

WORKER THE WORKER

FOR WORKERS POWER AND INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM

Inside:

FIANNA FAIL	PAGE 3
INTO	PAGE 2
H BLOCKS	PAGE 4 & 5
TALBOT	PAGE 6

SMASH THE BLOCKS

A CRIME is a crime, is a crime, is a crime, Margaret Thatcher. Four times a crime. First Bobby Sands and Francis Hughes. And now Raymond Mc Creesh and Patsy O'Hara. All of them murdered by the Iron Lady's ruthlessness and brutality.

But the crimes don't stop at these four. 12 year old Carol Ann Kelly, a young girl from Twinbrook, West Belfast, had her skull shattered by a plastic bullet.

Who can really believe that the thugs who pulled the trigger are 'peacekeepers'?

Who can say that those who fight back are criminals?

Catholic workers around the ghettos of the North have known the real criminals for a long time.

They pointed the finger at Margaret Thatcher in the Fermanagh bye-election, when they sent Bobby Sands to the House of Commons.

And now, they are pointing the finger at her allies closer to home.

Gerry Felt, that so-called socialist, was thrown off his seat in the Belfast Councils.

But Margaret Thatcher apparently does not listen to the ballot box. Immovable to the end, she is determined to wave her branding iron, in the face of all odds.

And she can do so with more resolution, when she has side-line partner in Haughey.

It is Haughey who has mobilised his political and riot police to break the H Block campaign.

We read daily so-called intimidation to workers by H Block activists.

Standing at a factory gate with a black armband or arriving at Garrett's door in an anorak, compares lightly to the head wounds received by H Block demonstrators after Gardai baton charges.

There is only one force that can break Thatcher, and indeed Haughey on this- that is massive mobilisation of the Southern working class.

In Drogheda, in Waterford, in Dundalk, we have already seen the solid support for the prisoners by industrial action on the days of Sands and Hughes funerals.

That support must be extended. We have the power to get at the British ruling class where it really hurts. At the profits they extract yearly from us all.

That is why we say:

- Build the H Block Campaign in the factories and in the workplaces.
- Organise CIE against the H Blocks,
- Post office against the H Blocks,
- Teachers against the H Blocks.
- And prepare now for taking industrial action to defeat Thatcher.



...and Haughey too!

LUCKY you. You would normally be entitled to a few minutes democracy while you cast your vote in a General Election, once every five years. This time round you can have that privilege after only four years!

The Carnival is on. The moment chosen by the Party in power, to its own best advantage. Just as in the US, where Carter was bad but Reagan was worse, here Haughey is bad but Fitzgerald would probably be worse. Take your pick: two-figure inflation under the Coalition or two-figure inflation under Fianna Fail?

A Charlie Haughey government that sends in troops to

break strikes of a Garret Fitzgerald government that thinks the pay-terms of the National Understanding was too high?

Or even a Labour administration which outlaws pay-rises above National Wage Agreements, as Michael O'Leary did with the bankworkers?

Would you rather have Charlie's riot-helmeted Gardai guarding the British Embassy against angry H Block marchers, or Garret's Emergency laws record? Who cuts better, the coalition and its embargo on recruitment in the public services or

continued on back page

FROM JANUARY to April, Teachers Action Alliance supporter Molly O'Duffy, campaigned hard for the Vice Presidency of the 22,000 member IRISH NATIONAL TEACHERS ASSOCIATION.

She did not win but by taking second place with 26% of the vote, she gave the union establishment one hell of a fright and laid the basis for a solid rank-and-file opposition in the union. THE WORKER talked to her about the campaign.

Shaking up the INTO

WORKER: What were your main reasons for standing in the V.P. campaign?

MOLLY: Well, to be truthful, it was very much a spur-of-the-moment decision. It's not very often that there's an opportunity in the INTO to raise broad issues of concern to the membership and suddenly we were faced with this election which allowed us to do so, if we could put a candidate up.

I talked it over with some other TAA people and we decided to have a go. We had no thoughts of winning but we knew it would shake up the union and help us get our ideas across to a much wider audience than up to now.

What was the reaction of the union establishment to your candidacy? MOLLY: Amazement, first of all. There's really no tradition of anyone opposing the establishment in the INTO.

For fifty years until Fionna Poole stood for President in 1977, there had never been a contest for any of the national officers positions! It was considered just "not done". Once they realised we were serious, though, they began to try to discredit me.

"Lack of experience" was one charge. It was true in a way. I've only been in the union five years but that can be an asset in our union where the majority of the executive are much older than the membership and very out of touch with the problems of young teachers.

Then they attempted to label



me a "mad women's libber". I was standing as a woman and for women's rights in the union and teaching generally. That's absolutely necessary in a union with 71% female membership but only one woman member on an executive of nineteen.

But this wasn't even my main platform really. I stressed union democracy and militant action just as much as the women's issue. That's the reason for the smear, to draw attention away from the other things. They didn't succeed though — the union democracy problem really came to the fore in the latter part of the campaign. How did that happen. It even got into the national papers?

MOLLY: Well, I think the establishment started to get a bit worried about my campaign when I got the support necessary from a

number of big branches — for example: West Belfast, Dundalk — to go onto the national ballot. At this point all candidates were entitled to have their platform circulated in the union paper but the executive unanimously decided that my platform and that of a third candidate were "damaging to the professional interests of the organisation" and therefore they couldn't circulate any platforms.

This was a blatant attempt at censorship and really angered many members who were not necessarily supporters of my campaign. There was an avalanche of resolutions

into head office condemning the executive but they refused to budge so we had to take it to the press and circulate the members ourselves with my platform. We also put a protest picket on the head office.

It is hard to say what effect all this had on the final voting but certainly it rebounded against the executive at the Annual Conference when they were censured by a 2 to 1 vote of delegates — I don't think

'I stressed union democracy and militant action'

that's ever happened before. The whole episode vindicated what I'd been saying saying on union democracy.

What do you think of the vote in the end? Have you succeeded in what you set out to do?

MOLLY: I think the vote was quite good. You've got to remember that this is really a very conservative union and my opponent, Waldron, had the whole union machine behind him. If you count the votes of the third candidate, it means that one in three union members are dissatisfied with the way the union is being run and are at least prepared to express that dissatisfaction in voting for the opposition.

Of course, it doesn't mean that everyone who voted for me voted for all my positions or would be

prepared to support an organised opposition grouping like the TAA. But I think a good many of them would. It's now up to us in the TAA to gather that support in.

The campaign has put TAA on the map in the union and there is no doubt that the sort of policies TAA stands for — union democracy; militant action on pay, the cuts and class sizes; women's rights; amalgamation of the three teachers unions, etc — have had a much wider hearing (and received much more support) than we had managed up to now.

Finally, what about campaigning itself? How did you find it? MOLLY: Great. Hard work but a

load of fun. All the TAA people who helped me were marvellous. Working on a campaign like this really gave us all a boost. It can sometimes be quite boring working for change in the INTO through the occasional branch meeting resolution or whatever, but being able to get around the country and meet ordinary rank-and-file members and debate the issues with them is an opportunity not to be missed. It's vital that we do this in an up-front way wherever we can.

Apart from anything else, it's very educational about just how the union works — or doesn't work! — on the ground. It's back to the hard slog of working through the branches now, of course, but who knows we could very well be back on the trail again next year.

WOMEN rarely die in Ireland as a result of back street abortions. For that we can thank, not the legislation of abortion, but the proximity of England.

