.

Fluctuations

But in every recent burst of inflation, wage rises have come AFTER huge rises in prices—the evidence is that prices move first and only later do wages try to catch them up.

So the real cause of inflation must be found somewhere else than in the actions of greedy workers.

One such cause is fluctuating

currency rates. Because of the descent into crisis international bankers search the globe for countries whose governments look more likely to do less badly at promoting profitable investment—none are very successful. Those countries who for the week or month seem to have the edge notice that there currency rises in value—cheapening imports and making more expensive exports. Thus for all other countries prices of imported goods rise boosting inflation.

Governments

Governments and bankers who are desperate to promote and encourage profitable investment find it necessary to create credit by granting loans for capitalists or printing money to pay for government projects. Now if you print money which represents no equivalent increase in material wealth you cheapen money—it has less value and you must pay more of it for the same goods.

Reactionary economists called monetarists use a similar argument to explain inflation—we should not be afraid to see what is right in what they say—except that they propose making workers pay for

the crisis by cutting public spending and forcing still higher unemployment.

Bankrupt

Other factors play their part and it would take a book to go into it all but this much is clear. In the struggle for a decent living we are constantly having our gains taken from us by the bosses increasing prices—the answer is not to meekly submit and through wage restraint allow it all to happen in the vague hope that little Ireland can steam out of the crisis.

No, the bankrupt system of capitalism is daily showing itself incapable of providing the basic necessities to the great mass of humanity. It can't be patched up and working class organisation is the urgent necessity to raise the possibility of a rational world order, built out of the independent actions of workers.

Now is a time for the very least defending our living standards and rank-and-file organisation and curtly telling the feigning union bosses that we have no intention of paying for the bosses crisis.

KEVIN WINGFIELD'

DERMOT BYRNE

OR

ings and the challenge of

ank and file



on the building...

IN JANUARY 1979, Waterford building labourers were on a weekly wage of £60.78 for 40 hours. At this time it was described by the Chairman of the Building Group of Unions as an "Income of Shame."

Building workers in Waterford didn't have to be reminded of that fact—many of them were ashamed of their pay packets because it was less than that of their daughters working in local industries.

The difference in average earnings between building workers and workers in manufacturing industry was around £15.00 even though the hours worked were almost the same—44.4 hours in building, 44.5 hours in manufacturing.

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in the Corpo...

NATIONAL WAGE Agreements over the years have made it impossible both for craft workers and general operatives in the Dublin Corporation to maintain a wage rate which comes near to keeping up with the soaring cost of living.

Although the trade union leadership of the craft unions have been traditionally opposed to National Wage Agreements, many of these people have accepted the cosy job myth and offered no real opposition to wage restraint.

The result has been that over the years the living standards of such groups as carpenters, plumbers, bricklayers, engineers and painters has been dramatically eroded.

A fight back against this situation was begun as far back as 1974, when a Shop Stewards Committee representing stewards from the different craft unions was formed to act independently of the trade union officials.

A ten week unofficial strike took place, and 80% of the workers from UCCAT, PPU, INWU, ETU, NEETU, and IME gave support.

The result which was negotiated by trade union leaders was a dismal £7 increase, coupled with a productivity deal.

The majority of the workers never wanted the productivity deal and it was never implemented but the bureaucrats of the Local Authority Staff Negotiating Board—the bosses—never paid the full increase due.

The trade union officials did nothing.

The Shop Stewards Committee implemented a go-slow with the result that the rise was finally given, and Dublin Corporation workers were amalgamated with local authority workers.

Rather than disband the Shop Stewards Committee which had been functioning successfully for some time, a new unofficial body was formed—the Dublin Corporation Crafts Group.

This brought together over 400 rank-and-file members of 11 unions, which was over a third of the craft workers.

Some trade union leaders have condemned the new body—one official from the painters unions even putting up posters threatening shop stewards who got involved. Most officials, however, have tried to ignore it.

To date, contacts have been built up with shop stewards around the country and half of the 10p subscription each week goes towards a National Shop Stewards Committee for local authority craft workers.

