

Socialist Worker

For a Workers Republic and International Socialism

SOLIDARITY AGAINST APARTHEID



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INSIDE

*How should socialists organise in the trade unions—page 8
Our History—1907, Belfast, when Protestant and Catholic workers united—pages 4 & 5.
Plus readers letters—page 9,
the Anglo-Irish talks—page 12 and much more.*



WORLDWIDE opposition to the racist regime in South Africa is growing.

Inspired by the year-long rebellion of that country's black majority against the apartheid system—which denies them basic social and political rights—millions of people the world over are rallying in solidarity with the struggle for freedom.

Especially important for workers everywhere has been the emergence of a new and powerful trade union movement of black workers. Hundreds of thousands of black South African workers—miners, dockers, public sector workers, garment workers and car workers—have joined the new independent unions and are often striking against the apartheid regime.

It is vital that all opponents of racism take up the movement for solidarity with black workers in South Africa. Especially important is union action against the use of South African products in the workplace or company links with the apartheid economy.

Dunnes workers in Henry Street Dublin have been on strike for seventeen months having refused to handle South African goods. The crying need is for other workers to follow their fighting example.

In this issue of *Socialist Worker* we talk to Nigel Lambert, who has just returned from South Africa. He gives an up to date picture of the struggle today including news of the black trade union movement, the politics of the black liberation movement and the influence of socialists in the fight back.

Turn to pages 6 and 7

Defend the clinics and fight for more

THE COMPLETE ability to control and plan their reproductive life is vital to the liberation of women.

In the light of the SPUC move to try and close down two Dublin clinics who do abortion referrals, it is essential that we remind ourselves of this, and that we actively campaign to keep the clinics open to continue to do abortion referrals.

But it is also important to see the fight to defend the clinics not as a single-issue campaign, but part of the ongoing struggle for free, legal, safe, available abortion here in Ireland.

The demand for abortion is a political demand, affecting both men and women. It raises the whole question of "who decides, who controls?"

Abortion is nothing new here in Ireland. In fact it was quite acceptable as a method of birth control up until the 19th century. Even the Catholic begrudgingly gave recognition to abortion.

Women carrying a male foetus (you may well ask, how did they know the sex?!) could abort up to 24 weeks, and for a female foetus it was up to 9 months! (Boys supposedly got their souls at 24 weeks while girls had to wait nine months.)

DIAPHRAGM

Just before the turn of the century the diaphragm was invented. This opened a door for women! In 1887, Anne Besant, an English socialist, wrote a sixpenny pamphlet for working class women containing information about contraception. She was charged with producing obscene literature although the same information was freely available for rich women in another expensive publication.

Once there was a breakthrough in contraception, the ruling class and the church got worried. They realised, of course, that once women got control over their fertility, they then had much more control over their lives. And there was a backlash against this. Like the present-day backlash exemplified by SPUC.

The present backlash is even stronger. There are fewer jobs. The further capitalism goes

by CREA RYDER

into crisis, the more clearly the bosses are aware that they must keep their workers under tight rein. They explore all ways of doing this. The SPUC offensive today is just one prong of the bosses' attack on our rights, the massive cuts throughout the public sector is another — the list could go on and on.

ECONOMIC BOOM

During the economic boom of the mid-60s there was a massive increase in jobs. To maximise production, women were drawn into the workforce in large numbers. To ensure that as many women as possible were drawn in, it was necessary to liberalise the laws on contraception and abortion.

in crisis, women are being forced back into the home. To do this the ruling class makes attacks on women's rights by limiting the availability of contraception, by trying to close off the back door to England. This leaves women with little choice about when and if they want children and limits their availability for decent jobs.

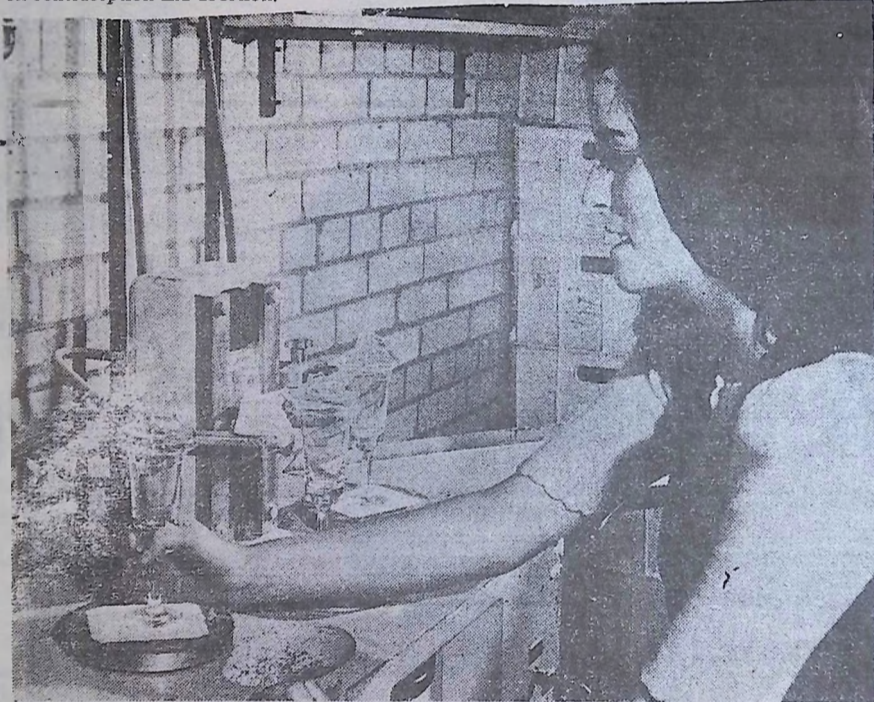
But exploiting sexist prejudices, the bosses can have a pool of workers (women) who can be pushed out of the workforce when not needed and paid less in wages, which in turn helps to keep down the wages and working conditions of the WHOLE working class.

There are many people fighting the backlash: In Galway, the fight to keep sterilisation available;

In Cork and Kerry, the fight to keep maternity wards open; Public sector workers



During the economic boom in the mid 60s women were drawn into the workforce in large numbers.



In Ireland we benefitted from the ready availability of contraception and abortion in England — our "back door". So the Irish ruling class had no necessity to liberalise laws to the same extent.

Now that capitalism is

throughout the country fighting the pay freeze:

The women cleaners in UCD, fighting against their job-losses which are a direct result of education cuts.

All these struggles are part and parcel of the same fight. If we restrict ourselves to fighting single battles without making the connections, we leave ourselves wide open for the bosses to win. It is, and always has been easier for them to smash small, isolated groups of workers. So we must broaden the fight and learn to see the connections between all struggles, as the bosses have.

CAMPAIGNS

You can no longer win the fight for women's rights in single-issue campaigns — just as you can't win the fight against unemployment in one factory.

For the attacks on women's right to control their fertility, their rights at work and in the home or on the dole are not unconnected. They are all part of the same thing.

Socialists know the connections and the need for one solution. We know that all the struggles are the same struggle. And we know the need for a political leadership that will spread our experiences tell of our successes and over-

come the divisions that exist within our class.

We see the need for an organisation to develop ideas, to inspire people when the struggle is difficult, to go on the offensive and encourage struggle when the opportunity arises. We see the need for a political party that will organise the best fighters, women and men, to lead our struggles.

That is exactly what the Socialist Workers Movement is about. Join us and help us win the struggle.



FIFTH COLUMN

SOLDIER SOLDIER

"WHEN you arrived it was a bit scary, but that only lasted a day and a night. Now I've got used to it: rushing into houses, kicking down the door, searching them, I like all that. We had a couple of grenades thrown at us last week and one or two shots, but no-one got hurt. I think it's dead good. We've arrested a few people on the streets as well: I don't go mad about it, but I like doing it, it seems to me it's proper soldiering . . ."

"I've only just come to Londonderry and I think it really is, it's a really shitty job like sewer cleaning—I think about my home town and try to imagine myself going around with a platoon in the streets at night, knocking on the doors of people's houses and demanding to be let in to search them. I can't imagine doing that with people in my own home town, I can't imagine living in my own home town and people coming and doing that to us. I reckon it's a pretty shitty job, I really do . . ."

"Last week I had to write to the parents of one of my lads and tell them he'd been killed. I told them he was a soldier, he died for his country and he died in a most honourable situation as a member of a peace-keeping force, doing his best for all the people of this country. But I don't know what I'm supposed to say in letters like that, what I'm supposed to write. We all know there's no solution to this problem and the best thing we can do is go away . . ."

—Comments of British soldiers serving in the Six Counties taken from the recently published book "Soldier, Soldier" by Tony Parker.

9.35—Real Lives

At the Edge of the Union. The inside story of the two political bosses of Derry — Martin McGuinness and Gregory Campbell — their different views and lifestyles within a divided city (postponed from 7 August).

Funny how we get things wrong. When the BBC governors stopped the showing of the documentary "Real Lives" at the request of the Home Secretary it was clear to all that it had been banned. Now with a number of minor changes we are informed that it wasn't banned, but "postponed".

The thought occurs that if the NUJ took strike action over all those other programmes on Ireland, banned during the last fifteen years, we could have a whole week of "postponed" programmes on the box.

REMEMBER CECIL

Remember Cecil Parkinson and those heart-rending stories of how he tried to force his lover Sarah Keays to have an abortion? An illegitimate child would have ruined his career.

Could this be the same Cecil Parkinson who in 1975 and 1978 supported bills which aimed to restrict the availability of abortion in Britain? Restrictions, which if they had been passed would have prevented Ms Keays, if she had so wanted, from having an abortion—a legal one that is.

The next time you hear a politician talking about "the defence of the unborn" or the "sanctity of the family" think of Cecil Parkinson.

DANGEROUS CRIMINAL

Jailed for stealing a bottle of lemonade and a bag of sweets. This was the fate of a 16-year-old Dublin girl who was remanded in Mountjoy for a week—The sweet shop owners of Dublin slept soundly that week.

If you're thinking of going into crime, make sure you have a good address and your crime is a big one. Absconding with your workers PRSI payments for instance. At least then you have some chance of getting off scott free.

RED IVOR

THERE ARE still some socialists who cling to the belief that Russia is a socialist state in however degenerated a form. They would be well advised to look at the recent activities of Dr. Ivor Kenny, director of the Irish Management Institute and militant champion of capitalism.

Dr. Kenny has recently received an award for his contribution to international co-operation in the profession of management. As part of that contribution he organised a meeting in Russia of the International

Academy of Management, "where there was a genuine growth of understanding between leaders in management from Socialist and Capitalist countries".

"Growth of understanding"? Impossible you might think, for Socialism and Capitalism are opposing systems locked in mutually hostile combat. Something is wrong somewhere . . . Could Ivor be a closet red?

Of course, you could take the view that Russia, far from being socialist, is State Capitalist—then, suddenly, everything becomes clear . . .

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WE THINK After the 15th

150,000 public sector workers went on strike on October 15th. The numbers on picket duty and the enthusiasm of the rank and file came as a surprise to the union leaders. It was the biggest display of industrial militancy in Southern Ireland since the tax marches of 1979.

In some ways it was more significant. One militant in the LGPSU put it like this: "During the tax marches, 95% of our members stayed at work — this time 95% struck and the presence on the picket lines was magnificent." The day of action was the first experience of strike actions for thousands of white collar workers in decades.

Every great flood — even when dammed up — produces its tributaries. The experience of struggle will give a flip to union militants up and down the country. Within a week of the strike, 150 civil servants in the tax offices in Hatch Street in Dublin were suspended for refusing to deal with the public because of overcrowding. The confidence built up from the Day of Action can be translated into a new determination to fight on the small local issues.