A new campaign has started, however, which is actually arguing that women should die rather than be saved by an abortion if their life is threatened by a pregnancy.

This group, the Pro-Life Amendment campaign, not satisfied with an absolute ban on abortion, wants an amendment added to the Constitution guaranteeing the right to life of the foetus.

Why are they bothering?

They are bothering because it is possible that a woman whose life is in danger could successfully challenge our anti-abortion legislation under the Constitution.

That is what they are afraid of.

Pro-Life Amendment Campaign, headed by eminent doctors, but basically a cover for SPUC (the society for the protection of the unborn child) and its ilk, has however less to do with abortion that with an extreme right wing Catholic offensive against women in this country.

It has relatively little to do with abortion because its effects on the situation here would be negligible — abortions are simply not being performed as it is and it could not prevent women going to England for

PRO WHOSE LIFE?

MARY GORDON

What it represents is a backlash against the growing confidence to make demands and the developing awareness of and sympathy for the plight of women with unwanted pregnancies.

Our Catholic country has recently been exposed as having as high an abortion rate as England.

What they want is a public national repudiation of the facts — a propaganda victory.

Now that all three major political parties have decided to back this campaign it is important to expose it for what it really is. A No Amendment — The Womens Right to Life Campaign is being set up to oppose this front. It should be supported.

Many Irish people may not yet accept the right of women to choose abortion but they must be forced to see what it is they are being asked to do.

Because the only logic to this proposed amendment is

that a woman has less value than the foetus she is carrying.

Meanwhile in Spain (where abortion is also illegal) a number of prosecutions of women who have had or performed abortions is growing all the time.

In Bilbao, Oviedo and Barcelona women are waiting trial. Now in Seville women are fighting back in their thousands by demanding to be prosecuted!

It started when a Family Planning Clinic in Seville, called Los Naranjos was raided in November 1980 and the 8 clinic workers were arrested and the files seized. The files contained the records of 432 women who had had abortion and were summoned to court.

All admitted to having abortions. The 2,500 women came to the court and claimed that they too had had abortions. Another 20 000

women signed papers saying they'd had abortions and sent names and addresses to the court.

The judge in Seville appealed for help to the Ministry of Justice in Madrid and it now feared that because of the numbers the trial will take place in Madrid. All of the women are risking 10-15 years imprisonment while the eight clinic workers are liable to 30 years.

Los Naranjos catered mainly for working class women. Information and guidance on contraception and sexuality were given free of charge. Abortions were carried out for £40, and no women was ever refused because she couldn't pay.

The majority of the 432 women who'd had abortions in the Clinic were workers and couldn't afford to go abroad.

The trial will be a political trial, the women demanding an amnesty for all those accused and the legalisation of abortion to be freely available and paid by Social Security.

They are doking for International support — letters of protest to be sent to: Juzgado de Instruccion No 6, Caso 3640/80, Prado de Sebastian, Seville, Spain.

But if the Pope can smile over the situation in Spain and in Ireland his blatant attempt to get the Italians to repeal their abortion legislation fell flat on its face.

The massive 70% referendum vote against repeal means they're not having it all their own way.



How to fool people most of the time

KIERAN ALLEN

"ANY Government that allows unemployment to shoot over 100,000 does not deserve to be re-elected."

The words are those of former Fianna Fail leader Jack Lynch, and they hang like a mill-stone around the neck of his successor Charles Haughey, as unemployment 'shoots' towards the 130,000 mark.

"There will be a return to full employment by 1984" trumpeted Fianna Fail economics whizz kid Martin O'Donoghue shortly after being returned to power with a massive majority.

It all reads now like nothing more than a sick joke.

And its not just unemployment. The whole economic strategy of Fianna Fail is in tatters.

The old strategy of relying on enough growth and profits from private industry to provide a surplus that could be distributed in the form of higher wages, tax concession, etc. To keep everyone happy is just not on any longer as the world economic crisis catches up with Ireland.

In the sixties Lemass put it like this: "The rising tide of profits raises all boats". We are now in danger in being swamped.

Some of the reality is now even being understood by Haughey, so, in true Fianna Fail fashion, he is busily attempting to divert attention from the mess by playing his trump card: the National Question.

The talks with Thatcher are presented as 'historic', he expresses concern with the 'intransigence' of the British on the hunger strikes. Wrapping the green flag round him he hopes to muddle through. But the 'trump card' is a sham.

Fianna Fail broke their connection with the struggle against imperialism in the thirties. They confirmed it when they hung republicans in the forties. Their concern today to 'unite Ireland' goes hand in hand with strengthening law and order in order to smash all those who are actively organising to destroy the Northern State.

The reality rather than the rhetoric is also something many anti-imperialists should recognise. Some believe that there is a core to Fianna Fail that has basic republican sympathies.

'Sympathetic' some may be, but that sympathy only extends so far - never to the point where they would openly oppose their own government because that would mean jeopardising their real basis of existence: the maintenance of power at all costs in order to continue their systems of patronage, favours and jobs for the boys.

The appeals and promises may differ from election to election but the goal is maintenance of state power, pure and simple.

They don't 'transcend' that fact in some magical way.

They are, in reality a thoroughly reactionary bosses' party. They totally oppose militant trade unionism - remember the jailing of the ESB workers in the late sixties, the forcing of the National Wage Agreements down our throats, the present threats to bring in anti-strike laws.

Fianna Fail offer simply nothing to the workers, they offer nothing to genuine anti-imperialists. Yet its possible they may win the election. The trump card of nationalism may do the trick again, and, after all what is the alternative?

The same promises, more 'law and order' from Fine Gael and Labour. Its no alternative at all. In a very real sense, this election is simply irrelevant to the working class.

They were ordered to wear prison clothes, accept letters with prison numbers on the top, and obey conventional prison routine. The little group of men refused. Since they would not wear prison clothing, the authorities let them remain naked but for their blankets. They could not attend Mass since they were not presentable. They would not accept letters with prison numbers, so they received none. They would not accept the routine, so they were locked in their cells.

Sitting month after month, year after year, in the bleak solitary cells, they were taken out once a week for a bath, and for the rest of the week lived the life of an animal trapped in a burrow. Even in solitary confinement there was no privacy. The lights were turned on day and night at erratic intervals for security checks. There were no books, no contact with each other, no opportunity to talk with anyone. That they did not all go mad is a remarkable comment on man's capacity for survival.

From: The Secret Army by J. Bowyer Bell.

Fianna Fail's treatment of republican prisoners in the 1940's who were fighting for political status.

FIANNA Fail would have us all believe that the economy is 'on course'. That there is even enough money around to finance the usual pre-election 'give-aways'. We've said before that its all pie in the sky. That Irish capitalism is heading into a deep crisis. That one day the borrowing will have to stop. Maybe you didn't believe us. Okay. But listen now to four 'eminent' bourgeois economists writing in the May Issue of Magill. Paid to come up with ideas of how capitalism can avoid crisis, they seemed troubled to say the least.

ON THE EFFECT ON JOBS:

"The logic of our situation with a rapidly increasing labour force and a very slowly increasing employment is a return to emigration in the next five years".

Brendan Walsh

ON THE EFFECT OF PRE-ELECTION PROMISES

"The only possible justification for these promises is in terms of purely political gains. There certainly is no economic justification for it".

