

the worker

FOR A WORKERS' REPUBLIC AND INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM

WAGE DEAL THROUGH.....

FIGHT BACK TO DEFEND RIGHTS

WHEN DO trade union officials go around enthusiastically getting their members to vote on a question of union policy?

When they're trying to get a National Wage Agreement accepted. Last month ballot boxes appeared on the job for the vote on the so-called revised terms where they hardly ever have been seen before.

The union officials were able to drag out a bigger total number of votes, swelling the yes-votes from trade union members who had not voted the first time round. The government weighed in with broad, unspecified hints about income tax reform, and proposals for extra taxation on the rich, as well as making the suggestion that workers would be lucky to get the rises promised in the original proposals because of the serious economic situation.

The employers, who had led us to believe that their first offer was also their 'absolutely final' offer, and that they had doubts whether they could pay that, managed to find a few more pence in the kitty. Not too surprising, since profits and dividends from shares are still soaring ahead.

On the tax question we were being bribed - there were no firm guarantees at all. On the question of an economic crisis ahead, we were being threatened.

Bribes and threats got the wage agreement through - plus, it must be said, the prospect for many workers that they would get their increases back-dated and could, therefore, look forward to sizeable lump sums.

For a great many of us it will take a fight even to get the minimum increases we are due. We can be sure that the rises will not come on a plate with no strings attached. Employers will be looking for "productivity" concessions on conditions and manning. We can be certain, too, that many more employers will plead "special economic circumstances" and try to get out of paying. This is especially likely if the economic situation in Britain worsens, as seems certain.

Anybody who imagines they now have a bigger and easier chance to

improve earnings and conditions because the National Agreement is through, is living in a fool's paradise.

It is a one-sided "agreement" where the bosses still have the upper hand - and the government lurks in the background to make sure it "works".

All the warnings of those of us who oppose the National Agreements in principle will be borne out unless there is continued, and greater, vigilance. Any effective control rank and file members have over their own unions or jobs will be finally taken away - UNLESS there is a consistent fight to defend all our hard-won rights. The working class will have abandoned one essential way of making its voice heard - strike action - UNLESS we defend that right, and use it.

If it was necessary to bring together militants in many different unions and jobs to organise the fight against the terms for a National Agreement it is doubly necessary to hold these people together now the Agreement is accepted.

Here, it is worth noting the words of a resolution passed at a conference held on 2nd March by the Dublin Shop Stewards Committee:

"We will maintain in existence the local shop stewards committees which have been set up to fight the National Agreement, encourage the setting up of more such committees, and co-ordinate their activities on a national basis . . . There is an urgent need for greater co-operation between shop stewards of different unions in the work-places to bring maximum unity of purpose. There is a need, too, to bring together workers in the same industry and union, and across the unions . . ." The resolution goes on to list some of the main points to be fought for.

Cosgrave wipes his hands after another dirty deal



INSIDE: Read about the prospects for the dirty deal at Sunningdale and for the Northern Executive (page 5); 2000 on strike at Waterford Glass (page 4); The 'neutral' Labour Court (page 2)—first in a series on problems facing trade unionists; Reviews of Eamonn McCann's book (page 4) and a valuable book on work safety (page 6).

Labour Can Change Little

GETTING THE TORIES out is a big victory for the British working class; putting Labour back into power is a very unsatisfactory way of expressing it. Four days after Wilson became Prime Minister, he was talking of people sharing "sacrifices" to get British capitalism back on its feet. These sacrifices if successfully enforced, are bound to be at the expense of the real living standards of British workers.

Heath's election strategy was simple, and, in ruling class terms, made good sense. To concede the miner's claim meant in his view, giving in to a leading group of workers when the economic situation demanded that they should be held back in order to prevent other workers from pursuing claims which would damage the effort to keep up profit levels. That effort is especially urgent for the bosses in the present period of recession, both in Britain and internationally.

TIRADES

Anti-communist tirades also make sense in this setting. As capitalism has become more international and inflation is easily passed around each state has had to take a more active part in its own economy, particularly on prices and incomes. Economics and politics have come together in the daily lives and consciousness of workers.

At the same time governments around the world are trying to incorporate the trade union leadership into the state machine and into the ruling class view of things. The attacks on militants are aimed at isolating them industrially and politically.

Wilson and company have inherited a system in Britain which is suffering from three major crises; a balance of payments deficit running at around £3,500 million per annum; a collapse of growth related to low investment in industry and an international recession which will make growth through exports more difficult.

The solution to all three crises demands an attack on working class living standards in Britain and also on the independence of working class organisations. In the short term, the economy has a lot of leeway to

make up after the losses made in the three-day week. In the medium term, however, the British government is going to have to borrow big sums on the

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international money market. The price they will have to pay for such loans is likely to be a state guarantee against further wage claims by significant sections of British workers.