But the picture wasn't all rosy. The Public Services Committee of the ICTU were determined to set the limits at token action. They refused to even call a centrally organised demonstration in Dublin. They put the focus on defending the "Conciliation and Arbitration" machinery in the public sector. That same system has led to the decay of shop floor organisation. But the union bureaucrats desperately need it because it does away with any need to organise industrial action.

However, the most damaging piece of treachery was the behaviour of the union leaders for the semi-state sector — An Post, CIE, Telecom, ESB, etc. They circulated their members to ignore the strike on the basis that they could get around the pay freeze. The NBU leaders narrowly won this position at their annual conference. But it wasn't just the right wing union leaders who called off the action in the semi-states. David Begg, the newly-appointed left general secretary of the PTWU, told his members to report for work. This same gentleman called for maximum unity of the public sector unions two months previously!

After the stoppage, the ICTU showed its complete bankruptcy. It refused to organise any further stoppages or action. It was as if they were saying to Boland: "You thought you could ignore us. We pulled off a real display of our strength. Now start bargaining." There was not the slightest sign of building on the confidence and enthusiasm of the rank and file.

This behaviour should not come as a surprise. It fits perfectly with the pattern of cowardice that the ICTU has shown over the last years. The question was where was the opposition? The Workers' Party officials were totally silent. In fact, many of the left-wingers' on the ICTU Public Services Committee showed themselves more than willing to go along with attacking the teachers' special claim in return for a lifting of the pay freeze.

The only organised opposition came from a tiny Broad Left conference in Dublin on October 15th. It pulled together just under 100 public sector activists. Unfortunately it has little base inside the movement to be able to initiate anything. This in itself reflects the scale of the bosses' offensive since 1970 and the weakness of shop floor organisation in the public sector. Nevertheless, it was a start. It stood proudly for opposition to the sellouts of the right wing.

Militants inside the public sector unions must learn clearly from the treachery of the officials. They must gear themselves to a strategy of being in a position to organise defiance of these officials when necessary. That can only mean building from the workplace upwards — rather than just stacking committee positions.

The danger of left wingers capturing committee positions without any base on the shop floor was well illustrated at the Broad Left conference.

One of the main organisers of the conference was the PTWU Broad Left who have been very successful in winning the officer posts in the Postal Outdoors Branch of the Union. But despite this they failed to bring their members out on unofficial action in support of the Day of Action.

Similarly in the CPSSU, the Telecom branch committee voted support for the Day of Action — but the members voted six to one to accept.

In the months ahead, militants need to rebuild rank and file organisation throughout the public sector. You do that by fighting on the small issues. By taking collections and raising solidarity with every group of public sector workers in struggle. That means today solidarity with the Cork ESB linesmen and the UCD cleaners.

It is by embarking on a rank and file strategy that the calls for all-out action begin to take on a meaning.

Who do the police really protect?

MOST PEOPLE think of the police as their protectors. If your house is burgled, they will try to recover your property. They sort out the traffic, arrest dangerous drivers, help children across the road. In fact, our image of the police is that of a socially useful service, there to service the needs of the people. But this masks the true role police play in society.

Their primary role is to protect the interests and capital of the people who run society. This can be seen at its most extreme during periods of economic crisis.

On a small scale it can be seen in the fact that in industrial disputes, the police are never on the side of the workers. This is something that the UCD cleaners found out very quickly. Van loads of police turned up on the picket line at 6 a.m. every morning to ensure the scabs could break the picket line.

During the 1979 Post Office strike, the police attacked the pickets in Sheriff St with batons drawn. More and more workers are finding out whose side the police are on.

In Britain, during the miners' strike, the police arrested over 11,000 miners, terrorised whole villages and behaved like an occupying army in mining areas. Why? Because the miners had dared to challenge the Tories in their fight to save their jobs. The techniques learned in Northern Ireland were used in full by the police to smash the miners.

During the last 10 years, the gardai have been involved more and more as a repressive force than in the past. The "heavy gang" operated against those in the Republican and socialist movements, obtaining confessions by brute force. The events in Shercok garda station, when gardai beat a man to death attempting to obtain a confession of guilt to a £30 fraud case, show that the same methods are still in use. The Hayes family in Kerry confessing to a crime they could not have committed is part of the same pattern.

As the crisis deepens, we can expect to see the heavy hand of the law used even more heavily against anyone who dares to challenge the system.



Gardai, which side are they on. (Top) Post Office pickets in Sheriff St. (Left) Ranks workers and supporters



Media lies

HOW OFTEN have you been embroiled in an argument with someone who effectively ends all further discussion by claiming "it must be right, it was in the newspapers, or on the radio/TV"?

Why do people accept as Gospel anything seen or heard in the news media while paradoxically, these same people believe that the news media in other countries are controlled and only puts out propaganda?

Censorship is an acknowledged feature of both RTE and BBC programming, while a far more subtle process of selection pervades the entire Irish media.

National newspapers are a powerful and pervasive influence in Irish society. They are wholly owned and controlled by the capitalist class and used effectively to promote their views.

News is people. It is people talking and people doing. Committees and governments, courts and councils, employers and unions, are all people. So too are fires and accidents, rapes and strikes. They are only news because they affect people.

Rapes, deaths, strikes, protests, elections, accidents are happening all the time but only those selected and published are news. News therefore is a selection process.

Selection of what is news and how it is to be presented is entirely in the hands of those who control the news media.

The degree of prominence or value of any news item will depend on the political and philosophical outlook of those who produce the news.

The fallacy that something must be important or newsworthy merely because it is on the news is surpassed only by the more dangerous and sinister belief that it must also be true because it is on radio/TV or in the newspapers.

People want to believe that they are living truth and that what the media is reflecting and reporting is truth. Nobody wants to believe that life is a lie and that manipulation is the order of the day.

In Ireland today, there is clear evidence to suggest that many people in power understand the importance of the news media in forming and influencing public opinion. We have only to look at the number of PR firms to see how news can be presented with skill in a controlled and influential manner.

News is created to divert the attention of the public away from important fundamental issues of social deprivation and exploitation which are seen all around us.

A climate of support for the introduction of further repressive legislation was created by the media who claimed a breakdown in law and order when socially-deprived unemployed youths vented their frustration on society by stealing their BMWs.

The record shows that the extra powers conferred on the security forces under the resultant repressive legislation — such as the recently-enacted Criminal Justice Bill, The Forcible Entry Act, The Offences Against the State Act — are used also to suppress and control workers and activists who seek to highlight the injustices of our society.

There is no call from the media to have legislation enacted to curb financial speculation, tax evasion, bad investment policy or general mismanagement which leads to job losses and hundreds of millions of pounds to be paid for by the PAYE sector.

—GERARD MURPHY

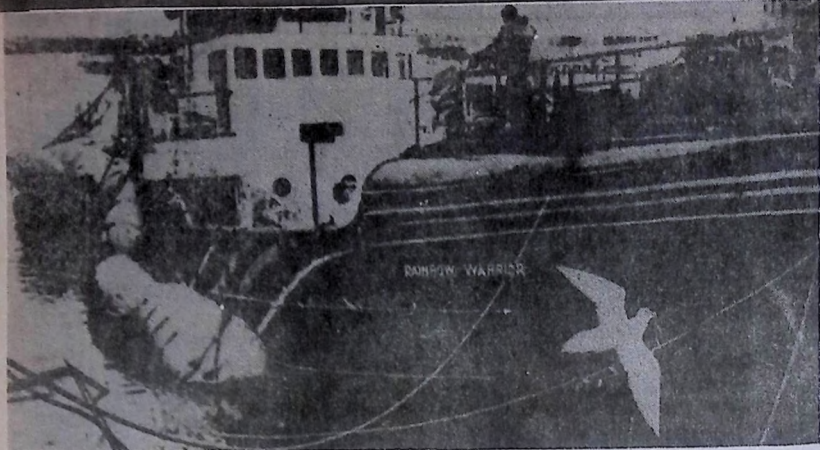
Socialists want to change the world, to get rid of the rotten society we live in and build a better one based on workers' power. Feminists too want to change the world, to make

women free and equal. Are the two struggles the same, or separate?

Norah Carlin
**Women
and the
struggle
for
Socialism**

available from SWM, Box 1648, Dublin 8 price: £1.25 post free.

INTERNATIONAL



WORLD VIEW

BOLIVIA

Recently, a state of siege was declared in an attempt to break the general strike which began in mid-September. Thousands of workers and trade unionists including the country's top labour leader Juan Lechin were rounded up by armed troops. Under the emergency legislation, all the arrested can be banished to remote parts of the country or into exile abroad.

The strike was called in protest at Government austerity measures. Bolivia has the world's highest inflation rate which at present is running at 14,000%. In an attempt to curb this chaotic situation, the government decided that the workers bear the brunt of the extreme measures adopted. Thus the peso was devalued by 95% and a wage freeze was imposed. In response the general strike was declared and the country brought to a virtual standstill. The interior Ministry condemned the strike as an act of sabotage "by known agitators, under orders from abroad". Sounds familiar.

SPAIN

In October 1934, thousands of miners in Asturias rose up against the right-wing government of Lerroux. Within days the entire state was in the hands of the insurgents, with each town and village controlled by a revolutionary committee elected by the workers themselves. On that occasion, the revolution was savagely crushed by troops under the leadership of Franco. Nearly 2,000 miners were killed.

Judging by recent events, this militancy is not entirely dead. In September and October over 30,000 miners struck in protest at the lack of safety measures in the mines. So far this year, 27 miners have been killed in the region and another 30 in other parts of Spain. Most of the mines in Asturias are privately owned and conditions underground have been described as being akin to the Third World. Typically the government ("socialist") reacted badly. The Director-General of mines at the Industry Ministry described conditions in the mines as being "among the best in the world" and blamed the fatalities on "an authentic run of bad luck".

The workers are having none of it. The 48-hour stoppages are due to be followed by more militant action.

BANGLADESH

Strong evidence is emerging that thousands of women have been denied food aid unless they agreed to be sterilised, in areas stricken by massive floods earlier this year. The reports are coming from voluntary workers with War on Want and other international and Bangladeshi relief agencies. Two researchers from Sussex University who are studying the country claim to have found large numbers of starving women who were denied wheat because they refused to be sterilised. The Health Ministry issued a memorandum to family planning workers earlier in the year stating that food was being used as an "incentive" for sterilisation, and warning that this was against government wishes. Most aid is channelled through the World Bank who have insisted (naturally) that they are not promoting compulsory sterilisation.

ALBANIA

It would appear that our reclusive comrades in Tirana are rethinking their foreign policy following the death of Enver Hoxha six months ago. The good man was still warm in his grave when his replacement Ramiz Alia began sending out feelers around Europe, particularly to Britain and France. One wonders if this has anything to do with the deplorably low living standards of most of the population in this "socialist" utopia.

A particular problem presents itself with Britain. It seems that over 7,000 kilos of gold robbed by the Germans during the war was later confiscated by the Allies. This is now stashed away in Britain and the US. Mr Alia is demanding its return before diplomatic relations can be improved. The gold is now worth about £50 million. Britain, for its part, is demanding reparations of £850,000 for two ships sunk in 1946 in Albanian waters, before it will consider returning the loot. Talks are continuing. We await the outcome with baited breath.

NO GOLD AT END OF 'RAINBOW'

AS THE French Socialist Party slides down-hill towards electoral defeat, problems are accumulating for President Mitterrand. One of the biggest may prove to be the affair of the *Rainbow Warrior*, the Greenpeace ship blown up in Auckland harbour in July as it was preparing to monitor French nuclear tests at the Pacific island of Mururoa.

What remains unclear is who exactly gave the orders for the attack and, even more unclear, why they did so. The bombing seems to have had no obvious motive; the result has been mainly to give Greenpeace good publicity and to embarrass the French government.