More and more corpo workers are becoming frustrated with the bureaucratic manoeuvrings of officials, the straight jacket of the Labour Court and the lack of control they have in their own unions. Many workers see the need now for militant action. The Dublin Corporation Crafts Group is only a small start in the fight to organise craft and general workers into a rank-and-file controlled movement which can cut through wage restraint and the dilly dallying of the trade union bosses.

It is only by breaking through wage restraint and doing it ourselves that we can succeed.

JOHN BYRNE
EPTU, CORPORATION
CRAFTS GROUP NEC.

in the classroom...

NATIONAL wage Agreements have been a disastrous experience for teachers since their introduction a decade ago for three basic reasons—

1. They make the growth of militancy in a so-called professional association more difficult;
2. They freeze the equation of teachers pay with junior sections of the civil service;
3. They depress the relative income of teachers in relation to other workers.

The most effective way of generating militancy at branch level is by formulating pay demands and fighting to implement them.

Protecting jobs is the most important fighting strategy of any union.

Nation Wage Agreements have seriously undermined this process by forcing teachers to accept centrally negotiated increases whether they like them or not.

An attempt was made by Wexford Branch in 1978 to rally milita-

nt forces in ASTI and push for a 40% increase across the board. Such an increase would have brought teachers pay in line with other graduates in the public service.

This was a direct challenge to the NWA. All efforts to take strike action in support of the demands collapsed last Spring.

The leadership—committed to NWA—never supported the rank-and-file and a sizable minority of the membership were emasculated by the lack of any meaningful collective bargaining over the past ten years during the regime of NWAs, and other teachers unions refused to support the action because of its conflict with the NWA.

The rank-and-file of the ASTI began the decade by supporting National Wage Agreements and ended it rejecting them—at least we are entering the '80s wiser if poorer trade unionists.

Dermot Quish.

and on the buses

CIE BUS workers have nothing to thank National Wage Agreements for—contrary to myth.

Traditional poor wages and conditions have only improved at all thanks to industrial action.

Although receiving National Understanding increases with the sugar coating of back money, the most significant rise in pay recently was achieved by a long strike led by the National Busmen's Union—a non-Congress union—and accepted by the Labour Court under pressure of disruption of transport services.

The NBU itself is a split from the ITGWU which until the mid sixties dominated bus work in CIE.

Like most such splits, it occurred around a few charismatic leaders who originally were rank-and-file inspired.

In stark contrast, the ITGWU was—and is—completely identified with Congress "business unionism"

The years of NWA's have done nothing to improve the situation, indeed the Transport's only meetings at which ordinary members can attend are AGM's which unsurprisingly—in view of their impotent irrelevance—command attendances seldom exceeding a dozen or so.

Cowboys

The NBU with the aura of a "cowboy" union is from the top more concerned with replacing the ITGWU as the bus worker's union. The split accomplished, its reputation for "militancy" assured its leaders have no further need of a rank-and-file orientation.

All this inevitably leads to inter-union rivalry and divisions between busworkers and other grades of workers in CIE.

But how to break out? Every year the main issues are settled by national wage bargaining and the unions are seen as purely a ticket to work or at best a defence against company disciplinary measures.

Rules of Congress on picketing have led to officially organised scabbing on maintenance and craftworkers' disputes in recent months have put any half way decent conception of trade unionism in deep eclipse.

A start has been made—"busworker" a rank-and-file paper produced by bus workers themselves has built up a good audience for

itself. But it is none too clear on where it is going.

It recognises that small "bread and butter" issues are an important start, to its credit, but has not yet managed to organise its readers around its ideas. Indeed, it is not always clear on its ideas. This is a fault which some of its participants are trying to correct, but experience has often to be gained the hard way.

Illegal

"Busworker's" greatest success to date has been its exposure of the illegality of the shift system worked in Dublin—entailing periods of 7 consecutive days worked contrary to the Road Traffic Regulations—and a lone driver who has refused to work the illegal system.

The Sunday World took up the case and the Company was forced to back down on a sacking for the driver and the Unions are asking the Company to renegotiate the working week.

Tied to a campaign for a 35 hour 5-day week, the "Busworker" has showed a promise of what trade unionism could be like if the rank and file took charge and NWAs and National Understandings, Labour Courts and the rest were shown the door.