Paddy Geary

ON BORROWING OUR WAY OUT OF TROUBLE:

"Maybe it will take ten years before foreigners decide that they are not going to lend us any more money and at that point it just collapses around us".

Joe Durkan

ON HOPING THINGS WILL GET BETTER:

"We simply can't look towards a world recovery to get us out of our problems. The situation is getting worse faster than any growth can deal with it".

"The idea that a slow phased reduction in our borrowing levels and buoyancy in the economy can do the trick for us is illusory. There is no painless remedy for our current mess".

Peter Neary

ON THE CAPITALIST WAY OF DEALING WITH THE CRISIS'

"The real choice is between deflation and more unemployment now and financial collapse and vastly greater unemployment at some later stage".

Joe Durkin

BUT CAN CAPITALISM PULL IT OFF:

"I doubt that any of our possible governments will have the political will to do what is required. It is because of this that I say that the Institution of our state can't meet the crisis that is about to befall us. The situation seems to be already out of hand".

Paddy Geary

IS THERE ANY OTHER WAY OUT OF ALL THIS:

"Yes - Socialism"

The Worker

Charlie and Maggie

DES DERWIN

JUST UNDER a year ago the Fianna Fail and Tory governments began their first careful public steps towards a joint political solution to the struggle in the North.

In London, they proclaimed the 'unique relationship' of Ireland and Britain.

Seven months later, Thatcher was helicoptered into Dublin Castle to announce with Haughey the 'totality of relationships' between the countries.

Meaningless language, no details, no specific targets yet Haughey glorified in a 'major historical breakthrough!'

If so, it is probably the first major event in history to be revealed to the puzzled millions at some later date. But the vagueness is deliberate.

There are so many obstacles to any Dublin-London 'solution' that even to openly admit the plan puts it in jeopardy.

Any real attempt to give Dublin responsibility in the North would sooner or later meet fierce Loyalist opposition.

But even as Thatcher and Haughey schemed, Bobby Sands was creeping up behind them.

The 'grand strategy' is in deep trouble because of the political status campaign and the massive struggle that has been rejuvenated among Northern anti-unionists.

But there is meaning behind the meaningless language of the joint communiques. What Haughey and Thatcher are attempting to do is to find a new strategy for ensuring the stable rule of international capitalism on this island.

The old strategy of Partition and a sectarian state in Northern Ireland has become more trouble than it is worth.

The problem is - can a new strategy be made to work after the old has produced an entrenched Loyalist bloc and a determined struggle from the oppressed minority?

There is the rub for international capitalism - the irreformability

of the Northern state.

Will the new 'totality of relationships' follow Sunningdale into oblivion?

The way Haughey and Thatcher see round this is inching towards some form of joint administration, or at least political link, between Britain and the whole of Ireland.

The British and Southern ruling classes should become bed-fellows in dealing with the instability in the North - as well as in the South, of course.

A low key British withdrawal from the North would, they hope, remove the disadvantage for imperialism of British troops seen to be the oppressors on Irish soil.

The involvement of the Southern state would, they hope, reconcile a section of Northern Catholics with the security forces. Then any dissent could be labelled 'terrorist', having been robbed of its traditional enemy, the 'British Crown'.

In the process, Britain would keep one of its main interests in the North - a base for defence of the mainland. An Anglo-Irish defence pact would not only keep early warning stations, and maybe nuclear missiles, on Irish soil - it might even extend them to the South.

For this reason, America and other Western Powers could be expected to back the 'grand design' - the 'back door to Europe' could be secured without even the need to press the South into NATO.

For this new strategy of international capitalism to even stand a chance of success, Charles Haughey and Fianna Fail are vital ingredients. Can Haughey deliver the South? He is in a unique position to do so. With his own reputation



as a gun-running militant nationalist and wrapping the green flag around him, he is ideal cover for taking the South into the new 'totality of relationships'.

And the beauty of it is that he can represent it all as a step towards Irish unification. Haughey would rise on a wave of nationalist triumph in the very act of increasing the ties between Irish capitalism and its senior partners in the West.

Who, apart from some misguided republicans, H Block activists and perhaps some Trotskyists, would stand against such a service to capitalism? . . .

But, as yet, this remains a pipe dream for Western bosses.

The Northern minority is rising against oppression now, the Loyalists remain as intransigent as ever, Thatcher cannot be seen to weaken Haughey, in the face of all this and with an election coming up, is in no position now to deliver.

Capitalism will wait. The grand design goes into cold storage but it will reappear. In the meantime, socialists - with no more interest in one capitalist scheme or another, must challenge the system now, as they find it, where they find it, North and South.

INDUSTRIAL action has not been as widespread as during the first hunger strike but significant new groups have been mobilised in the Belfast area.

Workers from the new DeLorean car plant have stopped work and held marches. Brewery workers have joined in. And particularly important, workers at the Royal Victoria Hospital have organised a workplace committee. Made up mostly of ancillary staff, they have had H Block speakers in the canteen in an attempt to recruit nurses to the hunger strike campaign.

They have stopped work several times. After Bobby Sands died they blocked the Falls Road outside the Royal.

Even the Saracens turned back when they saw who was protesting. The dockers who were so prominent during the last strike are themselves almost totally unemployed so were not able to take industrial action.

National leadership, however has been seriously lacking in pulling together these forces, in an organised way. Calling national days of action, organising workers like the dockers who have the time, to go South to do meetings, would have given a much needed lead to the campaign. It would also give the workers in the North the confidence that comes from being part of a national movement of workers that is able to take concerted action to hurt the British and Irish governments.

The Belfast Trades Council has finally been pressured into

making a statement on the hunger strike. The Council's executive accused the British government of inflexibility and said it should re-examine its attitude on the hunger strike.

This statement, weak though it is, is the result of the protest over trade council officials co-operating with police in preventing the H Block issue from being raised at the annual May Day rally.

8 trade unionists were arrested on May Day for the 'crimes' of having an H Block banner, taking photos, shouting slogans and giving out H Block leaflets. The protesting trade unionists were held over the weekend but charges were later withdrawn by the prosecutors office. The May Day arrests raised the question of trade union democracy - seriously lacking in the trade union movement and the trades councils lack of movement on the H Block issue.

The ICTU passed a resolution in 1978 which stated that imprisonment in itself was sufficient punishment, that prisoners should therefore not have to wear prison clothes.

Trades Councils and leaders of the trade unions have satisfied themselves that this motion was passed and then hidden away.

They have refused to publicise or act on the resolution.

By refusing to mobilise the unions to use the workers power that can stop deaths in the H Blocks the trade union leaders have fully co-operated in killing the hunger strikers. Four dead is too much.

It is up to rank and file activists now to use their power to get the five demands.

Involving the workers

WE have had four deaths too many in the H Blocks.

Many people feel that, and are shocked at the hard-headed callousness of Margaret Thatcher. The point is to involve these people in the H Block campaign. Now, more than ever, the local action groups must be building that new layer of support.

In Finglas we have found that we are beginning to reach new people and, more especially we are beginning to reach that support where it's most organised; in the workplaces.

We were a small action group. But in the group we had two local shop stewards. We decided to concentrate our energies on the many factories in Finglas.

We brought out a local factory leaflet, we organised one or two factory gate meetings, and we held a rally in Finglas with local trade unionists speaking.

On the day that Bobby Sands died, we went round the factories, meeting the shop stewards and seeing what industrial action could be taken for the day of the funeral.