Whatever the exact degree of government complicity, the *Rainbow Warrior* incident has brought out the relation of the Socialist government to the French state. In terms of the secret service apparatus, nuclear policy and colonial interests, Mitterrand has accepted the framework inherited from his predecessors—indeed, he clearly recognises that he is powerless to change it.

Mitterrand has come a long way from the man who said in July 1973 that the "Socialist Party has always considered French nuclear tests to be useless and dangerous". France has been testing nuclear weapons in the Pacific since the days of General de Gaulle in 1966.

The French Socialist government resumed nuclear testing as early as November 1981 and Mitterrand has increased France's fleet of nuclear submarines. France has still not signed the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, now signed by some 130 states. Mitterrand has also gone back on his pre-election promise to cut back on France's nuclear power programme, and France leads the world in fast-breeder reactors.

The French Communist Party has backed Mitterrand's nuclear policy, and support for Mitterrand on the left has meant that France has been virtually alone in Western Europe in not developing a mass peace movement.

Doubtless there will be further cover ups, and the full truth may never emerge. But at least the world has had the spectacle of the revolting hypocrisy of a "socialist" government which whimpers about terrorism, but stages nuclear tests and employs teams of trained naval saboteurs.—IAN BIRCHALL.

AT THE turn of the century Belfast was an industrial centre of world importance.

It was the "Linen Capital of the World": in fact by 1910 there were more linen spindles in use in the city of Belfast than in any other city in the world.

Belfast shipbuilding had a similar reputation. In 1911, Harland and Wolff was the largest yard in these islands and had the biggest dry dock in the world. It employed 12,000 workers while Belfast's second shipyard, Workman Clark, known as the "wee yard" employed 7,000.

With many large engineering works supplying the needs of the linen mills and shipyards, with rope works, distilleries and a whole range of smaller, associated industries, some people in Belfast just had to be making big money.

As always, it was the bosses. There were at least three millionaires in Belfast and many more wealthy industrialists who didn't quite make the millionaire stakes. This at a time when a fiver was a fortune to most working people.

And as always, the price of

the bosses' profits was the sweat, suffering and poverty of their workers. For the majority of the working class of Belfast, living and working conditions were squalid.

In 1909, the city's Medical Officer of Health commented on the high level of "consumption" and typhus fever among the working class. Both these diseases flourished in the miserable, overcrowded, dark, damp hovels where workers were forced to live and try to rear their families. The narrow, rat-infested streets of huddled houses, crammed together so every available square inch of space was used, were ghettos of misery. Many of the tiny two-bedroomed dwellings held more than one family, plus grandparents, uncles, aunts, etc. Connolly aptly described these streets as "the warrens of the poor".

When workers left the squalor of home, they went to the even more dangerous squalor of work. Health officials estimated that the average length of life for girls working as carders in the linen mills was 16.8 years of work. "If a girl gets a card at 18,"

they reported, "her life is generally terminated at 30". Working conditions were no safer for working men. As Connolly pointed out in *Labour in Irish History*, "our shipyards offer a daily sacrifice of life and limb on the altar of capitalism. The clang of the ambulance bell is one of the most familiar daily sounds on the streets between our shipyards and our hospitals."

WAGES

The wages of skilled craftsmen were among the highest in these islands—skilled engineering workers in the shipyards enjoyed rates of pay better than those on the Clyde or Tyne. Even in the linen trade, skilled male workers could expect premium rates. These skilled men made up about a quarter of the workforce. They could sometimes earn over £3 a week and usually more than £2.

In contrast, the unskilled workers who made up the other three-quarters of the workforce slaved for a pittance. Even in the shipyards unskilled

...and Big Jim

FOR A time at least Larkin was able to overcome the sectarian divisions and unite the workers. He did it not by "moderation" or any hand-wringing reluctance to mount a frontal challenge to the authorities, but by mass workers' action and aggressive, socialist leadership.

The strike began on May 6th when members of the National Union of Dock Labourers employed by the Belfast Steamship Company refused to work with two non-union men and as a result were locked out. Two days later, they attempted to go back pending negotiations, but found that 50 scabs imported from Liverpool had taken their jobs. The bosses had decided to take the opportunity to teach the unionised dockers a lesson and break Larkin's union before it gathered strength. Larkin's reaction was to call out all the dockers. The bosses countered by bringing in more scabs from Britain and the stage was set for battle.

Larkin put a very high priority on involving all strikers actively in the dispute. There were mass meetings at least once a day and every development was reported in detail and discussed.

STRIKE

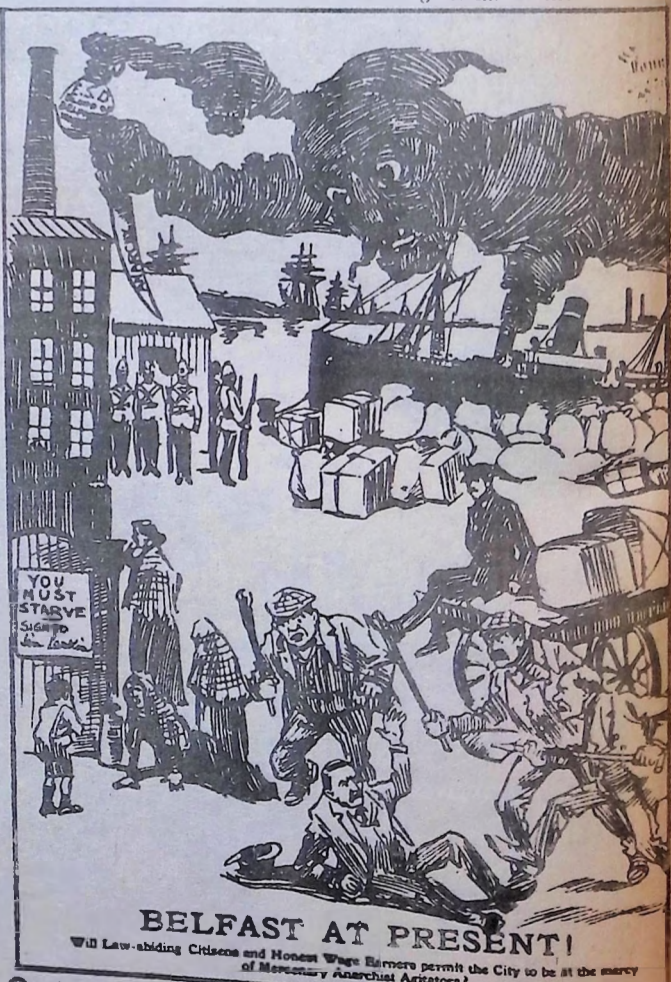
The solidity of the strike was very impressive and it was declared official by the British-based leadership of the National Union of Dock Labourers and backed by the Belfast Labour and Trades Council which had previously had little input into the struggles of the unskilled. Women relations of the strikers and mill-girls and women workers in the giant Gallagher's tobacco factory also became actively involved. Whole work-forces of women came on marches to the dockers' mass meetings and there were

incredulous press reports of groups of women assaulting scabs in the streets.

As the strike persisted through May attacks on any scabs who ventured outside the docks (where they slept on board ships) continued and many of the scabs who had been recruited under false

pretences in Liverpool and Hull came out and joined the strike.

With the strike stalemated early in June Larkin went on the offensive, and slapped in a wage claim for all coal fitters. When only four firms agreed to talks, all of the rest of the city's coal fitters were pulled out. A wage claim for the



Cartoon in *Nomad's Weekly*, July 20th, 1907

Protestant and Catholic workers united...

men earned no more than 15 to 18 shillings a week. The wives and the children of these unskilled workers were forced into the textile factories to help put bread on the table. 43% of women and girls over the age of 10 worked.

Childhood finished young for working class kids. From the age of 7-8 they would be expected to work a few hours a day and full-time from the age of ten. Their parents had no choice except starvation.

This was the Belfast in which James Larkin arrived in 1907. "Big Jim" came as organiser for the British-based National Union of Dock Labourers. The dockers he wanted to organise were an important in the ranks of the poorly-paid unskilled workers. There were about 3,100 of them. But in spite of booming trade, the majority of dockers, more than 2,000 "spellman" who were casual workers taken on on a daily basis, could not be sure of work and often earned less than 10 shillings a week. Work when found was brutally hard: it was usual for one man to shift 170 tons in a day in 2½ hundredweight sacks.

Men often finished the day with their backs "in raw flesh".

The regular dockers got a somewhat better deal. With just over 1,000 of them, they earned 20-25 shillings for a working week of 67-75 hours.

One of the main reasons for the terrible conditions under which the unskilled working class of Belfast were forced to live and work at this time was the low level of trade union organisation. Belfast had been the first town in Ireland to set up a Trades Council, which it did in 1881. By 1899 there were 57 trade unions with a membership of 19,000 represented on the trades council. These unions organised only skilled male workers and ignored both the unskilled and women workers.

BELFAST

Furthermore, most skilled workers in Belfast were Protestants who saw their relatively privileged status threatened by unskilled workers, and particularly Catholic, unskilled workers. The result was that while there were strikes among craft

workers, these conflicts between bosses and workers never challenged the ideas which linked the craft workers with their bosses against unskilled and especially Catholic unskilled workers.

The discrimination against Catholic workers which continues today in the North had been well-established by the turn of the century. Shipbuilding and engineering works were predominantly Protestant workplaces, the docks and building sites more "Catholic". Catholics were only a quarter of the population of Belfast in 1901, but were nearly half the workhouse inmates, half of the barefoot women spinners. 41% of the dockers and a third of the general labourers. On the other hand, Catholics made up only 7% of the highly-paid shipwrights and 8% of the white-collar municipal clerks.

Unfortunately, despite the fact that there were more Protestant than Catholic unskilled workers, Protestant workers as a whole, skilled and unskilled, tended to identify with their Unionist bosses rather than with their Catholic fellow-workers.



Larkin addressing the dockers in 1907

Larkin showed how

striking dockers—who until then were out only for the closed shop—was then put in. All the major employers—the Belfast Steamship, the Fleetwood, the Heysham and Barrow etc—refused even to consider it. Police backed up by 500 men from the Royal Sussex regiment occupied the docks area as feelings rose.

Towards the end of June a joint strike committee was formed and it put in a claim on behalf of the city's carters—and on July 4th the Carters struck.

The carters were crucial to all transport of goods in the city and pickets, both men and women, roamed the streets to discourage scabbing. There were violent scenes daily as police and military escorts tried to give scab carters clear passage.

PRESS

The Unionist press ranted and raved to Protestant workers and hammered away at the fact that Larkin was a Catholic. Horses were unhitched from vans and the vans burned in many areas. Some skirmishes developed into major riots. There were many arrests. Larkin spoke at mass strike rallies on the Shankill and Lindsay Crawford, Grand Master of the then-radical Independent Orange Order, addressed an enthusiastic multitude outside Clonard Monastery on the Falls.

Money poured in from all over Britain and Ireland and from the skilled trade unions in the city. In a desperate effort to break the carters the bosses brought in from Britain steam-driven traction engines which could pull three or four wagons at a time. These were attacked on the streets. The Joint Strike Committee also spread the action out to the suburbs and beyond (to Bangor,

for example) when the scab steam engine were used to bring goods there.

Towards the end of July came the most dramatic breakthrough of all when the cops came over to the strikers! They had been working long hours of overtime protecting scabs and for no extra pay. A few of them found the work uncongenial. Led by a Kerryman, William Barrett, 300 of them defied their officers and declared solidarity with the strike on July 24th, demanded better pay and announced a refusal to do the bosses' dirty work by protecting scabs.