But where "Busworker" is still just a voice—albeit a strident voice—rank and file organisation is beginning to take shape in a couple of garages in Dublin.

At Ringsend garage, an "Action Group" has sprung up in response to the lack of facilities and mess room there.

Still in its infancy, the group organises regular meetings which include the shop stewards of one of the unions.

Just a couple of months old and completely unofficial it is trying to draw in support and participation from all sections and unions.

In Donnybrook, a similar scheme is just beginning.

More and more Busworkers are beginning to see the dark corner that "social peace" trade unionism has left them in.

National Wage Agreements threaten to plunge all workers into that darkness. It's time to turn on the light of the rank-and-file.

KEVIN WINGFIELD.
(Busworker Editorial Board.)

AGES REALLY CAUSE INFLATION?

way, a fall in the value of money. It is a sign of crisis—and because it is a world occurrence it is a sign of world crisis.

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KEVIN WINGFIELD

Abortion A Woman's Right To Choose

42% OF Irish women who had abortions this year had never used contraceptives in their lives. This horrifying statistic was announced at the launching of the Women's Right to Choose Group at the beginning of August.

Mary Gordon, a member of the Socialist Workers Movement, who was speaking for the Women's Right to Choose Group quoted from a sample study of 300 women who had been referred to Britain this year for pregnancy terminations, through the WellWomen Clinic in Dublin.

The demands of the group, she said were for choice but what choice did Irishwomen have when, under the new contraception Act contraceptives would be even harder to get than before.

That the WellWomen Clinic did abortion referral was not widely

known, as it could not advertise this service publically, and that probably accounted for the fact that over 72% of the samples were from Dublin.

Likewise the fact that professional and wealthy women were more likely to be in a position to organise their terminations independently probably explained why over 79% of the women using the service were working class or unemployed.

(32% clerical, 20% manual workers, 14% housewives, 7% students and 6% unemployed).

Whereas more than 85% of the abortions were before 14 weeks this still is a very low percentage for early abortions, compared to Britain and other countries where the facts about terminations and the facilities are widely publicised.

One of the first steps of the

Right to Choose Campaign therefore will be to fight for open referral from health centres and hospitals and full access to information on all methods of fertility control.

75% of the women in the sample were single, the rest living or having been married (divorced, separated, widowed etc.) Yet 22% had children, which suggests that at least 6% had already had an illegitimate child and were not prepared to again. 5% of the sample were under 17 years of age, 27% between 18 and 21, 31% between 22 and 27, 13% between 28 and 34 and 13% were over 35.

The usual image presented of women who have abortions, when it is not of cold blooded murderers, is of very young and frightened girls who don't know any better. Yet 25% of the sample were married and only 32% were under 21.



Picture: Derek Spliers (IFL)

The founding meeting at TCD: l to r.; Mary Gordon, SWM, Patricia McMahon of the USA Catholics For a Free Choice, Ann Connolly, chairing, of the Dublin Well Woman Centre.

As Mary Gordon pointed out, the termination of an unwanted pregnancy is a valid choice for a woman to make, and is only traumatic when it is a late abortion or it hasn't been chosen freely.

The Women's Right to Choose Group meets every week at 8pm and can be contacted by writing to, c/o Women's Centre, 8, Marlborough St., Dublin 1, or phoning 787160

H Blocks REVIEW

FOR THE past few months resolutions have been raised in Union Branches around the country on H-Block. But we lacked information on specific cases of Trade Unionists in H-Block.

Now we've got a pamphlet that fills the gap. Produced by trade unionists in the H-Block campaign, this pamphlet gives six case-histories of workers who ended up in the H Block.

Just one example—Michael Culbert was a shop steward in NUPE in St. Patrick's Training School in Belfast. On Saturday 6 May 1978 he was arrested and charged with the murder of a policeman.

He was interrogated continually for 49 hours while being forced to stand and do without food. The RUC claim he made a verbal admission. That "verbal" was accepted by the non-jury Diplock court and he was sentenced to life imprisonment.

Now Amnesty International are looking into the case. But he will still do a few years on the blanket before getting an appeal.