Those efforts paid off. On the day we had stoppages in four factories in Finglas - one of which, Janelle, brought out three hundred workers in support of Bobby Sands.

That gave a boost of confidence to us in the group and to other workers in the area. If Janelles down the road could do it, why couldn't we?

The following week we called a meeting of local shop

stewards and twenty attended.

On Francie Hughes death we had workers in eight factories in the area.

Where do we go from here? We in the Finglas group know that there is not simply a layer of spontaneous nationalist support that can be tapped at will. It has to be organised and carefully built.

So for us it is a question of consolidating the gains we have made. We are now bringing out a regular Finglas against the H Block bulletin with contributions from local shop stewards and local people telling people what they can do, where the group meets etc.

We as a group have felt a dearth of leadership from the National H Block campaign, and many of our initiatives have to be taken in spite of that leadership rather than with it.

Nevertheless, we are optimistic that we can build that factory support - hopefully directed towards a coordinated national day of action in the near future - and confident that at the next national demonstration in Dublin we will have a bigger contingent from Finglas than before.

If you are interested in the group and want to know of our activities contact 304 162 and help to build the campaign.

Marnie Holborow
Secretary Finglas H Block
Armagh Action group.

FOUR prisoners have died horrible tortuous deaths through hunger in the H Blocks. A massive outbreak of anger followed the news of the death of Bobby Sands.

Yet the tempo of the campaign has dropped since. When the two hunger strikers, Raymond McCreesh and Patsy O'Hara died, their deaths were marked neither by industrial action or massive demonstrations.

At a huge meeting in the Mansion House just after Patsy O'Hara died, Bernadette McAliskey said: "It is legitimate to ask now - has our strategy and tactics been right? We certainly believe that it is necessary to ask that question - not to indulge in side-line slugging, but as a measure of our seriousness about winning. Bernadette, though, argued firmly for continuing to direct our energies to winning over the rank and file of Fianna Fail.

And it is that emphasis that has characterised the H Block campaign to date. Basically, the campaign believes that Thatcher will be broken only when Haughey speaks out for the five demands.

Haughey, it is claimed, can be forced to speak out because he depends on a 'republican image'.

The key, then, lies in the rank and file of Fianna Fail. It is they who are in the position to apply the pressure to Haughey.

It is clear that the emphasis has been the over-riding part of the H Block campaign.

Meeting after meeting demonstration after demonstration has ended with the appeal to lobby your local Fianna Fail TD - rather than, say, organise for industrial action.

The SWM believes that this orientation has been a central weakness of the campaign. Essentially, it is setting up a chain of lobbying.

A word in the ear of the local TD, to put a word in the ear of Haughey, to shout over to Thatcher: Grant the demands.

It misses the point. Haughey and Thatcher are partners in crime.

Haughey, although a junior partner, is as much committed to break any militant anti-imperialist opposition to the Northern state as Thatcher. His whole attempt at a "constitutional settlement" depends on FIRSTLY breaking the militants. It is for that reason that his political police harass the campaign daily: that border security has been stepped up since he assume power.

Never mind, says a section of the campaign, we can use his own republican image to force him - if we can win over his own rank and file. But that rank and file are dependent on Haughey for privilege and patronage. They are not going to jeopardise their positions as members of the ruling party by attacking their leader.

More than that, that rank and

BLOCKS: NOW FOR

file come from the most conservative sections of the southern population - those middle class elements who mouth catholic nationalism while fearing with a holy terror that 'the trouble may come down here'.

The strategy of winning over Fianna Fail is not just useless, it has been a real hindrance. Because to put yourself in a position to even have the possibility of influencing Fianna Fail you have to have respectability.

When the news of the death of Francis Hughes broke, the anger and frustration of the young Dublin working class exploded in riots. Rioting, because a hastily organised demonstration had not the power to break the police lines and was forced to retreat before a crowd of baton charging cops.

The H Block campaign should have pointed the finger at those things in uniform instead, it denounced the 'hooligans' and 'troublemakers' that latched onto the campaign. And it banned night time H Block marches in Dublin.

Psychologically, the effect was to both justify police claims about our responsibility and to allow them to intimidate us off the streets. As a result, many felt that the campaign lost impetus at that point and allowed the southern state to go on the offensive with stories about intimidation.

But that was the price that paid for safeguarding the respectability of the campaign and the orientation to Fianna Fail.

That, of course, doesn't mean we advocate smashing up CIE buses. Riots are the result of frus-

tation, of despair. They do reflect a lack of leadership. But the problem is overcome not by rapping the young 'hooligans' over the knuckles, but by providing that leadership. And if violence still occurs we need to put the responsibility where it firmly belongs; the police.

But what is the alternative? The power to defeat Thatcher lies with the Irish working class. The key is workers in the South. They have their hands on the investments of Thatcher's friends.

They can undermine the whole stability of the South on which Thatcher depends. And it was their mobilisation after Bloody Sunday which forced the Heath government back onto the road of reforms.

But the key point is this: they

Organising resistance in Belfast

EVERY TIME Maggie Thatcher arrogantly states, "we will let them die", masses of anti-unionist people in the North harden their resistance to British rule.

Every hunger strike funeral every provocation by the British Army, every humiliating act by the RUC convince more people that the only answer is to get the Brits out of Ireland.

The hope of the SDLP to achieve power sharing are now clearly seen to be bankrupt. The plans to get a reformed RUC accepted by Catholics are obviously pathetic. The hunger strikes and the intransigent reaction of the British and the RUC have made reformist plans unacceptable to increasing numbers of people in the North.

As the children of 1969 die in the H Blocks, the young people of the North are being recruited to the anti-imperialist cause. Teachers talk of Bobby Sands and the riots.

Four year old children explain to their mothers that 'Maggie Thatcher killed Bobby Sands'.

Six year old children are building barricades. Ten year olds are rioting against the troops. These children see the enormous Saladins rolling down the streets again. They hear the foot patrols shouting 'Bobby Sands, Slimmer of the year'. They are being killed by land rovers and plastic bullets.

They are the new generation that is learning about Britain's hateful rule in Ireland.

in Belfast

JOAN KELLY

Many more people are willing to risk everything now in an all out fight to get the Brits out.

One woman living the Ardoyne expressed it, "What have we got to lose, we've fought for so long. If we don't get them out now we won't be able to put with life as we have for the past 12 years".

Another in Clonard said, "They keep threatening civil war, well lets get it over with. It couldn't be worse than things are now."

The resistance generated by the hunger strikes has taken the form of the much publicised rioting and increased military activity. It is also seen in the 70,000 people who came out for Bobby Sands funeral, the local organising in the areas, and the support given to the H Block candidates in the local government elections.

Fears of sectarian attack and the knowledge that Catholic areas would be cut off once rioting began led to the organising of welfare and defence committees in every Catholic area in Belfast.

In the week before Bobby Sands death, Citizen Defence Associations were set up in most areas. Mass meetings were held to



discuss the coming crisis. 600 turned out in Lenadoon, hundreds in Andersontown; they flowed into the streets in Ardoyne.

These meetings were initiated by the Provos who played upon the fears of sectarian attack. People were told what plans were already made for evacuations and for storage of medical and food supplies.

There was little discussion of defence - 'Leave that to us' was the implication.

In Ardoyne men were asked to volunteer for vigilante duty. The women were asked to

make tea. In some areas, though like Beechmont and Lower Ormeau women have organised themselves the vigilante patrols.