Army units with Maxim and Gatling guns poured into Belfast as near-panic gripped the authorities. Ormeau Park was hastily made into a tented camp and troops took up positions at strategic points throughout the city. Meanwhile, messages of solidarity came from RIC barracks around the country. There were threatened mutinies in places as far apart as west Cork, Derry, Athenry...

ACTION

Tragically, faced with the awesome consequences of their actions and intimidated by the show of military force, Barrett and the few RIC men in the leadership of the move hesitated. As they dithered, the authorities acted decisively, sacked Barrett and five others and transferred practically all the men who had backed them to country areas at a day's notice. Hundreds of carefully-chosen "dependable" men were drafted in to replace them and for practical purposes the great Belfast police mutiny was over after 10 days.

The police and military now turned on the strikers. Belfast became like a city occupied by a foreign army (which, of course, in once sense it was).

The authorities, advised by the Orange bosses of local industry, now operated a cynical strategy of provoking major unrest in Catholic areas (where most of the strikers, being unskilled, came from) while going softly-softly in Protestant areas. Meanwhile the Unionist press intensified its sectarian propaganda.

FIGHTING

In the second week in August prolonged and serious fighting erupted on the Falls as army units, particularly of the Cameron Highlanders, were sent in to break the strikers. Two people, mill worker Maggie Lennon (23) and iron turner Charles McMullen (28) were shot dead. Their funeral down the Falls to Milltown cemetery was 30,000 strong.

But if the bosses were near panic, they were not nearly as terrified as the union bureaucrats. In England, James Sexton, the boss of the NUDL, was utterly alarmed at the turn of events. Like most union leaders then and now, he was a "law-abiding" sort and vehemently disapproved of confrontation with police and military and of the radical politics which went along with such confrontations. In mid-August he took advantage of Larkin's absence in Liverpool (to attend the funeral of his mother) and travelled to Belfast to negotiate a settlement for the carters and coal fitters which gave them a small wage rise but failed completely to win on the major point of principle—union recognition and the right to refuse to work with non-union members.

The dockers who had come out four months previously on precisely this issue, were left isolated. And as the great wave of working class consciousness receded, sectarianism was beginning to divide Belfast

again. On September 4th the dockers were forced to sue for peace and go back on humiliating terms, nothing gained.

On the face of it the strike was a failure. Its aims were not won, despite a marvellous fight and great sacrifice, including the sacrifice of two lives. It was seen at the time as a catastrophic defeat.

Yet looking back at it with the luxury of hindsight, we can see that the Belfast strikers of 1907 achieved a tremendous amount too, which we can draw on today.

SPIRIT

It isn't just that we can take inspiration from their magnificent spirit, there are practical lessons as well.

Most importantly, they showed that the way to defeat sectarianism is not to back away from it but to go on a class based offensive against it. When the strike was at its militant height and going forward it rode rough-shod over the sectarian provocations of the Orange bosses and their newspaper hacks. It was when the strike began to falter and fall back that sectarianism found breathing space again among the working class.

Larkin showed to that the old adage of "an injury to one is an injury to all" is the key to winning strikes. When the bosses went on the offensive he countered not by drawing back or "boxing clever" but by upping the stakes, encouraging other workers to come out in

support and linking demands on behalf of those workers with the demands of the original dispute in order to strengthen solidarity.

He even showed, briefly, that it is not entirely impossible to break some elements of the forces of "law and order" from their allegiance to the capitalist State. He did that not by moralistic argument but by showing that the power of the capitalist State was not absolute, that it could be challenged, that there was a real alternative for Barrett and the others to come over to.

On the debit side, Larkin himself wasn't in the process of building any revolutionary political organisation to reflect these tactics, and had no solid, well-organised base from which to fight back when Sexton and Co moved in to organise the sell-out.

From Belfast in 1907 we can learn the extent of the treachery of the top trade union leadership and the extent to which the bosses will go to hang on to their profits and

privileged life-styles. We can learn too of the heroism of which workers are capable when they have a leadership which they can trust and which is not using them as a stage army in a mock battle.

We can learn of the way in which sectarianism is deliberately used to divide workers, and of the only way, the way of clear class politics, that it can be defeated.

If we learn the lessons that this great struggle of Catholic and Protestant workers bequeathed to us in 1907, we will have repaid some small part of the debt we owe to the previous generations of working class fighters who gave all that they had that we might have better.

We hear often enough of the need to remember 1916 or 1798 and indeed many other more questionable dates in Irish history. None of them is more important for an understanding of the tasks which face us than nineteen hundred and seven.

GORETTI HORGAN

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Nigel Lambert, just back from South Africa, speaks to

SOUTH AFRICA

What is the scale of events now in South Africa compared with Sharpeville in 1960 or Soweto in 1976?

It's enormous. It affects the whole of South Africa. It's not just the school students but also a large number of workers—the students' parents in fact.

In Cape Town the struggle now involves coloureds, not just black Africans. The action is more extensive—geographically and socially.

The repression doesn't seem to destroy people's willingness to fight.

The state doesn't feel it can repress the movement in the way it did in 1960. One reason for that is that there is now a substantial trade union movement and repression by the state generally would mean taking on the unions.

In 1960 the state arrested people massively—23,000 in fact. Now it is about 3,500. It is not the same scale as after Sharpeville.

Do those involved in the struggle think that they will win?

I hadn't been to South Africa for 12 years. Going back I was struck by the mood of confidence. Certainly in the townships there is a widespread feeling that now is the time. But others, including people on the left, recognise that, although people are fighting back in a much more determined way, there is not a revolutionary situation in South Africa at the moment.

What has been the effect of such a high and widespread level of struggle on the regime and on big business? Is the regime on the defensive?

Yes.

The level of struggle in the townships has meant that it can't organise society as it did previously—through community councils and the like. In a number of areas its spies and police agents have been forced out of the townships. This causes all sorts of difficulties for it in maintaining its rule over black people.

The second problem the regime faces is the attitude of multinational capital. Sections of capital are very concerned about their profits. So they are calling for reform.

But the regime still retains a degree of initiative.

The structures of the state are still intact. If the struggle remains at the current level then at some stage the regime could attempt to repress the movement. It might try to buy off a certain section of the black population at the same time. They would also hope that this would pacify certain sections of multinational capital.

Why are sections of multinational capital going for reform rather than repression?

Big business interests are not too bothered whether the regime has a black skin or a white skin. All they want is to ensure profits. But they have a problem. There is a barrier to the transition from a white state to a black state. The state and the people behind it—white workers, farmers and small businessmen—are totally opposed to a black regime. A black regime wouldn't necessarily challenge big business directly, but it would challenge the privileges of these layers.

There is no possibility of a peaceful change towards a black government because of these layers.

You have this mass movement, probably far bigger than anyone in Britain has ever seen, which covers all sections of black South African society. But what is the leadership? What is the UDF about?

The leadership of the UDF has been heavily repressed. The arrests have been mainly aimed at the UDF and its supporters.

But it's people who have UDF politics who seem to be providing leadership in most of the townships. And there are people sympathetic to the UDF who are now in a position to give some kind of lead to the struggle. For instance, Alan Boesak is a leading UDF supporter. He is the person who called for the demonstration to Pollsmoor prison, where Mandela is held. He did so without any discussion with the workers and students who he was calling on to support the action.

That lack of democracy is not inevitable.

For instance, every Saturday and Sunday in the centres of the major cities you will find trade union meetings where people openly discuss how they are going to organise. It would have been possible for them to have discussed what tactics to pursue in Cape Town. But because workers were not involved in discussions about the march there was a degree of resentment and bitterness and not such a high level of involvement.

The UDF does exist on the ground in most places. But it is more an identification with the politics of the UDF which is important.

It is not usually the UDF that is the principle body organising the activities in the townships, but affiliates of the UDF or community organisations within which the UDF are particularly active.

In Soweto, for instance, as far as I know there is no UDF branch. But there is the Soweto Civic Association which is affiliated to the UDF.

In some of the townships in the Eastern Cape there are now burial action committees which have pulled together many of the leaders of the community. Many of the people involved would consider themselves to be UDF supporters.

What about the black consciousness movement?

My impression is that Azapo has effectively been pushed to the fringes. It has genuinely less mass support than the UDF. There's been a significant decline in the fortunes of the black consciousness movement since the high point of 1976.

Many of the best activists involved in the struggle of 1976 were forced into exile, where



REFORM OR RE

they found the ANC was the best organised force and began to take on some of its politics.

And the government has, since 1976, made substantial attempts to develop not just a black middle class but a black bourgeoisie. This makes it much more difficult to argue that all blacks have the same interests.

In some areas, particularly in the Eastern Cape, the UDF have physically pushed Azapo to one side, preventing Azapo and other opposition elements from organising. The UDF will say, 'These people are against Mandela. These people are against the Charter'—and that is often enough to deter any potential supporters.

The ANC still retains enormous support, doesn't it? The supporters of the UDF are by and large people who support the ANC.

It is probably the case that the ANC are getting arms into the townships. In Cape Town, certainly, there have been reports of hand grenades being used on quite a number of occasions now, and it is assumed that these come from MK, the military wing of the ANC. This gives them a lot of credibility among the youth, who would otherwise be fighting back using just stones and petrol bombs.

The ANC's authority is maintained in the townships, not necessarily through a disciplined organisation with a mass base, but often through individuals who may have been on Robbin Island, may have been in prison with Mandela, whose record of struggle goes back to the fifties when the ANC could operate openly. These people have enormous authority in the townships.

The ANC has mass support. Often this means popular support for the UDF. The most popular chants on demonstrations are 'Viva Mandela', 'Viva the ANC', 'Viva MK'. It's particularly the identification with the armed struggle that gives the ANC a lot of authority in the townships. They seem to be leading the struggle against apartheid.

The idea of there being some force coming from outside to liberate people is very popular, because people in the townships still don't have the confidence to believe they can liberate themselves. The support for an organisation which people believe will come into the townships with large numbers of arms to take on the defence forces is very great.

Usually armed struggle and wanting to reform the state are opposed notions. But the ANC seems to hold both.

I don't see it as a big contradiction. Robert Mugabe and Zanu were involved in a military struggle against Ian Smith in Zimbabwe. But at the end of the day they were quite willing to sit down and talk about a handover of power which would enable capitalism to maintain itself in Zimbabwe at the same time as shifting from a white government to a black government.

The perspective of a Zimbabwe-type rural guerilla struggle is no longer possible. Botha's deal with Mozambique last year meant that trying to march into South Africa by guerilla warfare from the front line states is no longer on the agenda. So the ANC have had to rethink their strategy.

But their approach is still based on the idea of using armed force to force the state and the capitalists to the negotiating table. It's not aimed at taking power by means of an insurrection.

The ANC think they can make townships ungovernable, frighten the Western capitalists and, at some stage, they would expect there to be some kind of handover of power to themselves.

We've talked about the struggle in the townships. Can we go on to talk about the struggle in the workplaces?

The big problem is that the working class isn't leading the struggle generally. Of course action is occurring but at present there is no massive movement of workers to challenge the employing class.

When we look at most revolutionary struggles in the past—say Russia in 1905 or even the fight against the Shah of Iran, the qualitative shift in the movement came when the workers not merely struggled in the localities but began a mass wave of strike action. Are you saying that that shift hasn't taken place yet?

There have been strike waves they have boosted workers' confidence which then flows struggle in the townships.

The situation can change. workers begin to fight over interests. For example, the metal Transvaal have demanded that players in the Transvaal negotiate. This could lead to a amongst metal workers in November.

Or there could be massive political demands. One could be of both of them.

What is the leadership of union movement like?

It is effectively being provoked Federation of South African and the other unions who are in them in launching a new front end of November. That would be organising over 400,000 workers.

It is more militant and more trade union leadership in the forced to be by the nature of the

Most of the leaders have history of struggle. Their organisation is much more that of most union leaders in E strong emphasis, particularly unions, on shop steward and workers' control rather than unions by the fulltimers.