The pamphlet is excellent on detailing how those in H-Block have gone through a very special system to get there. In clear and concise language it describes the "conveyor-belt" system—the harassment, interrogation and torture, the internment by remand, the Diplock courts and finally H-Block.

In describing the case-histories of trade unionists, the pamphlet is not simply saying that each union must "look after its own." Many who end up in H-Block have not been union members because of the large amount of unemployment in areas like west Belfast and Strabane.

But it IS saying that the labour movement has a responsibility to be in the forefront of the struggle for democratic rights.

Buy it! Read it! Order it for your union branch and workmates!

Available from: The Trade Union Sub-Committee of the National H Block Campaign, 52 Broadway, Belfast 12. Kieran Allen.

WOMEN THE WORLD OVER

THE DANISH for women is "kvinder" and the word was displayed proudly in every nook and cranny of Copenhagen during July when the city hosted no less than 3 women's conferences: the UN mid-decade conference on women (the decade in question being the International Women's Decade 1975-1985); the "alternative" or Non-Governmental Organisations conference; an "alternative alternative", a one day festival in the open air.

The world and her mother was there; smiling out ones from the African National Congress mixed with intense young Lesbians from

America: the atmosphere was electric: the solidarity was great.

The UN Conference was a predictable farce as the participants acted out the roles meted out to them by their male-dominated governments.

The women at the alternative conference were from every strand of the women's movement. The Congress therefore lacked any cohesion, failed to chart a direction for the women's movement or even unite around the slogan of feminism. But there was a common orientation—support for the oppressed and their struggles in every part of the world, and in particular the women taking part in those

MOLLY O' DUFFY struggles.

Thus the hundreds of signatures circulated by the Armagh Solidarity Committee on the demands of the women on the dirty protest, and the heartfelt support for the Bolivian women who demonstrated twice at the military take-over in their country. Domitila, the leader of the Bolivian mine-workers in their long struggle against dictatorship, was the heroine of the conference.

Chaos there was, decisions there were not—revolutionary women were thin on the ground. But any notion that the women's movement is free of politics or need not take sides in the class



struggle, was declared officially dead in Copenhagen. The women's movement is about Palestine, is about South Africa, is about Armagh—this was the message of those hurly-burly weeks in Copenhagen.

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Perhaps you would like more information on the activities and policies of the Socialist Workers Movement, if so fill out the form and tick the box.

Write to SWM, 35 Woodbine Road, Raheny, Dublin 5.

I wish to subscribe to "The Worker" and enclose £1.30 for six months/£2.50 for 1 year. (Cheques etc made out to Socialist Workers Movement.)

I am interested in SWM and would like more details.

I would like to join the Socialist Workers Movement.

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

SLAVERY IRISH STYLE

CORRINNE BUISSON.

Corrine Buisson, a French Student, came to Ireland for a summer job in a hotel in Lisdoonvarna. Here she describes the other side of 'Ireland of the Welcomes'...

YOU ARE pretty young, you leave school and you need money for the year—the unavoidable is to look for a job and spend your holidays working.

It's what I did! I started in that hotel in Lisdoonvarna at the beginning of July.

Now I've worked before, so I'm not a stranger to working for a capitalist—but was in for a shock!

The working conditions were as follows—

10 hours a day—often more—for twenty pounds a week. And that is a six day week.

This low level of pay is justified by the fact that you are being fed and your board is included.

But what happens really is that the way they make you live doesn't cost them a penny—



sharing a convenience between 5 girls and eating what the guests leave, that is to say almost nothing.

Young workers of 15 or 16 are kept in conditions of slavery for pocket money.

Slavery was abolished a long time ago, but the basic idea is still there in the so-called democratic society.

What meaning has freedom when you have neither the time nor the money for anything except working?

For the past two years there has been a very well known scandal about the way staff are treated in the hotels in Lisdoonvarna—so how is such a thing possible?

No law seems to effectively regulate this kind of treatment—laws without control serve no purpose.

GAYS HARRASSED

IN LATE 1976 a gay man found himself in an RUC cell, the "original" reason he had been lifted was for a small quantity of cannabis that was found in his flat. He had been the victim of a drugs squad purge—the first in their purge against gay people.