The welfare committee in the Ormeau area, which is isolated from other Catholic areas found itself having to organise bin collections and coal deliveries and fight constant police harassment.

Catholics watched the bin men collect on the other side of the Ormeau Road but they refused to come into the Catholic side though their safety was assured and there was no serious rioting in the area.

The welfare committee has also taken on the vigilante patrols.

This is done by local activists who realised the safety and organisation of their area was up to themselves. The committee is also publishing a local bulletin to involve others in these activities.

In this and other Catholic areas of the North, ordinary people are experiencing vicious attacks by the British Army and the RUC.

The army and police seem to be using the hunger strike deaths as an excuse to launch their own attack against anti-unionists. Already three people have been killed by plastic bullets. There are witnesses to show they were not even involved in riots. But even if they were, since when is rioting punishable by death?

The riots are often a reaction to the presence of the army and police. On the night that Frankie Hughes died, 3 saracens lined up at the bottom of Ladybrook Park in Belfast just as people were hearing the news and hanging out black flags. People were too stunned to react yet but the army presence certainly organises a riot. It's the same in other Catholic areas.

The police line up around Ceomac Square at night ready for a fight. The fierce Saladins go up and down the Falls area. Saracens weave in and out of peaceful protesters on picket lines. Foot patrols taunt local people with their ugly and cruel shouts about the dying hunger strikers.

The supposedly reformed RUC has during the hunger strike campaign shown itself to be as sectarian as ever.

The police have allowed the UDA, and other Loyalists groups to openly march in Larne and up the Shankill and even into Long Kesh.

But H Block protesters have been kicked off the streets and forbidden access to Belfast city centre.

One young girl was arrested in Castle St. for wearing an H Block badge. Vigilante patrols in the Ormeau area are stopped every night and names taken by the RUC. The same police have friendly chats with UDA vigilantes just down the road. A peaceful protest by hundreds of Ormeau area people were told they couldn't go into Ormeau Road. Land Rovers were driven into the crowd of mainly women and children to make the point.

The next day the police started firing plastic bullets down the side streets before a march got anywhere near the Ormeau Road.

These police practices are not the result of a few bad apples as SDLP always claim. Orders from the highest levels of the police and army are responsible for the vicious attacks on H Block protesters.

Margaret Thatcher keeps saying we'll defeat the IRA. She and her forces are trying to defeat every bit of resistance to British rule in Ireland. And her methods of doing that - beating back every protest, killing young people with plastic bullets and landrovers, murdering the hunger strikers - are making that resistance more determined than ever to rid Ireland of British rule.

WHICH WAY FOR THE CAMPAIGN

do not need to speak through Cí Haughey to get their message to Thatcher. Their mobilisation may force Haughey to tailor his policies to that movement. But, in any case, the message will be rammed home to the British ruling class, that the political price of sticking out is far higher than conceding.

Unfortunately, the level of industrial action to date has not been strong enough to drive home that message.

But it is also the case that there will be no spontaneous nationalist response from southern workers to the H Blocks. It needs to be worked for, organised for, and won through class arguments.

There has been ten years of a tradition of southern working class passivity on Northern issues.

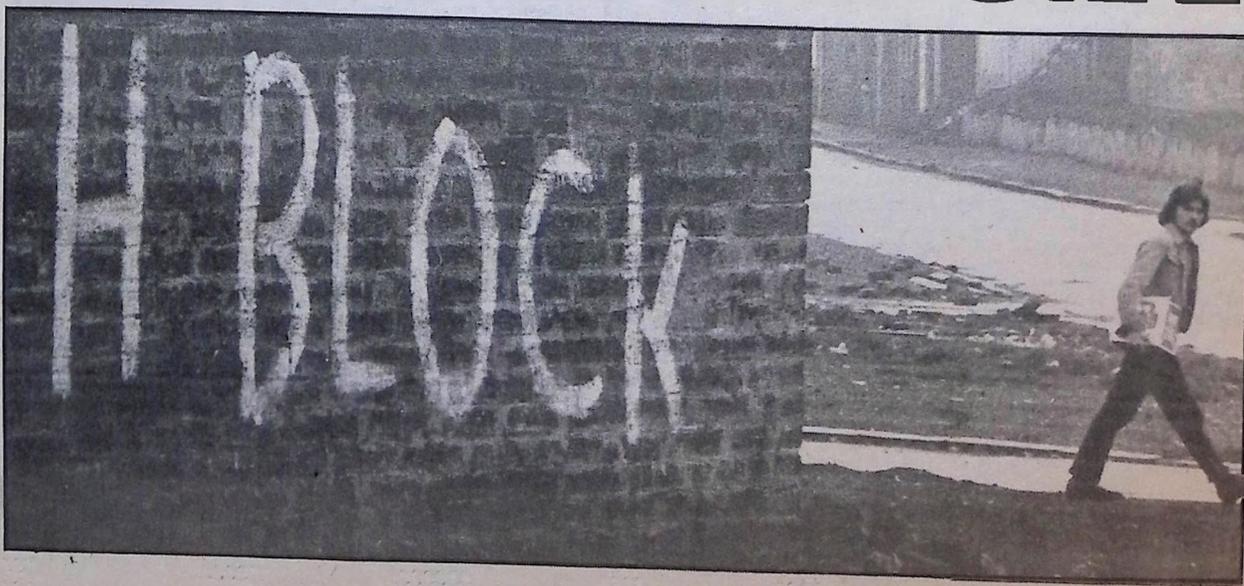
That tradition can only be broken collectively; through bringing shop stewards from different local factories together to discuss the issue.

It was agreed at the last H Block conference in Belfast that industrial action was the key.

Firstly, the H Block campaign nationally must set itself the goal that shop stewards and trade union reps are brought together locally to organise for mass strike action.

Secondly, the campaign must call for a one day national stoppage. That stoppage cannot simply be organised in response to a funeral. It must be prepared, publicised and organised for in advance.

Thirdly, in the strong areas the campaign must seek to extend the stoppage and send delegations to other areas.



INDUSTRIAL NEWS

All hell will break loose

the significance of the Talbot struggle

JOHN CANE

"ALL hell will break loose if any of our members go to jail"

That was the official responses of the Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union when the courts attempted in May to jail 11 striking Talbot car workers for refusing to apologise for "aggressive" picketing and District secretary Matt Merrigan for refusing to lift an embargo on the importation of Talbot cars.

The union meant it too. A delegate meeting of all branch stewards - including car workers, dockers, ESB workers - had decided to strike immediately anyone went inside, no ifs or buts.

And the ruling class - judges, bosses, politicians, and media chiefs knew they meant it. So it never happened. The judges backed off when they decided that the Talbot strikers needn't apologise after all - so long as they were good boys in the future. And the Talbot bosses backed off by declining to actually deprive Merrigan of his liberty, though the embargo stays on as effective as ever.

And the politicians backed off by keeping quiet during the whole affair.

And the media backed off by easing up on the usual 'holding country to ransom' headlines.

All in all it amounts to a seemingly total victory for the trade union and labour movements - and a very welcome one at that in a period more notable for defeats.

But the victory was not total - and could well be temporary if this initial battle is not built on by preparing the movement for the bigger war.

The first thing to be borne in mind is the confidence of the ruling class in allowing it all even to go as far as it did. Remember the last time workers were jailed over a trade dispute was back in the late sixties - the ESB maintenance workers.