But nevertheless there are lems when it comes to politic The leaders now understand have to become involved in part they have been forced in members.

Their members are not only concerned with wages and cost also the people who are being streets by the defence forces daughters are being arrested and sisters are being imprisoned members have forced a situation unions have to operate more up questions other than those workplace. They have to deal with housing and rent problems take up the big political emergency. But because there isn't an in



Socialist Worker



OR REVOLUTION?

There have been waves in the past and they have flows back into the struggle in the...
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 Or there could be a combination of both of these...
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 It is more radical than the idea of trade union organisation in this country. There is a more democratic than their idea of trade union organisation, and on strong emphasis on the control of the workers' control...
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 Their members are not only workers who are being hammered on the streets by the police forces. Their sons and daughters are being imprisoned. The union members have to take up questions other than those which arise in the workplace. They have to deal with housing and political questions like the...
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ers' party the way in which the trade unions engage in political activity is, in reality, to support the initiatives of one of the existing political organisations. That means supporting, at the end of the day, the initiatives of petty bourgeois blacks.

How did this express itself in the run up to the miners' strike?

Formally the mines union is extremely democratic. Democratic procedures were used to win support for the strike action in the first place. There was a massive vote in support of strike action. But when it came to the strike being called off the decision was made by Cyril Ramaphosa, the general secretary, in consultation with the president and deputy president.

The miners' strike was conceived as being a purely economic issue. This meant the potential of the strike was missed.

The miners in Anglo American, where the increase had been agreed, were not willing to come out on strike.

If the strike had been posed in more political terms, it would have been much harder for Anglo American to divide the workers. And much easier for the union to lead a strike of all their members.

Why did the NUM make the mistake of posing the strike in economic terms?

The economic aspect of the strike was obviously important to the miners.

But the NUM's conception of the role of trade unions and their conception of the way workers can advance themselves has certain dangers. Cyril Ramaphosa was very quick to go to the courts rather than concentrating on ways of generalising the struggle and involving more workers in struggle to take on the state.

At the end of the day, unless you are prepared to do that you are going to get knocked back by the state.

It would be wrong to put that down to either the level of struggle or the kind of politics in the NUM. It could be a combination of both these elements.

The South African mines are one of the most difficult places to organise. They are so isolated and the degree of control over the miners is so great. This makes it difficult to generalise their struggles to other mines, which undermines miners' confidence to act independently of the trade union leaders.

Are there people in South Africa talking in terms of socialist politics in a different way to leaders of the UDF and ANC?

I came across large numbers of people who were critical of what they call the 'populism' of the UDF. They see themselves as being on the left. This is a vague concept, but it means they are against the politics of the UDF and of black consciousness and are for the working class.

An increasing number see the importance of a party which organises the working class in its own interests. But it is one thing to say such a party is required, and it is another to begin to create it. On that question there are all sorts of differences of views.

The main criticism of the ANC and the UDF is that they don't place the interests of the working class at the centre.

It would be wrong to talk about the left in South Africa as if it was a single, uniform grouping. For instance, there are elements on the left who are soft on the UDF and the ANC, and there are others who adopt a very sectarian approach towards them.

In Cape Town the left do have substantial support, particularly among the 'coloured' teachers and, to some extent, among the school students. It would be wrong to talk about a mass following beyond that, although clearly the trade union movement has developed people who understand the centrality of the working class and who are extremely critical of the leaders of the UDF and the ANC. But such views would tend to be restricted to the most active trade unionists. For instance, I did not hear such views being expressed at public meetings.

MARXISM MADE EASY

Unconditional but critical support

WHAT should be the attitude of Marxists to the African National Congress, one of the leading forces in the struggle against apartheid?

The answer is clear. First of all we support the ANC unreservedly and unconditionally against the racist South African regime. We defend its right to take up arms against the repressive state, call for the release of its political prisoners and applaud its courage and its victories.

At the same time we are critical of the ANC's political line and practice. We criticise its belief in an all-class alliance of blacks and "progressive" whites and its relative neglect of the role of the black industrial working class.

We disagree with the ANC's stages theory of first replacing apartheid with bourgeois democracy and only later struggling for socialism, and flowing from all this its willingness to negotiate and compromise with the representatives of white capital.

However, this attitude to the ANC is only one example of a general stance — unconditional but critical support — which Marxists take towards numerous movements and organisations around the world today.

For example we support the Sandinistas in Nicaragua against US intervention and the Contras but criticise their alliance with the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie and their maintenance of capitalism.

In the Six Counties we support the IRA against British imperialism and Orange reaction but criticise the nationalist politics of the movement. Like the ANC, the Provos rely on an all-class alliance and an armed struggle which is not based on the power of the working class. They too have a stages theory which postpones the struggle for workers' emancipation.

Critical support is a position which people often find difficult to grasp. It seems to them a contradiction. Surely, they think, if you support a movement you shouldn't criticise it. Or, conversely, if you criticise it, you can't really support it. Consequently the position of critical support comes under fire from a number of directions.

UNDER FIRE

The ruling class will, of course, condemn anyone who challenges the system. The IRA are attacked as "terrorists" while the bosses spend billions of pounds on nuclear weapons; striking ESB workers are condemned for leaving consumers in the dark while old people die of hypothermia as a result of the high cost of electricity. The right-wing claim to be concerned about the "common good" but are, in reality, looking after their own class interests.

Neil Kinnock condemned "picket-line violence" during the British miners' strike and claims to be following a "peaceful road to socialism". Yet when Labour, or any other Social Democratic party, have come to power, they too have used

violence — not against the ruling class but actually, against workers in struggle.

The Militant Tendency, in the Irish Labour Party, refuse to take the side of the Republican Movement against the British Army. They regard the Provos as "sectarian" and "divisive" — yet it is British imperialism, by creating and backing sectarianism in the Six Counties which has divided the working class and not the IRA who are simply fighting against the sectarian state.

Some ultra-left groups go further and argue that since Marxists have important differences with national liberation movements, we should give them no support whatsoever.

Other sections of the left tend to romanticise national liberation movements. From these come the emotive argument that since these movements and their leaders display great courage, we have therefore no right to criticise them.

These last two arguments are both wrong.

To condemn a movement of the oppressed on the grounds of its tactics alone is to give tacit support to the oppressor. The ultra-left argument arrives at the same position objectively as the right-wing and is therefore self-defeating. There is no neutrality in the class struggle.

Marxists are part of the working class, part of the oppressed and part of the left. Its victories are our victories, its defeats our defeats, no matter who the leaders or what the tactics might be.

The argument for no criticism is also mistaken. Courage and heroism should always be given their due but they are no guarantee of tactics that can win or of a political line that represents the interests of the working class.

The IRA fights bravely but its military strategy cannot defeat the British army and the nationalist politics from which this strategy flows can never bring about socialism.

Early in the Dunnes strike, the Socialist Workers Movement argued for spreading the strike and for non-reliance on the union officials. As a result we were accused of giving "hypocritical support"!

Yet to abandon criticism is to abandon Marxist principles and therefore to abandon our defence of the interests of the working class.

"Unconditional but critical support" is thus an essential position for Marxists. It is crucial for all our political work not only in relation to national liberation movements but also in the Southern class struggle.

We support wholeheartedly the struggle of the Dunnes workers against Ben Dunne, but we criticise their inadequate strategy. If tomorrow John Mitchell of IDATU finds himself before the courts for breaking the anti-union laws we will mobilise in his support, but we won't drop our criticisms of him as a trade union bureaucrat.

Without the combination of both support and criticism, Marxists are condemned to either sterile sectarianism or crude opportunism.



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ANALYSIS

How should socialists organise in unions

THE IRISH trade union movement has one of the most conservative leaderships in the world. In the forties and fifties union leaders like William O'Brien and Conroy devoted much of their energies to leading anti-communist witch-hunts or organising to ban British-based unions from Ireland.

Today it has been the ICTU which has imposed the two-tier picket system which virtually outlaws solidarity. Now more than ever this set-up needs to be challenged. But how? What is the strategy socialists should follow in the unions?

The largest left-wing force inside the unions today is the Workers' Party. Its motto can be summed up in two words: capture positions. By any standard they have been fairly successful. Today up to a third of ITGWU officials support the Workers' Party. Des Geraghty and Pat Rabbitte head up their team.

But throughout the union and, increasingly, on branch committees Workers' Party supporters are also making their mark. In the more white-collar unions, Workers' Party supporters are increasingly making an appearance—Seamus Coady in the UPTCS, Catherine Byrne in the INTO, Kieran Mulvey in the ASTI.

Unfortunately, this capturing of union positions by the left has not led to any increase in official support for workers' struggles. Thus, it was Pat Rabbitte who insisted to the UCD cleaning women to give up their occupation. During the Public Service Day of Action last month, the Workers' Party refused to call for action in the semi-state companies. In 1980 when the oil workers had their strike broken by the army, the Workers' Party denounced them as "ultra-left" and so on.

The past few years have not seen Workers' Party union officials behave any differently to the majority of officials—they insist on respect for the law, observance of the two-tier picket, almost automatic use of the Labour Court. Why has the left-wing dominance of union branches not led to a more militant union?

by KIERAN ALLEN

Part of the reason lies in the way the Workers' Party won the positions. The original influx of Workers' Party officials came from student unions. Pat Rabbitte, Eamonn Gilmore, Paul O'Sullivan, John Curran were all former officers of USI before taking up positions as full-time officers in the ITGWU. They were appointed as the way any white-collar professional is appointed. The membership had no say in the matter. In order to win positions, many of the Workers' Party officials did not reveal their politics. They all had to adapt to the conservatism of the union bureaucracy as a whole because their winning of positions did not reflect any upsurge of left-wing thought among the rank and file. Adapting meant refusing to issue any challenge to the sell-outs because they themselves owed their positions to the likes of Micky Mullen or John Carroll who were doing the selling out.

TRADITION

This tradition of adapting to the right-wing in the unions was reinforced by the general conditions of the period when the Workers' Party won official positions. In the mid-seventies, the Irish trade unions were hamstrung by the "National Wage Agreements" which outlawed shop floor activity. Every grievance had to be processed by the so-called neutral Labour Court. The Workers' Party officials and Party publication the "Irish People" refused to oppose these agreements.

Indeed, when the "National Understandings" were introduced to trade off minor concessions on social welfare for wage restraint, Des Geraghty hailed it as a political breakthrough for the unions! This, despite the experience of the Social Contract in Britain, where it was the right-wing of the Labour Party who pushed similar arguments for wage restraint.

The manner and the period in which Workers' Party supporters won their positions mean that they developed a loyalty to the bureaucracy. Unlike, for example, the Communist Party in Britain, they never had any sort of base among rank and file militants. They simply parachuted in. This explains the extreme right wing positions Workers' Party officials tend to take up in the unions.

But what about some more principled left wing officials? Matt Merrigan in the ATGWU, Phil Flynn in the LGPSU or John Mitchell in IDATU? The experience has been that these officials have had a longer record of sponsoring left-wing causes outside the union than fighting for militancy inside. In the case of John Mitchell, for example, even though he has had an excellent record in defending republican-style causes or raising questions of international solidarity—he still managed recently to stick the knife into the Dunnes strikers' back. The only way we can explain this behaviour, and the cowardice of left officials generally, is to understand the nature of the trade union bureaucracy itself.

The development of the unions leads to the emergence of a layer of officials who are not subject to control by their members. In many cases they earn far more than their ordinary members. They develop slight material privileges that cut them off from the experience of the shop floor. They come to see the apparatus of the union as far more important than the fighting spirit of the membership.