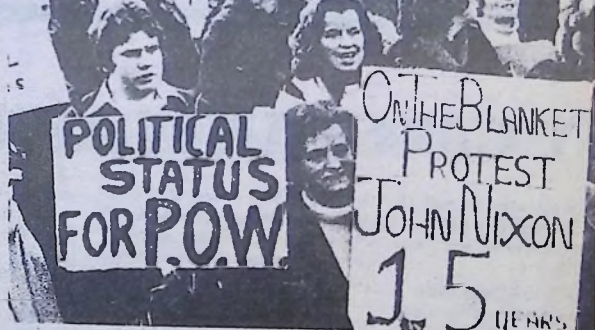
After the raids that followed he plus another had lost their jobs. 26 were interrogated, their diaries and letters plus the documents of organisations to which they belonged, were seized.

It took the legal machinery of the Northern Ireland Office 2 years to decide not to prosecute the 26, who could have received life. The RUC were instructed to return the piles of impounded material—Mervyn Rees had more important

things on his mind. . . Now the purges have begun again, this time centring around prostitution in a Belfast Boys' Home covering a period from 1966-79!

This time no-one is above the suspicion of the RUC—non-gay people have been raided and interrogated. Three social workers, one of whom is gay, have already lost their jobs—and it has not stopped there.

This years gay pride march in London on June 28 had Ireland as its theme, and the Socialist Workers Party—British fraternal party of the Socialist Workers Movement—provided the focus for those supporting the immediate withdrawal of troops from the North.



TRADE UNION NEWS

IRISH TRANSPORT ONE BIG MESS

THE CONSTANT occurrence of incidents and strikes which remind true trade unionists again and again of the need for reform in the ITGWU appear to have increased in frequency and importance over the past two years.

They have reached the public eye not just as the major unofficial ITGWU strikes, but because members are now frequently turning to the Courts of law in their struggle with the bureaucracy.

Each incident demonstrates the need for a movement for democracy within the ITGWU if the Unions are not to lose its best activists in a series of breakaways.

The 17 unofficial strikes at the Irish Sugar Company sought a High Court injunction to declare a ballot 'null and void'. They claimed that a clause in a new productivity deal, which meant reduced earnings for them, was included in the ballot despite an assurance from their union negotiator that the clause would be altered.

Sugar co

In a statement to a meeting on 2nd August of the Sugar Co. workers in Barlow, (the bulk of whom supported the strikers), the 17 said, "We believed, and still believe, that our own union, the ITGWU, treated us unfairly by not consulting us fully in drawing up proposals which severely effect those rights which we fought for as far back as 1949. This we believe they did because, as a group, we do not swell their ranks."

Meanwhile the long strike at the Irish Glass Bottle Co., in Dublin, was repeating a pattern which seems to be becoming a feature of Irish industrial relations: a large force of ITGWU general workers instructed to work on during a strike by a smaller force of craftsmen to work on during a strike (over sackings and a pay claim) by a smaller force of craftsmen. Just like the Unidare and Irish steel strike in 1977, at IGB 70 craftsmen are outside while the ITGWU organisers continued work inside; by whatever unscrupulous methods are necessary. In this case, the crafts allege, the ITGWU put out a leaflet to its members at the beginning of the strike claiming that it was unofficial, when it was official. When the strikers approached dockers to have deliveries of sand (used in the manufacture of glass) blocked, the ITGWU wrote to the Marine Port and General Workers Union asking for free passage for the sand and stating, the strikers allege, that the craftsmen claims included work proper to ITGWU mem-

bers. The strikers say they never claimed any such thing. A copy of the ITGWU letter is now at NEEU head office, and is signed by no less than Michael Mullen.

Another parallel with previous craft strikes is that it looks as though scabbing is taking place as production is kept going in a process that requires continuous maintenance. In 1977 the ITGWU, at Unidare refused a craft request to stop working machinery that had been repaired by maintenance supervisors; when some rank and filers objected to working such plant they were obliged to stay out themselves without strike-pay. Similarly, about twenty ITGWU members at IGB refused to pass the picket. But such a stand is difficult: an essential feature of the pattern is that the ITGWU member MUST work on or be reduced to a pauper. Even when there is a possibility that the member will be laid-off during the strike, he or she must initially pass the picket to qualify for the dole.