The state backed off pretty quickly then too, but came back with a vengeance when it rammed home the 'law and order' National Wage Agreements.

Since then, year after year, the bosses have grown bolder in the use of the law to mop up any militancy still left. And the judges have been very obliging.

These days, injunctions against picketing, occupations, etc are given at the drop of a hat. The last

straw came in March when the new government-employer proposals for "reforming" industrial relations were leaked. They proved to be the most vicious anti-union attacks ever seen; banning unofficial strikes, solidarity strikes, imposing secret ballots.

The ruling class may have bitten off more than it could chew in taking on the ATGWU but there is no doubt that it will be back given half the chance. Is the movement as a whole really prepared?

It obviously isn't if you believe that the 'general staff' of the movement is composed of the bureaucrats of the ICTU. Their role in the whole Talbot affair has been despicable.

When the courts decided that the embargo on Talbot cars was unlawful - an embargo that went out in their name - they never even contested it.

When the issue went to the Supreme Court, they whimpered that it wasn't really any of their doing, it was all the fault of the nasty ATGWU!

Then the very day after the Supreme Court ruled that the embargo was illegal, the obnoxious Dan Murphy appeared in the media instructing all trade unionists to abide by the law of the land.

And this Supreme Court has very far-reaching implications.

It amounts to saying that ALL blacking and ALL solidarity action can be considered illegal.

You'd think that all union leaders, no matter how right-wing, would oppose that. You'd be wrong.

Already ITGWU John Carroll has sent round a circular to his minions stating that no blacking must be undertaken whilst the Supreme Court ruling simply be disobeyed on every shop floor Supreme Court ruling stands.

That is before the law, before any specific injunctions were ever taken out. Talk about lying down and letting them walk right over you.

But then we must expect this sort of thing from the likes of Dan Murphy and John Carroll.

The real question - as always - is are the rank and file prepared to fight? Will this Supreme Court ruling simply be disobeyed on every shop floor? Can a campaign be built to force the ICTU to defy the courts, anti-union laws and the rest of it?

Well there's no doubting the commitment of the ATGWU. The Dublin Trades Council and a good few individual left officials

have also stated their opposition.

But this does not amount to a broad-based campaign capable of turning back the tide. The left officials are reluctant to initiate a campaign at the moment

preferring to rely on getting the ICTU to change its stance at the July Annual Conference.

That's not good enough. The ICTU will never openly defy the courts and in the meantime lots

of workers, especially the less well-organised, will be left without guidance and support.

Sooner or later and the sooner the better, militants across the unions will have to build a defense

campaign to do the job.

Last, but by no means least, we must not forget the cause of all this kerfuffle.

It is probably no accident that the biggest threat yet to trade union rights, the Supreme Court ruling, and the biggest yet open defiance of that ruling by the ATGWU, is all over the biggest attempt yet by a large group of workers to seriously fight a closure.

The ruling class is quite correct to see the Talbot workers action as a major battle.

If those jobs can be saved, it means that at last we have begun to turn the tide of capitalist 'logic'.

And it is possible to win. The embargo is still there and effective. Support from other car workers and ATGWU is assured.

Now is the time to step up the campaign: the factory should be reoccupied; there should be marches and work stoppages by car workers at least; dealers should be picketed; the heat should be turned on O'Malley and the government during the election.

Quite simply, the Talbot workers and the ATGWU now need to make another statement - 'All hell will break loose if those jobs aren't saved.' Just maybe the ruling class will back off again.



Attempting to foil Unidare

IT'S not only so-called 'unprofitable' firms that are busily chopping thousands of jobs, every day 'rationalisation' measures by the big multi-nationals add to the dole queues as well. Unidare in Dublin, with profits last year of £2½ million, have announced the closure of their Foil Section. The men are opposing the move and have already picketed the firm's AGM, the Spring Show and the IDA.

The Worker received the following letter from one of the stewards involved explaining their position.

"When sales drop, workers are likely to be consigned to the scrap-heap.

A big proportion of the 126,000 employed fall into this category - victims of lay-offs and closures.

Even within profitable companies profitable lines which are loosing money can be chopped with job losses. Often no-one is actually made redundant because the displaced workers are used to fill vacancies that would otherwise be filled from the dole.

'Natural wastage' does the dirty work for the employer, and the workforce is reduced without expense.

But the callous attitude of employers to the unemployment figures, and their own workers, does not stop here. It is also practice within profitable companies to

chop particular products or sections which have a market.

For reasons of 'rationalisation' convenience or maximising profits the board room pen will kill an area of production that has hitherto provided employment and paid its way.

We are a group of workers who are threatened with this fate. Our section, employing 30 people, which makes and prints aluminium foil within the profitable Unidare complex in Finglas, is to be phased out. The company will continue as agents and suppliers for foil imported from a parent company of Unidare.

Some of our work will simply be picked up by outside firms. letter worker

Unidare have recently announced, with great fanfares in the press

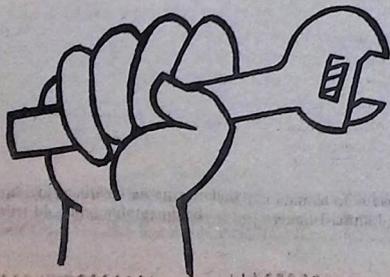
that they intend to expand and create 230 jobs. What was not announced, of course, is that some of the room for this expansion is to be gained by moving some sections into the space created by the closure of the foil section.

'Market recession' does not come into it. Rather the company wishes to concentrate on engineering and drop printing. A currency pay claim based on parity with printers may have coloured their thinking here.

Although we are being provided with alternative jobs our objections are that a) a section is being lost and the alternative jobs are being filled by us instead of from the dole queues; b) the pay and conditions in these new jobs are in many cases inferior to our present jobs; c) no consultations or guarantees whatsoever were offered to us or our Union before the decision or the first moves were made.

We intend to oppose these job-losses in every way we can.

JOHN FOLEY,
ITGWU SHOP STEWARD,
FOIL SECTION, UNIDARE,
DUBLIN





Victimisation in the Banks

PAUL O'BRIEN

TWO trade unionists have been picketing the Allied Irish Bank Branch in Drogheda and the AIB Bank Centre in Dublin for months now over clear cases of victimisation with almost no publicity and precious little help from the official trade union movement.

They need all the help they can get. This is the story.

The origins of the dispute go back to May 1979 when Johnny Lupton refused to handle customers cash transactions after normal banking hours in AIB Rush Branch.

Johnny, the Irish Bank Officials Association rep in the Branch, was simply carrying out official IBOA policy. Mr Hegarty, the Branch Manager, didn't quite see it that way and threatened him with transfer to another branch.

When Niall Murphy, IBOA and assistant Branch Manager, protested that this was unfair, he was promptly informed that he would be sent to Raphoe in Donegal.

It should have been settled quickly. The manager was obviously in the wrong but AIB top brass descended to back up their manager and refused to allow any apology.

Unfortunately, despite the fact that both Johnny and Niall were long-time active IBOA members, the union did not show the same sort of militancy on their side.

Instead they worked behind the scenes to impose an unsatisfactory settlement in July.

In the interests of peace Johnny and Niall accepted it.

Part of the deal was that there would be no victimisation transfers, but in December 1979 Niall was transferred to the Bank Centre in Dublin, shortly afterwards Johnny was transferred to Drogheda.

Clearly a breach of the agreement, but again accepted in the interests of peace.