This is reinforced by the actual job of the official. They are full-time negotiators. In order to maintain their position as trustworthy negotiators they have to make sure that agreements are adhered to by the more fickle (and sometimes more politically conservative) membership.

The trade union bureaucracy comes to consider the negotiating process—and his negotiating skills—the be-all and end-all of trade union activity. When strike action is organised—as on October 15th



Eamonn Gilmore—
Workers Party member
and ITGWU official

on a wide scale—it is seen as a display of the officials' ability to turn on the pressure.

These pressures affect all full-time officials—left and right. Unlike the shop steward, who is often subject to instant recall, this is not counter-balanced by the activity of rank and file workers. Indeed, rank and file activity often appears as a threat to the official.

What does that mean for changing the unions?

It means one thing simply—socialists have to start out from the shop floor rather than sneaking into full-time positions.

PURPOSE

Socialists in the union—indeed everybody in the unions who wants a fight-back against the bosses' offensive—must learn that it serves no good purpose to expend energy electing or securing the appointment of "left-wing" officials in the hope that this will make a real difference. It will not.

While left-wing officials may (sometimes) be more amenable to rank and file pressure, it's rank and file organisation which is the key. Even in the midst of demoralisation and a drift towards the right, there are always some small groups of militants who do have the stomach for a fight, and at particular times, in particular struggles, these groups can have a decisive influence.

But to play a real role they have to be organised at shop floor level. Isolated individuals shouting Bolshie slogans from the sidelines will have no impact.

While campaigning for the democratisation of the unions and the election rather than the appointment of all union officials, socialists in the workplace must put their major effort into giving leadership and creating organisation in the course of all the small day-to-day struggles which inevitably arise, and into fighting for rank-and-file control of any industrial action which develops, whether it be local and sectional or on a broad national basis.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

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

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

NEITHER WASHINGTON NOR MOSCOW

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

AGAINST PARTITION

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

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

We stand for:

- The immediate withdrawal of the British Army
- The disbandment of the RUC and UDR
- No to extradition and collaboration on border security

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

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

AGAINST ALL OPPRESSION

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

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

THE UNIONS

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

We stand for:

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

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

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

THE PARTY

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



Teachers are revolting!

SOCIALIST WORKER STUDENTS ORGANISE

Socialist Worker Student Societies are being set up in colleges around Ireland. SWSS is the student organisation of the Socialist Workers Movement and is being launched for the first time this year. There are already groups in Trinity College, University College Dublin, Queen's in Belfast and University College Galway. In Galway, 75 students turned up to hear Eamonn McCann speak on the Revolutionary Road to Socialism. Students also heard Bruce George, a former South African student, talk on the possibility of revolution against the apartheid system. Bruce was exiled after the Soweto riots in 1976 and got a very good reception in the colleges.

The SWSS groups aim to recruit students to the ideas of revolutionary socialism. Although there has been a drift to the right in the colleges, a minority of students can still be won to straight socialist politics. There hasn't been much to choose from in recent years. Originally, the Workers' Party controlled the students union, USI, through manipulation. Nowadays a semi-republican left find themselves in the leadership but have done very little to campaign to win students to fighting positions.

Typical of this style of leadership was a recent general meeting of students in Trinity to discuss solidarity action with the public sector workers' day of action on October 15th. About 300 students turned up and voted to close the college. But no pickets were organised, nor was there any attempt to take the issue to the students who hadn't turned up. The Result—the college stayed open.

The SWSS group stand for a fighting alternative based on a simple point: that socialists in the colleges must do everything to connect up with workers in struggle rather than simply trying to get into positions in the union on the basis of looking after the interest of all students. It is open to those who generally support the politics of SWM but may not yet be members. On November 30 it holds a national day school for students (see box on this page).

For further information on SWSS or the day school write to: National Secretary, SWSS, PO Box 1648, Dublin 8.

SOCIALIST WORKER

The key to building any revolutionary organisation is a paper. That is what Lenin argued as far back as 1903 in Russia. It is still

LETTERS

Write to PO Box 1648, Dublin 8

It's profits that kill!

Dear Socialist Worker,
Your article in October's SW about the death of a Dublin Corporation worker prompts me to write about the death on Easter Monday, the 20th April 1981, of a young married worker with two children, from the transnational Pfizer chemical plant at Ringaskiddy, Co. Cork.

Two weeks prior to his death, this man was injured at work when Hydrofluoric Acid leaked from a pipe onto his skin.

On his last day at work, he complained of toxic fumes coming from a drain into the area in which he was working. When nothing was done to stop these fumes, he covered the drain in an attempt to do so. He was ordered by his Dept. Manager to remove the cover because it made the area look "unsightly".

Within hours, the man had lapsed into a coma in the Regional Hospital after being sent home from work in a taxi, because he was unable to drive his car.

He was put on a life-support machine, until finally pronounced clinically dead a week later.

This death does not appear among the Dept. of Labour statistics of deaths resulting from works accidents, simply because it was never reported to the Department as one.

Following his death, a secret meeting took place between Senior Company Management and the Doctor in charge of the case in the home of one of the Senior Company Managers. The Company then informed

the workers at the plant that the death was caused by a virus infection and in no way related to his employment.

The official death certificate states cause of death as: "Bronchial pneumonia associated with Septicaemia and Staphylococci". Staphylococci is a virus but not a common one like 'flu. The question of how he got this rare virus was never answered. Whether this man's death was a result of his exposure to toxic chemicals and fumes is something we as workers are not qualified to judge.

However, the circumstances of his death were suspicious and this was made worse by the Company's efforts to avoid a full investigation.

These efforts were successful and the matter was never fully investigated.

I had a similar experience last year when overcome by fumes coming from a drain. I was brought to the Regional Hospital and kept in for two days "for observation". Then I was presented with a bill for £40 for consultancy charges which I passed on to the Company, who refused to pay it.

I immediately put the matter in the hands of a solicitor with the result that the Company paid me a sum of £500 for my inconvenience and two-day loss of enjoyment of life.

This matter was of course settled out of court. Genard Murphy, shop steward, Pfizer's Cork, Carrigaline, Co. Cork.

true today. A revolutionary paper provides the arguments month after month that give confidence to hundreds of militants outside the ranks of its organisation. With this issue Socialist Worker goes to 12 pages. This reflects the growth and expansion of the SWM over the last year. But the new paper also aims to do even better. A

letters column has been opened for any of our readers who want to enter into debate with the paper. And we also aim to increase the sales—particularly in work-places and on picket lines. This month 100 papers were sold around the picket lines on October 15th. And in Watertord, the comrades have pushed up their sale outside the glass factory to over 30. The sales drive continues. Any of our readers who like the politics and want to take a few extra copies should write to the Sales Organiser, C/o PO Box 1648, Dublin 8.

IN STRUGGLE

Politics are tested in practise. There is no better practise than the experience of strike action. You soon find the difference between those who mouth about socialism and those who are stuck in for a fight. Take the ESB linesmen's strike in Cork. There you have a group of workers who are being slandered by the press and their own union officials. You might think it's time for anyone who calls themselves a socialist to stand up and be counted. Unfortunately, the "left" in the ATGWU has been deafening in its silence.

AIDS AND SUPERSTITION

Your article by Paula Hinchy (SW September) on AIDS was timely, informative and topical.

In an earlier age in Ireland well within the memory of the grey-haired and balding among us there was a disease called tuberculosis for which there was no known cure.

Those who had the disease, mostly young people, were almost certain to die from it with the frightening symptoms of blood being coughed up from the lungs.

There was another aspect to it. It was associated with poverty and poor living conditions. It therefore carried a severe social stigma which was a cruel double edge to a disease that was fatal. Families were avoided and openly name-called. The worst name was "consumption". It became a frightening, dirty word in an earlier more superstitious society.

Along comes AIDS, Acquired Immunity DEficiency Syndrome, which is caused

by a virus that breaks down the body's resistance to disease.

If some fundamentalist Christian working in one of Reagan's or Thatcher's germ warfare laboratories had wanted to develop a virus to strike the fear of God into those sections of the population which had made too many gains recently there could not have been a more convenient release. Conspiracy theoretician, Killarney, Co Kerry.

RELIGION AND THE CAPITALISTS

Your article on religion in the September issue was spot on and said a lot that needed to be said. However, as Marxists I think we have got to be very sensitive about the question of religion in a country where the majority of people still attend church and listen to their pastors.

It would be very easy to see religion as the cause of suffering and poverty but this is patently untrue. In Britain where religion has disappeared as a force, certainly among the working class, which is the class we are concerned about, there is still suffering and poverty and false consciousness.

Our attack must always be directed at the capitalist state on which religion ultimately depends. With the collapse of the capitalist state and the growth of socialism religion will inevitably disappear. Men and women will control their own lives and in doing so will reach for new ideas in poetry, painting, literature and science etc. We will build a better world through our own efforts without the need for a god. After all it was man who created God and not God who created man.

Jim Blake, Cork. Making my regular pilgrimage into Cork city centre on the

number 8 bus, I happened upon two CIE notices plastered across the window. Day trips to Ballinspittal £4 for adults, £2 for children, £10 for families; and Mount Mellory £5 for adults, £2 for children and £12 for families (with 3 children).

I couldn't help but reflect back on my retreat the other day down at the Dole office selling my Socialist Workers, when a punter remarked to me that he was in fact a bona fide eye witness of the Cork 800 phenomenon known to us all as "moving statues".

I asked him why he thought the statue should do such a humble thing. His reply was that it didn't matter why, the point was that it moved, and he had seen it. After a few minutes more of idle banter, this lost soul bought his Socialist Worker and trundled off, safe in the knowledge that he hadn't missed the greatest show on earth.

But of course there is nothing unique or extraordinary about the "moving statue syndrome". They've been moving ever since Lot's wife turned into a pillar of salt. But it wasn't until the capitalist system took its greedy grip on the masses that the Church really began to cash in, prime examples being Knock, Fatima and Lourdes. Lourdes is the big daddy of them all, a relig-

ious Las Vegas if you like: a real money spinner, where literally thousands of mainly working class people visit to gamble their chances on a miracle that can cure their ills or that of the world.

But of course there are no miracles or moving statues in this world, although I seem to remember one, way back in 66—Nelson's Column in O'Connell O'Connell St. Now there was a moving statue!

Anyway, the point is this, no amount of moving statues is going to change this miserable, exploiting, repressive system we live under. But it does teach socialists one thing—that working class people are not happy with the way things are going, so unhappy, in fact, that they are willing to clutch on to any straw. And as events go from bad to worse, and workers fight back, as they inevitably will, then moving statues and UFOs will just become memories among all the other irrelevances in our society today.

So therefore, at least for today, whatever about the many varied and colourful jokes about moving statues, to the tourist board, CIE, etc, and most particularly the Church, it's all a deadly serious business. Eamonn Lewsley, Cork SWM.

SWSS

Socialist Worker Student Society
Day school - November 30th

NICARAGUA: What sort of revolution—Mike Gonzales (SWP Britain);

MAY '68: Students and workers—Marnie Holborow;

TROTSKY versus STALIN: The great Debate—Eamonn McCann;

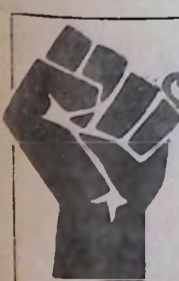
WHAT IS REVOLUTION—Kieran Allen

For more details, send to SWSS National Secretary, PO Box 1648, Dublin 8.

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REVIEWS

Stallone spins day-dreams for wistful, macho Yanks

by EAMONN McCANN

SYLVESTER STALLONE is not only the most successful screen actor in America today, he is the most successful screen actor in American history.

His three "Rocky" films and two "Rambo" have between them taken a billion and a half dollars at the box office over the past nine years. No film actor has ever before been so solidly established for so long as by far the most popular star of them all.