Of course their own bureaucrats, and Congress (who blocked the all-out picket), weren't much use to the craftsmen either.

McDonalds

The sequel to the strike at McDonalds, where despite the ITGWU's triumphalism on 'winning' it, there is reported to be one Union member left, continued with the leafletting by Jimmy Macken of the ICTU Conference in Belfast. (Macken a McDonalds striker, was expelled from the Union and denied his job back by McDonalds.) The Fermanagh Trades Council wrote to him expressing surprise at the case and requesting more information.

Unless a wide and coherent grouping is built in the ITGWU, to oppose the sell-outs and to offer a focus for those who seek change and democracy, the most active sections will continue to break away piecemeal (thus weakening the forces for change and delaying the day of DECISIVE rank and file revolt.) The bulk of the Union will remain as bur-

IN THE last issue of the "Worker" we reported on the housing crisis facing young couples with families in Waterford.

Since then the Waterford Branch of the Socialist Workers Movement have carried out a study on housing in the city to find out the extent of the crisis.

The study showed:-
There are more than 700 families on the housing list and this figure is increasing weekly;

Many of these families are living in conditions not fit for animals;

Only 57 families will have any chance of being housed in the next two years;

Since 1978, out of a total of 600 houses required only 141 were built;

No houses at all were built in 1977/78;

There are now no flats available for married couples in the city—many couples are forced to live apart.

The Corpo have stopped making serviced sites available to people in a position to build their own houses;

It would cost £13½m to catch up on the shortfall in housing;

The Corpo can't even get £1,650,000 from the government to start a 57 house scheme for which contracts have already been cleared;

Waterford has the oldest housing stock in the entire country.

eaucratic as ever and sections who go into struggle with bosses and union officials, such as the Telecommunications workers in Dublin and the ambulancemen in Cork, will continue to break away and turn to (or threaten) High

Court proceedings against the ITGWU. They will have no other choice. Unless, that is, members can see some hope for change embodied in an organised, widespread and credible grouping with a programme for change and the strength to fight for it within the union. The building of such a movement among the ITGWUs 160,000 members is an urgent task for anyone who cares about trade unionism and, because of the Unions relative size, the struggle for socialism. Indeed if the break-aways continue it may become the concern of any ITGWU member who cares about the continued unity and strength of the 'One Big Union'!

by Des Derwin

HOUSING-WATERFORD S.W.M. UNCOVER CORPO SCANDAL



Government spending cuts are responsible for desperate housing shortage.

The branch published the results with a strong statement attacking the Corpo and received massive front-page coverage in the local papers and were also interviewed on local radio.

The Corpo's response to the crisis has been to go cap in hand to see the Minister for the Environment Mr Barrett to try to change his mind about spending cuts, which are responsible for the housing shortage.

The deputation was made up of Corpo members who themselves voted for the im-

plementation of spending cuts locally and included the so-called workers representative Ald Paddy Gallagher. SFWP.

The Corpo also responded by introducing a points system for people on the housing list.

This is intended to create the impression that they are actually doing something about the situation. The implication here though is that there must always be a housing shortage and people must have patience and wait their turn—so much for the demand "proper housing for all".

Our response has been to seek meetings with the Flat-

dwellers Association and to raise the issue in the building unions and on the Trades Council as well as with the community organisations with a view to getting a united campaign of the ground.

The Flatdwellers have now changed their name to Flatdwellers Association and Housing action Group and it is hoped that this will be an umbrella organisation for all those willing to get involved and fight on the issue.

Our members will be arguing for a campaign with an orientation towards direct action and are gearing themselves for a hectic winter.

by Waterford Socialist Workers Movement.

Waterford Glass

WATERFORD GLASS workers have had ten years of National Wage Agreements during which time they have only once voted for acceptance of the terms offered. During this period they have also negotiated wages and conditions above the terms of the agreements—namely: equal pay for women, shorter working week, longer holidays, plant agreements and parity claims.