But the last straw came in October 1980 when on reporting for work at the Drogheda Branch after a long lay-off due to illness, Johnny was told he was being transferred to Athy in Kildare.

This time he refused and started a sit-in at the Drogheda Branch in protest. Immediately the bank got a court order barring him from the premises. The union did next

Since then Johnny has been picketing the Drogheda Branch.

Supported by Niall, who came out in sympathy in Dublin, and some trade unionists from the local Becton Dickinson factory, he has managed to keep up the fight for basic trade union rights.

The odds are tremendous. Little publicity outside Drogheda, virtual refusal to intervene by the IBOA on the grounds that the matter is tied up in court, injunctions against the Becton Dickinson laid stopping them helping on the picket line.

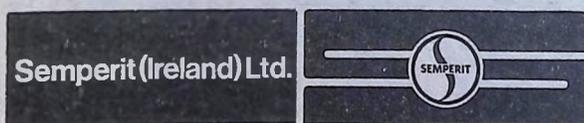
All of which means that spread-

ing support is vital.

Collections are very important the Becton Dickinson supporters have already raised a magnificent \$700 locally.

Support from trade union bodies are needed. The Drogheda Trades Council has taken up the case. Others need to as well.

Rank and Filers in the IBOA need to take up the case urgently their stand is shameful and must be changed. If you can help in any way at all contact The Worker or write to Johnny Lupton, Sansfieldstown, Johnstown, Co Meath.



Semperit Strike

AS WE go to press, a major strike in the Semperit tyre factory in Dublin is still in progress with little sign of a settlement... so 50 workers in Division A of the works struck on May 5th after 6 men had been suspended. The following day the rest of the 400 strong workforce were laid off and despite union-management talks, the main problems remain.

The origins of the dispute go back some eight weeks ago when management unilaterally changed men from two to three shift working - using the third shift as spare labour to fill vacancies. It was an attempt to introduce flexibility by the back door.

An official meeting of the men and stewards in Liberty Hall (Semperit workers are all in No 12 Branch of the ITGWU) decided on a number of measures to be taken to ensure that work was evenly

not running the machines during breaks.

None of these measures broke any company rules. Nevertheless 6 men were suspended and the strike was on.

Despite a general meeting of all production workers agreeing to remain laid-off and despite the suspended men only having carried out agreed measures, the union refused to make it official.

They did eventually step in - but only to talk to management behind the workers backs.

The deal they cooked up was rejected.

Feeling is running high against the union and some of the stewards over the issue.

Semperit is a factory where unofficial action is heavily dealt with by the ITGWU and many grievances have been building up for some time.

There is every likelihood that the present dispute could lead to some long-term grouping of rank and file militants in the factory to ensure fair play in the future from both the company and the union.

INDUSTRIAL NEWS

Breaking the Lump on the Buildings

A LENGTHY strike by Irish National Painters and Decorators Union members on 18 Local Authority building sites around Dublin was recently settled with most of the men's demands met.

It was yet another set-back for the notorious 'lump system' in the building industry.

JOHN O'CONNOR, shop steward at the Jackie Green complex in Clondalkin explained to the Worker what was won.

"The dispute revolved around the builders inhumane sacking of workers for refusing to operate the illegal lump system. The use of those demon oppressors, the lump sub-contractors, has been the cause of great hardship over the years for anyone unfortunate enough to be employed by them.

These parasitic reprobates refused to comply with any of the basic trade union agreements like stamping of cards, meal allowances tool money, etc. The strike was to get rid of the lumpers and get basic

trade union conditions.

The settlement has given us most of it. The lump system is gone, there is to be a properly structured bonus, welfare contributions and allowances will be properly maintained and holiday pay will be on average earnings.

We got a couple of other things as well. We got a guarantee that one apprentice will be employed per four men. This has been sadly neglected in the past.

We've also stopped the use of the 'dreaded roller'. This was a big cause of unemployment in painting. These victories should mean a big increase in employment.

For example, on my site we've now got ten men and two apprentices where we used to have only four men and the roller.

All the men feel that these measures add up to a big step in the right direction. Without the tremendous solidarity between the sites and the help of the INP-&D union committee, it could have taken us years to achieve such advances."

EBS Strike

SINCE the end of April, 105 Educational Building Society workers have been on strike for wage parity with the Irish Civil Service Building Society.

As we go to press, all branches throughout the country are still being picketed and the strike is solid with only non-union and managerial staff scabbing.

For the last two years, workers in the EBS have been organising themselves into the ASTMS union because their salary structure and conditions are way below those of workers in the Building Societies.

For example, workers in ICSBS have a salary scale 10% above those in EBS despite the fact that the EBS is a much bigger and more profitable enterprise with assets of £283 million compared to the ICSBS of £56 million. EBS directors fees in the EBS came to £38,800 alone in 1980.

EBS management have up

upto now taken a hard line.

The first offer they made was a 40% wage increase-in return for a 6% increase in work. This was not surprisingly turned down. A second offer, some 4 weeks into the strike, also came nowhere near the strikers' demands and was rejected.

As well as attempting to keep the offices open with their own scabs working extra hours they threatened one manager in Cork who supported the strike with losing his special mortgage allowance if he didn't get back to work - he stayed out.

Such tactics have only made the strikers (95%) are women - more determined.

One woman picketed the Spring Show and as a result workers there refused to erect the firm's stand.

The strikers are determined to see it through and are looking for all the support they can get from trade unionists.

Good collection, messages of

support etc. to Mary Devine, c/o EBS Strike Committee, ASTMS, 38 Lower Leeson St, Dublin 2.

CORRECTION

BRIAN ABBOT, Secretary of the ATGWU Branch at the Cork Regional Hospital, has asked us to correct a couple of points in our interview with him in the last issue of The Worker. We are happy to do so and apologise for any confusion caused by sloppy editing.

First, it was not on the National Wage Agreement that the ambulance drivers were unable to vote but on the 1978 Ambulance Drivers Agreement. Also, in respect of the same agreement, it was union representatives from outside the city who accepted the new method of payment for on-call duty (without the city drivers being present) rather than the official.

Second, Brian asks us to point out that he didn't use the word "scabs" to describe either those who voted for a return to work in the October 1979 dispute or those brought in from outside by the ITGWU in the November 1980 dispute. He prefers that readers should just be given the facts and to point out the absence of solidarity and class consciousness.

THE WORKER

FOR WORKERS POWER AND INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM

Fitt for the scrap heap

Haughey and the rest must go

Denise O'Malley and his breach of the car-industry agreement to maintain job-levels until 1984?

Long ago there used to be a party that offered a real alternative - the Labour Party of James Connolly,

But today it has sold out completely to the capitalists of Fine Gael and stands idly by while the hunger strikers die. And its no use looking to Sinn Fein Workers Party either. They attack unofficial strikers and H Block activists even more openly. These parties offer no real way forward for the working class.

Fianna Fail go to the country with 126,000 unemployed, 21% inflation and a balance of payments deficit of £12 to £13 million this year. One third of the population is at or below the poverty line.

This system keeps its head above the bankruptcy line through massive borrowing. It is either that or a full scale attack on the living standards of the working class a la Margaret Thatcher.

Fianna Fail has upped the borrowing, while inching towards limitations of trade union rights. Secure in power after an election they would proceed at a quickened pace. Under Charlie or Garret - whoever is running Irish capitalism - the working class will be up against it after the elections are over.