There has to be a reason for this. Stallone, who now writes and directs his own movies, must represent and express something which strikes a deep chord within Americans—within young, white Americans in particular, given that 80% of the US cinema audience is under 35 and upwards of 90% of it is white.

All successful films work by getting the audience to identify with the characters on the screen. A really successful film is one where masses of people easily and naturally identify

with the feelings, the hopes, the fears, etc. of the main characters.

If you look at Stallone's movies with that in mind the reasons for their fabulous success in the US becomes clear.

What the Rocky and Rambo films have in common is that in them Stallone achieves things which white America would dearly love to achieve but hasn't been able to.

HEAVYWEIGHT

As "Rocky", he wins the heavyweight title. No white American has won the heavyweight title since Marciano in the 50s. The best they have been able to come up with was poor Gerry Cooney. But Stallone did it for them and enabled millions of young macho male Yanks to live out their fantasy on the screen.

But of course, the greatest recent blow to the arrogant self-image of macho America was their defeat at the hands of the Vietnamese. Unable to

bring themselves to believe that little yellow people in black pajamas had actually done this, the right-wing cold warriors in the US have taken to blaming the "liberals" and "wets" and "pinkos" at home who, so the theory runs, didn't have the stomach for the fight.

Here too, Stallone comes riding to the rescue. In "Rambo 1 - First Blood" he took revenge on the wet wimps who had weakened the war effort at home.

And in "Rambo 2" he actually goes back to Nam, fights a return match against the Viet Cong, kills hundreds of them and wins easily. It is an elaborate fantasy about reversing the result of the Vietnam war.

VICIOUSNESS

Fantasies on their own never hurt anybody, and if Stallone can channel the frustrated viciousness of Reaganite America away from the real world and on to the

screen he will have done no harm at all.

However, what is genuinely alarming about his success is what it reveals about the American mind in the 80s. There is no guarantee that those who cheer on Rocky and Rambo will be content to confine their fantasising to the cinema. Indeed, the euphoric reaction to the US hi-jacking of the plane carrying Palestinians to Tunisia last month suggests that they'd keep on cheering if Rambo was for real.

HYSTERICAL

There's no point in becoming hysterical over mere movies and demanding that Rambo films be banned as "too violent" — as some silly leftists have done in the UK and the US.

Equally, there's no point being complacent about what the films tell us about real-life America. After all, the man in the White House is a great admirer of Rambo. And the man in the White House has his finger on the nuclear button.



Sylvester Stallone who now writes and directs his own movies.

What the Joanne Hayes case shows about class justice

role.

Superintendent John Courtney and his travelling squad of confession-extractors went down to Tralee in April of last year to investigate a murder. In the course of their investigations they did absolutely nothing which they hadn't been doing for years—and doing with the full knowledge and authority of the governments of both Coalition and Fianna Fail variety.

Courtney, Gerry Carroll and PJ Browne in particular were prominent in the Heavy Gang whose methods were exposed in the 70s first by socialist and republican papers, then by The Irish Times and finally by Amnesty International.

The fact that they had been kicking, battering and terrorising republicans in order to obtain "confessions", and had been concocting false evidence to secure convictions, was fully known by every senior politician in the land. But instead of taking any action to stop it, Justice Ministers of successive governments conveyed by nods and winks that those responsible should carry on.

After the devastating Amnesty Report in 1978 a committee under Judge Barra O Briain was set up to examine ways in which people held in custody might have their rights better protected. It suggested a number of measures. Not a single one of their recommendations has been implemented by either the Coalition or Fianna Fail.

Instead, governments signalled clearly that they

supported the brutality and corruption. A number of the gardai named in the cases which formed the basis of the Amnesty Report, far from being disciplined or downgraded were actually promoted by both Fianna Fail and Coalition regimes.

SCANDAL

Superintendent John Courtney himself was made up to superintendent by Fianna Fail after the Heavy Gang scandal. There can have been no doubt in John Courtney's mind that the vicious methods he used were approved by his superiors both in the gardai and the government.

What the murder squad had been doing to "suspects" all over the 26 counties for years, they were doing, by and large, to republicans or other radicals, "subversives" or even "terrorists". And very many of the people who have been banging their breasts in protests against the treatment of the Hayes family vehemently refused to join in protests.

The same goes for the judge, Lynch is now being foul-mouthed—and quite right too—for his disgraceful and utterly dishonest Report. He should be booted off the bench, no question.

But, again, he did nothing in compiling his report that judges have not been doing for a long time. After all, no fewer than nine judges—some of them completely wide awake—declared that Nicky Kelly was guilty when the

dogs in the street could tell he was innocent.

Judges in the Special Criminal Court year in and year out have sent people to prison for long periods on evidence that you wouldn't hang one of the aforementioned dogs on. And, quite clearly, governments fully approved and, again, there was precious little protest from many which are now up in arms.

The fundamental point to emerge from the Kerry Babies affair is not that women are treated worse than men by the legal machinery in Ireland, although that's true too. Nor is it that there is hostility and even hatred for women's sexuality in wide areas of Irish life—although that's true

as well. Nor is it the main point that the courts are too willing to believe the cops and to disbelieve those accused by the cops.

THREAT

The fundamental point is that the capitalist state within which we live habitually treats its citizens most abominably—particularly those citizens who are perceived to be a threat—and that this state of affairs will continue until the capitalist state is confronted.

To draw any other conclusion is to miss the point. And liberals—including liberal feminists—are very good at missing the point.

—EAMONN McCANN

YOU CAN FOOL ALL THE PEOPLE SOME OF THE TIME



JUSTICE LYNCH
JOANNE HAYES GUILTY,
GARDAI INNOCENT,
AND IM PETER PAN!

TO DATE four books and maybe 4,000 magazine and newspaper articles have been published about the Kerry Babies affair. Many of the books and articles make good points...that the report by Judge Kevin Lynch shows the same ignorant bigoted sexism that is the hallmark of much of the legal and political life in Southern Ireland anyway.

That the Hayes family were disgracefully treated throughout, by the gardai, by the tribunal and finally in the Report. That the entire sequence of events emphasises the scandalous lack of sex education and contraceptive facilities in the State generally and particularly in rural areas.

Socialists will broadly agree with all these points. But there is a more fundamental point too, which has often gone unmentioned in the interviews and public arguments which followed publication of the Report. This has to do with the responsibility of politicians of all three major parties, and of the State itself.

The Government, supported by Fianna Fail, has attempted to get itself off the hook by disciplining five of the gardai who were directly involved in trying to frame the Hayes family and who tried to perjure their way out of a corner at the Tribunal. But in doing this the Government itself is covering up its own

Nicaragua:
REVOLUTION UNDER SIEGE

by Mike Gonzalez

Judge by the reaction of the US, and the Nicaraguan revolution is a Marxist threat on a par with Joe Stalin. According to its supporters, it is a socialist revolution of a new type. Beneath these highly-coloured reactions, what is really happening in Nicaragua? Has mass involvement in the overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship been translated into mass democracy? What are the political effects of the US blockade and military threat?



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Teachers: build the links

TREMENDOUS support has built up amongst the teachers unions for the fight for a special 10% increase. That 10% was awarded by the government's own arbitrator after taking into account the "difficulties in public finances". The Coalition have however refused to pay up.

At special branch meetings around the country only a tiny number opposed strike action on the issue. Throughout the whole country there were only a handful of scabs on October 15th. In Dublin, there was a magnificent turn out from teachers on the day—even if the march itself had sometimes the character of a troupe around the schoolyard.

For the first time teachers find themselves the victims of a fierce press campaign. On the morning of October 15th, the "liberal" Irish Times prominently printed a letter from two scabs who claimed they were being intimidated. The slanders of "long

holidays" and "cushy jobs" dovetail neatly with Hussey's and Bishop Kavanagh's attempt to blame teachers for a lack of morality. Their aim is clearly to appeal to the conservative instincts of many teachers.

But the crucial thing about the strikes is that a new generation of young teachers find themselves on the picket line. In the INTO, for example there wasn't a national strike for more than 30 years. That in itself will build up the union spirit among teachers.

COALITION

However the strategy of the union leaders is still fraught with dangers. The one-day strikes merely display anger—they are not a strategy to win. The Coalition now aim to do a trade-off between relaxing the pay freeze and sticking the knife into teachers. There are signs that some of the other leaders of the ICTU may

go along with this. Not all of them are the right wingers. Pat Rabbitte, for example, has been using semi-workerist arguments to cover a possible deal where the teachers lose their 10% while the rest of the public sector scrape together a small pay increase.

In this situation, determined strike action is crucial. That can only be won by a campaign amongst the membership. It may mean taking out the stronger areas with a view to spreading the strike by example. But the prospect of all-out strike action must be on the cards when the TDs come to vote on the issue in the Dail. Otherwise all the lobbying is just "shooting the breeze".

There is another reason for all-out action. You can never win solidarity if you are not prepared to sacrifice yourself. Despite the nonsense about "the professional status" of teachers they are going to desperately need the

solidarity of other public sector workers if they are going to win. You only get solidarity when you show you want a real fight.

SECTIONALISM

In the weeks ahead, the job of militants in the teachers unions is to argue against all forms of sectionalism. The possible sell-out of the teachers by the other union leaders can easily be turned to their advantage by the conservative bureaucracy who lead the teachers themselves. They have long held the wider trade union movement at arms length. It is up to socialists in the union to argue for links between rank and file teachers and other workers. Just because Pat Rabbitte or John Carroll might try a trade-off with the Coalition, doesn't mean that the membership of the ITGWU cannot be won to solidarity.



ESB linesmen take lead



Gardai attack ESB striker in Cork.

FEW GROUPS of workers in recent times have been subjected to as much ignorant abuse as the striking ESB men in Cork. The media have labelled them as "selfish", "despicable", "irresponsible" etc.

All the major political parties have been vehemently opposed to them: Dick Spring, leader of the sell-out Labour Party, sent in an army of gardai to protect scabs breaking the strike in Douglas and then had the nerve to claim he was "acting in the best interests of the trade union movement".

The seriousness with which the capitalists' state takes the dispute was indicated on October 12th when the ESB chief engineer who drove a service lorry in to repair a line break in Gurrabraher was given an *escort* special branch escort while the rest of the scab gang was flanked by such a contingent of gardai that you'd wonder where all the complaints about a lack of gardai overtime are coming from.

In addition, strikers have been arrested not only under common law but under Section 30 of the Offences against the State Act.

The facts behind the strike are simple. ESB, without any prior consultation, tried to force linesmen to do drivers' work in breach of clear 1975 agreement. For more than 18 months the management have been refusing to pay wages to men who refused to do the drivers' work. The extra work would have meant more job losses in an industry where the bosses are already demanding 1,000 redundancies

nationally. No doubt they chose Cork to look for further job cuts, believing that with massive unemployment in the area, Cork would be a "soft" target.

The men in Cork were forced out on strike in July when 43 of their workmates were taken off the payroll.

One of the biggest burdens they have to carry into battle has been Jimmy Tinkler, the ATGWU national boss who has consistently tried to undermine the men's case and who, in defiance of the ATGWU's own rule book, not to mention basic trade union principle, refused to make the dispute official. Despite this the men, and local official Tom O'Donovan, have stood firm.

PRODUCTIVITY

The strike is part of a general fight-back against job cuts in the ESB and should be supported by all ESB workers. More broadly, it gives a lead to public sector workers generally who are faced with demands for higher productivity and lower work forces.

Power station workers and workers from other areas should be urged to weigh in with solidarity action. Solidarity is the key to winning.

And workers everywhere need to draw a serious conclusion from the scab behaviour of Tinkler and Spring.