On one occasion, the company pleaded inability to pay under the so-called escape clause.

However, on examination of the company accounts by the union, the company was proved wrong in the figures they had originally given and were forced to pay the terms of the agreement.

Why then are glass workers opposed to National Wage Agreements?

The main reason for opposition within the industry is that the increases provided for in the NWAs do not match the rise in the cost of living.

The other reason for opposi-

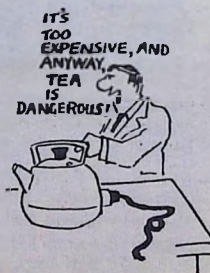
tion seems to be that increases are always on a percentage basis.

Because of this those who are on the highest wages get the highest increases. However, the Waterford Glass workers would be among the highest paid in Irish industry and therefore gain most from percentage increases.

Within the industry wages range from £100 per week to £200 per week. A ten per cent increase will give £10 to one and £20 to another. This is not acceptable to the workforce who argue that the cost of food, clothing and the rest is the same for the lowest and highest paid worker.

Another factor in this opposition to NWAs is the fact that the glass workers are members of the Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union which has consistently called for a return to free collective bargaining and always circularises its members with arguments against NWAs prior to voting.

by A GLASS WORKER 11/54
Branch ATGWU.



THE WORKER

FOR WORKERS POWER AND INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM

Republican women prisoners in Armagh Jail have been refusing to accept criminal status—to do prison work—since political status was abolished in March 1976. As punishment this refusal they were locked in their cells for 18 hours a day, and lost their remission of sentence. On February 9 this year they were attacked by malescrews and locked up for 24 hours without toilet facilities.

Since then the women have refused to use the toilets because the prison regulations make use of the toilets a privilege and not a right, which can be withheld. The governor has responded by locking the women in their cells 23 hours a day. The resulting conditions are according to the Republican leadership worse than those produced in the H-Blocks after 4 years of protest.

Margaretta D'Arcy speaks

"IN ARMAGH jail, if you're breathing, you're considered alive—if you're not you're dead. When you're dead, the authorities begin to worry about you."

This was the situation described by Margaretta D'Arcy, just released from Armagh jail when speaking about the serious medical condition of several of the Republican women still inside. Pauline McLaughlin, rushed to hospital on July 17 when she collapsed in her cell but returned to the jail a few days later, is a "living carcass"; Dolores Price who has political status but is suffering from a blood disease looks like an "alabaster angel" who never shows any feeling or emotion.

Dr. Cole—the doctor dealing with these women—is, according to Ms D'Arcy, a sadist and a male chauvinist pig.

He denies medical treatment at his will and when he does consent to see the women he deliberately degrades and humiliates them. He greets them with "How are we ladies?" and when they refuse to answer he prods them to provoke a response.

He tells a 17-year-old virgin that her urinary infection is a "honey-moon disease"; he tells another young woman that the cure for acne is pregnancy.

This medical and sexual harassment is compounded by interference from the authorities in the emotional lives of the prisoners. Letters in and out of prison are at least censored, at most stopped.



The gap in communications that results between women and their families has a profound effect on the prisoners.

Many of the women are engaged to men in the H-Blocks. Before permission is granted for the couple to write to each other the authorities decide whether or not they have serious marriage prospects. If one or both are in for a long sentence—say 30 years—it is deemed that they have no such prospects and permission to write is denied.

Margaretta D'Arcy described in gory detail the daily routine of Armagh—hungrily thinking of food all day; identifying and examining the different varieties of fly in the cells; swapping letters and "adopting" one another's families. In spite of the "living death" they are suffering their spirits are high.

Every protest and demonstration organised by those outside gives them new courage to continue their fight for political status.

Margaretta D'Arcy served three months for charges arising from an RUC attack on a Women Against Imperialism picket in Armagh Jail on March 8—International Women's Day—1979.



HE DID!

"I WAS in the Rose and Crown about half past ten when my son Dermot ran in and said, 'Something's happened to our Michael.' I went down the road with Dermot, the place was saturated with police vans, one of the RUC men told me to get down to the hospital as quick as I could."