Vote Communist and you won't have to vote again. So the joke goes. And the vote IS a right that should be protected.

But a very limited right, with little to do with real democracy. You can vote some party out and another in, but what the victors do after that is up to them - or the need of the capitalist system they represent.

On one day last year 700,000 workers took to the streets to demand tax reform. Fianna Fail ignored them. People are still powerless pawns: the people of Finglas upon whom two toxic dumps are foisted regardless of their protests; workers who have the misfortune to go sick - and have to wait six or eight weeks for the Social insurance checks they have already paid for each week.

Once the vote is cast the Administration of power is unaccountable under Parliamentary democracy. Huge areas of power over our daily lives lie well outside the ambit of the Dail.

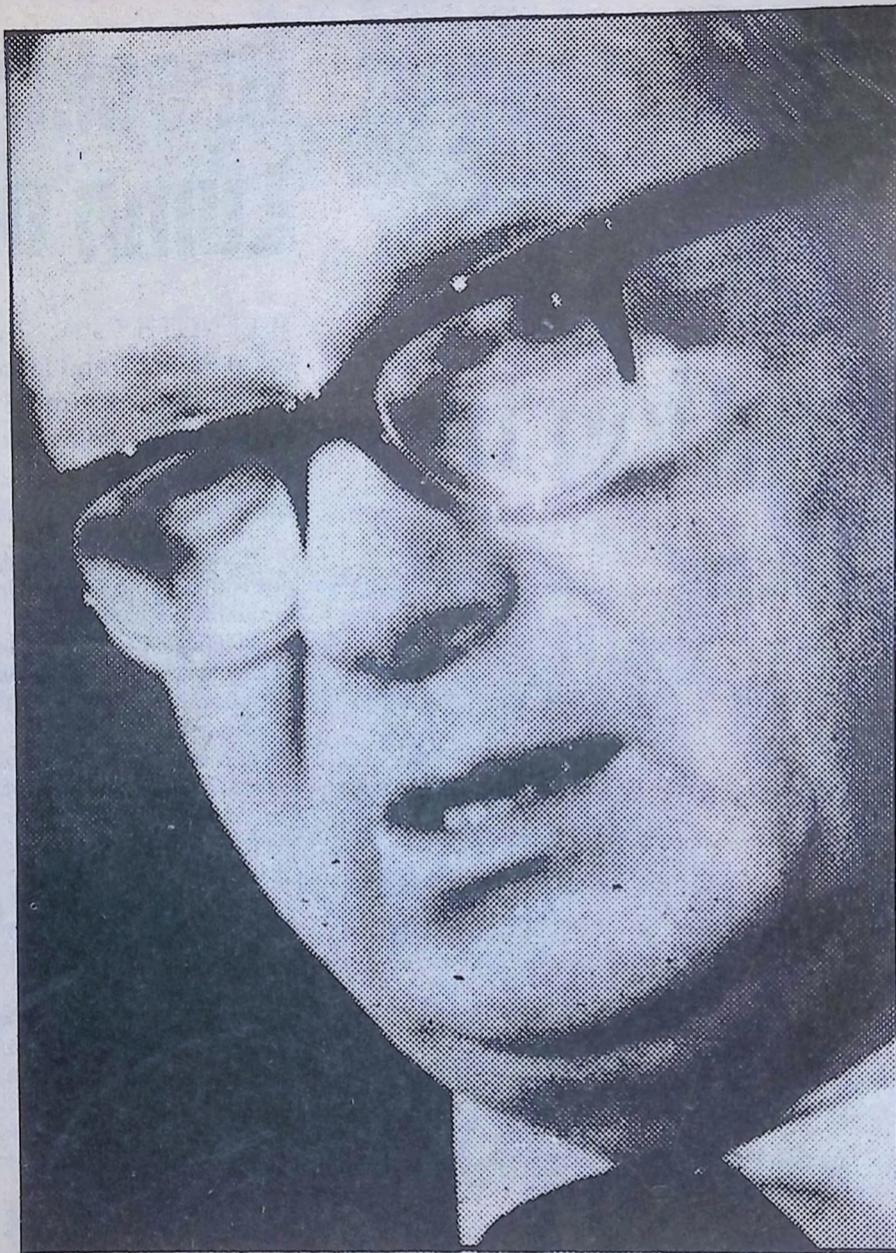
The day after the election was announced it was reported that four oil companies will close the Whitegate oil-refinery, where 150 people work, next June.

Unelected judges in the Supreme Court have taken away the right of 'blacking' action from the Talbot workers and cast a doubt over the right of the whole trade union movement to take solidarity action with fellow workers - a right we thought we had since 1906.

Nevertheless we should use our votes on June 11. We cannot change capitalism but we can lidge a protest. A protest against all three Establishment parties. A protest against the false promises of the 1977 Fianna Fail manifesto on job creation. A protest against committals over struggling workers to jail. A protest against hand-in-glove co-operation with the British while they let four hunger strikers die, to deny them political status.

Vote as left as you can, for H Block candidates, for Socialist Labour Party or Communist Party Candidates, for Independent or Revolutionary socialists, for individual left labour candidates where there is no alternative.

Vote left - but the real job of changing society - will be done outside not inside the Dail.



THERE WERE shouts of joy in the New Lodge and tears of horror on the BBC as it was announced that Gerry Fitt (Who's a Brit) got only 541 votes in the local government elections and lost the seat he has held for 23 years.

Fitt, Paddy Devlin, several Sticks and many SDLPers were rejected by the voters who massively supported the H Block/political status candidates.

Fergus O'Hare, PD member of the National H Blocks Armagh Committee demolished Fitt, topping the Anti-Unionist poll. John McAulity PD got 2,700 to Paddy Devlin's 800 in West Belfast. Also elected were Gerard Kelly and Sean Flynn of the IRSP, Oliver Hughes, brother of Francis Hughes, and about 40 independent candidates who campaigned on the Hunger strike issue.

These election results show once again the depth of support for the hunger strike in the North

But more deeply these results verify the bankruptcy of the kind of socialism preached by Fitt, Devlin, the Sticks and the Militant group.

For they all insisted that socialists should campaign on economic and social grounds only.

They made much of their ability to build links with the Protestant working class. But those links were made on the Loyalists' terms.

They chose to work within the confines of British rule. They protested about the effects of government policies on working class people economically and socially. But they ignores the political effects such as discrimination, repression, torture, imprisonment and even death caused by British rule.

This year is the first time the H Block issue was brought into local government elections. It has been traditional for the anti-imperialist movement to just ignore the elections and leave it to the sticks, SDLP and the Fitts and Devlins to speak for the anti-unionist community.

Unfortunately the Provos and the National H Block Committee chose to continue their policy,

Belatedly they agreed to oppose local candidates who didn't support the hunger strikers. But that didn't leave voters much choice when there was no alternative candidate. The National H Block campaign lost an excellent opportunity to severely damage the SDLP. Polite pleas for SLDP support is not going to chage its sell-out policies.

Overall, the increased Unionist majority to 60% (from 50%) and the massive gains made by the DUP can only mean greater hardship for the anti-unionist minority in the North.

The local councils don't have very much power but the unionist majority has proved as sectarian as ever in the few areas of work open to them.

They have been guilty of discrimination in local council employment and the provision of leisure facilities - for Gaelic Sports and Sunday openings. This discrimination will now get worse.

These election results can be seen as yet another proof that Britain is maintaining a sectarian state in the north