Strike after strike after strike

shows that it is not possible to rely on trade union bureaucrats to lead towards victory. The trade union bureaucracy rots from the top down. The further up you go the more rottenness you find. And those officials who are prepared to stand firm with the workers they represent find that they themselves are so isolated by the bureaucracy and that attempts are made to undermine their credibility and to pressurise them into conforming.

Politically, the behaviour of Spring shows that anybody who believes that socialism will be brought about by the Labour Party is living in a dream world. The many good, honest socialists who work inside the Labour Party should draw the obvious conclusion.

The Cork ESB workers have given a magnificent lead to all workers faced with an arrogant management and the prospect of job losses.

They have shown that real strength lies with the rank and file, when it is organised and mobilised. They should be given all possible support.

In the last issue we said that the local ATGWU official involved was a "dirty rat". This was a mistake. We meant to refer to the national ATGWU official—Tinkler.

The local official Tom O'Donovan has been totally supportive of the strike and we apologise for the error.

Just to be certain that it's absolutely clear: It's Tinkler, not O'Donovan, who is the rat in the Cork dispute. OK?

WORKPLACE NOTES

VOTE FIDDLE

THE BRITISH-BASED union, UCATT was found guilty recently in the Irish courts of election rigging. The penalty imposed was for a second election to be held and limited costs for the prosecution. Left wing candidate Richard Miles carried out an investigation in Ireland where returns here for just 7 branches showed a poll of 1,480 votes compared to a total of 1,300 votes of 128 branches covering the Scottish and London regions.

Calls now by shop stewards to the membership for action against those responsible has led to a vicious backlash from the union officials led by Bobby Rice, regional secretary, UCATT (Ireland).

The fears of rank and file action which could lead to removal from office of Rice and others is far greater than their fear of the courts which actually supports that type of union leader-

ship, and while it may expose corruption will never eradicate it and will if anything create conditions which sustain it.

The findings of the courts made no mention of the role of the leadership. Instead, they placed the full responsibility on individual members. This can only serve to encourage the union bureaucracy to assert, still more, their authority.

The attack by Rice and Co on militants has even descended to the level of open collaboration with the Personnel Department of Dublin Corporation. He has contacted them by writing a letter to Mr Soffe, Personnel Officer stating that the Local Authority Workers group of which most of his shop stewards are members is an unofficial body and should not be given any recognition! He has also conveyed this message to the local supervisors in Housing Maintenance Departments and elsewhere.

The fact that the LAW group

(originally the Corpo Craft Group) was responsible for organising numerous successful campaigns of industrial action appears to be completely irrelevant to people like Rice. Also the fact that the LAW group can still attract more people to their meetings than UCATT also appears to be irrelevant. Recognition of fellow bureaucrats on the opposite side of the fence are more important to union officials like Rice than the support even of their own members. The threat of withdrawing shop stewards' credentials of members of the LAW group was used by Rice in 1980 but it was never carried out because of the support that LAW group had at the time and still has. The best way to deal with Rice and Co is for the LAW group to continue to organise the membership in defence of its REAL interests—jobs, wages and conditions which guilt-ridden paranoid union officials like Rice are incapable of doing.

CHARLIE NOLAN, UCATT

Back Dunnes strikers

WITH THE strike in its seventeenth month a feeling of demoralisation is creeping in. Hopes were raised by a possibility of a strike in Dunnes Crumlin shops where a part-time worker was suspended for refusing to handle South African goods. The Crumlin workers have, however, voted against a strike and the case has been referred to the labour court.

The reasons for this vote are not hard to find. After 12 months the Henry Street strike seems no closer to victory. The union officials are placing their hopes in the labour court coming up with a solution.

As we have said before a victory is still possible, but this will require the strikers and the support group to campaign independently of the union officials.

At the moment the proposed demonstration for November 30th is the best prospect for rebuilding solidarity.

All unions and workplaces who have given any support in the past should be canvassed for support for the demonstration.



DEMONSTRATION

- *Solidarity with the struggle in Southern Africa
- *Break all links with South Africa
- *Victory to the Dunnes strikers.

Dublin Saturday Nov 30th

Support the Henry Street picket every Saturday!

Socialist Worker

UCD bosses put boot in, union leaders drag feet

AS MANAGEMENT at University College Dublin put the boot in on the strike by 23 cleaners last month, the women's union, the ITGWU, continued to hesitate to throw its full weight into the dispute.

With the strike now in its fourth month, UCD bosses have taken court action to keep the strikers off the campus, and they have sought an injunction banning Paddy Carroll, husband of one of the

strikers, and SWM member Eamonn McCann from the picket line. This is intended to frighten supporters away. However, cleaners from the FWUI have come out in solidarity. There are now no unionised cleaners

working in the college. Senior college management, including Bursar JP McHale and candidate for the presidency Paddy Masterson, have been coming in on weekends to do a spot of personal scabbing.

However, a union promise that maintenance staff would black any building cleaned by scab labour has not been acted on up to the time of going to press. Moreover, ITGWU college security staff who have been openly collaborating with management have not been disciplined.

No instruction has gone out to delivery drivers to respect the women's picket line.

Union leaders claim that the strike is "difficult" because the women were not employed directly by UCD but by Contract Cleaners LTD. But it is perfectly obvious that UCD caused the dispute by forcing down the cost of cleaning contracts to the point where hours were cut and PRSI entitlements removed—which is at the heart of the women's case.

The way to solve the dispute is to force UCD management to re-negotiate all cleaning contracts—this time with a stipulation that all workers involved have at least the minimum PRSI hours (18 a week) and union rates and conditions. This would have the effect of cementing the solidarity of all the college cleaners. It would mean getting the unions officially to pull out college workers in buildings where scab labour is being used.

ANGLO-IRISH TALKS NEAR COMPLETION: Why the British have nothing to offer

THE Anglo-Irish talks—which are generally expected to come to a conclusion this month—have inspired so many leaks and so much speculation that by now most people are either bored or bewildered by the whole thing.

Sinn Fein says openly and Charlie Haughey hints that the Brits are going to give absolutely nothing away. At the same time, the Loyalist leaders are warning that a united Ireland is just around the corner and urging their followers to prepare for a last-ditch struggle to prevent it.

Both sides are probably right!

As far as sovereignty over the North is concerned, right now the Brits aren't giving an inch. Thatcher made that abundantly clear when she dismissed the Forum Report and she hasn't budged since. It's obvious, too, that the Coalition has accepted this and has given up on any notion of making a break-through on the basic question of partition.

But at the same time, it's obvious that the Brits have no fundamental commitment to the Loyalists as such. They do want to find a way of accommodating the Catholics within the Northern State, of integrating the Catholic middle-classes into the running of the North and "recognising" the nationalist identity".

PRINCIPLE

Thatcher has even spelled it out that keeping the North within the UK is not exactly a matter of fundamental principle that the British ruling class would fight for, no matter what. She's said that any time more than 50 percent of the North's population want to join the South they can go with her blessing.

British Tory leaders don't talk like this about Yorkshire or Cornwall, or even Scotland or Wales. They do not believe that "Ulster is British", in the way that other regions of the "UK" are British.

And that's one of the things which deeply alarms the Loyalist leadership. They feel that any change in the North, even relatively minor change, could lead to the destruction of "Ulster", given that the Brits are not 100 percent behind them.

The truth about British capitalism's attitude to Ireland is that it doesn't much care whether partition remains or not. What it wants is that Ireland should be politically stable, securely within the capitalist system and as close as possible to NATO. The Brits can live with any political arrangement which guarantees these conditions.

INSTABILITY

The reason they rule out any sharing of sovereignty with Dublin (within the foreseeable future anyway) is that they believe this would create instability by calling forth mass Loyalist resistance. It's a practical matter, not a question of political principle.

The Free State ruling class—represented by FitzGerald's government—has aims which are not fundamentally different from Britain's. They, too, want political stability throughout the island and to preserve and protect the capitalist system—and they have no great objection to a closer relationship with NATO.

But there are problems. The pressures on FitzGerald are different from the pressures on Thatcher. He needs to tug Northern Catholics away from the Republican Movement—which is a source of instability to the South as well as the North—and into the camp of the SDLP. So he has to show that "constitutional nationalism" can deliver something meaningful. He has to persuade Thatcher to allow him to deliver even if it means her running a risk of Loyalist revolt.

Those are the basic parameters of the talks. They are talks between two capitalist



Anglo-Irish talk— Reform of the UDR?

governments trying in difficult circumstances to stitch up a pact which suits them both. That basic fact is far more important than the precise details of any deal which might emerge... whether it is a civil servant or a politician which Dublin is allowed to station in Belfast, whether there is a comb-out of the present membership of the UDR or merely more stringent examination of new recruits, etc, etc.

In all this, the Coalition Government is very much the junior partner. FitzGerald needs Thatcher far more than Thatcher needs FitzGerald. Put simply, despite all the changes of the past couple of decades, and particularly from the point of view of economics and finance, Britain is the most important country in the world for Free State capitalism.

RELATIONSHIP

But the Free State is far from the most important country in the world for British capitalism.

The relationship isn't equal. What's more, even as junior partners go, FitzGerald and his Government are a nervous and pretty weak-kneed lot, with neither guts nor gumption when it comes to dealing with their overbearing neighbour.

The distinct likelihood is, then, that FitzGerald won't win a good deal even from the point of view of the modest aims of his own conservative

class. In negotiating terms, Thatcher will have "won" and nothing much will have been achieved for nationalism, constitutional or otherwise. There will certainly be continued, and very likely increased, repression of Republicans both North and South, and no weakening, much less destruction, of the sectarian institutions of the Northern State.

REPRESENTED

Left entirely out of account in all this are the interests of the working class. The Irish working class is not represented in any shape, form or fashion at the negotiating table—just as it wasn't represented in 1921-22 when the present disastrous arrangement was agreed.

Now the Irish and British sections of the capitalist class are re-arranging Ireland's future between them. In light of this, it is depressing that none of the major forces on the Irish Left are criticising the talks from a working-class, anti-imperialist position.

The Workers' Party and Labour Youth, for example, both simply ignore the existence of British imperialism in Ireland and dodge the issue of sectarianism by foul-mouthing the Provos in a moralistic way and making repeated calls for "working class unity" without spelling out what it is they want the working class to unite for.

Sinn Fein, meanwhile, attacks FitzGerald (quite rightly) for collaboration with the Brits but don't make it clear that the reason he collaborates with the Brits is that his class has no argument with the Brits. It isn't the personal weakness of the man but the political interests of his class which explains his abject crawlings.

Only the working class has an argument with the Brits. Only the working class has an interest in getting British imperialism out of Ireland—as opposed to doing a deal with it about how to remain and run the country.

ARRANGEMENT

And as long as there is capitalism in Ireland, British imperialism will have agents here. Because in large measure still—despite the emergence of a few "independent" native capitalists like Smurfit and Purcell, and despite the growing importance of US, German and Japanese investment—that's what Irish capitalism is—an agency for British imperialism. And that will remain the case no matter what the exact shape of the political arrangements agreed between them.

You can't have one without the other. And you can't get rid of one unless you get rid of the other at the same time.

And it's perfectly plain that only the working class has the potential to do that.

APPROACH

If the union bosses won't do this officially the strikers should do it themselves by direct approach to the rank and file college workers.

Those students who have been admirably active on the picket line should now direct their energies towards *organising inside the college*. The students' union should be pressed to make the organisation of a picketing rota an official union activity, directed from the union office. If college management tried to close the office in retaliation, there could and should be massive mobilisation against them.

The students should also put direct pressure on the college bosses to concede the women's case, whether by leafletting, marches, action in the classes, pickets on official functions or whatever.

The UCD strike will be won if these things are done. Otherwise it will be beaten.

It would be much better to be able to do these things with full official backing from the trade union and the students' union.

But since they are necessary, they should be done anyway.