This was how a Belfast father first learnt that his 16-year-old son, Michael McCartan, had been shot by a RUC officer while painting slogans on a wall. He continues—
"I went down to the Hatfield where I found someone to drive me down to the hospital.

"Michael was being operated on and the sister told me he was very serious. A plainclothes detective came in later and told me Michael was 'not too bad'.

"When the sister came to say the doctor wanted to see me I knew it meant he was dead."

The McCartan family live off the Ormeau Road in an area that is predominantly Catholic but not known for Republican activity.

On Wednesday July 23 there had been riots in parts of the city but the Ormeau Road was quiet.

Michael and his father had been painting in the house that day. Michael and his friends were finishing off the tins of paint by daubing the word "Provos" on a billboard when an unmarked RUC van carrying two plainclothes RUC men arrived on the scene—the boys ran—Michael was the last to move off—one of the RUC men shot him in the stomach, claiming later that he thought the paintbrush was a gun.

The RUC claim they gave two warnings—eye-witnesses deny this.

The shooting occurred at 10.30 at night. It was not fully dark—six street lights were enough for four youngsters to play cards at the side of the road.

Michael was carrying an inch-wide paintbrush—black with white paint on the end.

The peeler who mistook that paintbrush for a gun was a very jittery, trigger-happy peeler indeed!

The killing shocked the community into action. People who had never been politically involved took to the streets in protest at the murder of Michael who was known in the area to be a quiet fella with no history of involvement with the republican movement.

R.U.C. KILL OVER

PAINTBRUSH

WOULD YOU MISTAKE THIS FOR A GUN?



A handful of residents quickly drafted a leaflet calling for a demonstration for the following day. Two hundred people from the area showed up.

The next day a spontaneous road-block was set up by the residents and on Sunday a public meeting was held on waste ground nearby.

The "security forces" reacted by arresting and beating up the demonstrators. This led to rioting and more arrests.

The following week a committee of local people was set up to direct and coordinate the future

protests of the Ormeau Road residents.

The committee—Friends of Michael McCartan—demand that the RUC officer who shot Michael be identified and brought to justice.

They are convinced that the inquest on the boy's death will return a verdict of "death by misadventure" and that the case will rest there.

To further their demands they have to date organised a roadblock and a picket of the law courts.

A petition containing the demands of the committee is being

circulated in the area, but according to Tom McDonnell—Chairperson of the Committee—most of its energy is going into the preparation of an alternative tribunal which will examine the evidence that the residents have collected about Michael's death.

This includes eye-witness accounts, a map of the area detailing movements of both the boys and the RUC and a photographic reconstruction of the shooting.

Persons "known for their defence of the people" will be asked to attend the tribunal.

The committee hope that the tribunal will show that in spite of the expected official cover-up, the RUC have a clear-cut case to answer.

The murder of Michael McCartan is proof, if proof is needed

that the RUC is no normal police force engaged in the protection of law and order.

The increased number of cases in 1980 of RUC men before the courts for sectarian killings is further evidence of this.

And three weeks after Michael's death, Humphrey Atkins declared the "normalisation" policy dead.

The RUC, he said, are in the forefront of the fight against terrorism.

The Ormeau Road residents now know to their cost that to the RUC everyone in a Catholic area is a terrorist.

The Friends of Michael McCartan are determined to be in the forefront of the struggle against RUC terrorism.

Molly O'Duffy.



As part of the activities to commemorate the 11th anniversary of the British troops on the streets of Northern Ireland, the Troops Out Movement organised a delegation of 150 British trade unionists, socialists and ex-soldiers to picket the army forts in West Belfast. Before the picket began a soldier was crushed to death between a Saracen and an excavator that was clearing barricades. For his fellow soldiers to be confronted by a picket calling on them to desert could only increase their demo-

normalisation. Not only do we not want them here but even people from their home towns are opposing their presence in Northern Ireland. But it will need more than demoralisation to get the troops out. Trade unionists in both Britain and Ireland have a vital role to play in getting them out. In Ireland the Trade Union H-Block committee is organising trade union support for the prisoners. For more details write to 52, Broadway, Belfast 12.