LABOUR AND THE NORTH

THE RETURN of a Labour Government to Westminster may be seen by many in the Catholic ghettos in the North as a reason for jubilation. After all, the Unionists and Tories are part and parcel of the same machine, sharing many ideas and policies. Internment, Bloody Sunday and Operation Motorman all took place under the direction of a Tory government. The British Army didn't really move onto the offensive in the 6 Counties until after a Tory regime came to power.

Many will look to the Labour Government for redress of the remaining grievances - an end to internment and repressive laws, radical reform of the RUC, and an end to British Army thuggery on the streets.

It may well be that the British Labour Party can do some things that the Tories refused to do, such as permit the return of the Winchester hostages to serve their savage sentences in Irish concentration camps and jails. They may even attempt to phase out internment.

But we must be absolutely clear on just what the Labour Party stands for. It is a pro-imperialist party. It has always supported the maintenance of British rule in Ireland. Throughout all the years of Tory rule it gave support

to Heath's savage repressive policies. It has given unquestioning support to the Sunningdale agreement which is simply aimed at bringing the Catholic middle class, North and South, and a section of the Unionist middle class, together in a new pro-imperialist alliance.

The Labour Party, like the Tories before them, is determined to hold onto Ireland in the interests of British big business, in the interests of the handful of shareholders of Courtaulds, I.C.I., Enkalon, Fords, and all the other parasites who survive by the sweat of Irish workers, North and South.

It may well be that the Labour Party will try to do this by ways slightly different for the Tories, but they will try to do it, no one should be in any doubt.

The anti-imperialist movement cannot now sit back and hope for better times ahead. Every concession given by the new regime will have to be wrung from it. And every 'concession' that is so won should never be taken as an excuse for resting on our laurels. It is, rather, a signal for stepping up the struggle until finally the whole rotten imperialist system is destroyed, along with its middle class backers, Orange and Green.

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THE 'NEUTRAL' LABOUR COURT

THE PAST few years have seen the Labour Court play an ever more important role in industrial relations in the 26 Counties. The employers are trying to refer as many cases as possible to it. Some unions let claims go to the Court even before they have tried to use the direct strength of their members in support of the claims.

In the first of a series of articles on major problems facing trade unionists, we take a look at the Labour Court and its supposed neutrality.

THE STRUCTURE of the Labour Court is simple enough — normally a Chairman, a worker's representative, and an employer's representative. The Court listens to submissions from both sides in dispute and then issues recommendations based on a majority vote of the three "judges".

The Chairman obviously has considerable power to affect that judgement. He is appointed by the Minister for Labour. The two representatives are nominated by the ICTU and the FUE. At best, then, the balance is likely to be two-to-one against the worker.

However, the worker's representatives are usually well removed from the normal experience of most workers. The latest nominee from Congress to get a post, Sean O'Murchu, has been sitting on boards with employers as long as anybody can remember. He was a member of the RTE Authority which was dismissed late 1972. He was a powerful full-time official in the ITGWU, very committed to the kind of trade union 'rationalisation' which would put the brakes on militancy.

Even if the worker's representative does defend the union case in the court sessions, you will never get to know of it, because the Chairman, in giving the recommendations, is not allowed to say whether the decision is unanimous or not.

The present Deputy Chairman came from worker's ranks — or did he? Maurice Cosgrave was one of the employer's best friends in the trade union movement. A consistent right-winger, it was he who, as President of Congress did most to ram the first National Wage Agreement down the throats of a reluctant trade union movement, whose membership was not even given the chance to say yea or nay. As General Secretary of the Post Office Workers Union for six years and Deputy General Secretary before that, he is well used to working within, and for, the state apparatus.

The Labour Court normally takes a few weeks to issue its recommendation for a settlement. It is not binding on either side, by law, but the Court expects "very serious consideration" to be given to it. Sometimes, employers press unions to be bound by Labour Court findings when a dispute is referred there.

Once a union agrees to go to the Labour Court, it is under great pressure to settle there rather than appear "unreasonable". This is reflected in the fact that in 1971 76% of the Court's

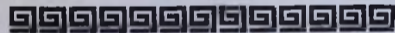
recommendations were accepted, and in 1972 the proportion was 86%. Needless to remark the employers have reason to reject far, far fewer Court recommendations than the unions do. And even where the unions have accepted the recommendations, there have often been unofficial strikes by the workers affected, who have not wanted to accept.

Before a case is heard in the Labour Court it will go through "conciliation". The Conciliation Officer (Industrial Relations Officer) talks to the employer and workers separately and tries to work out some deal. In 1972, 62% of the 713 disputes were settled at the conciliation stage. The remaining cases went on to the Labour Court and were settled there.

The Labour Court can also have cases referred to it by the Rights Commissioners attached to the Department of Labour. Parties involved in such cases have to accept the Court's recommendation.

As well as issuing recommendations and providing a conciliation service the Court has also established 23 Joint Labour Committees, which set minimum wages — mostly very, very low — and conditions for groups such as hairdressers, messengers, hotel workers, etc. Of course, many employers in these fields still get away with paying less than these rates.

Another important function of the Labour Court is to register agreements covering conditions and terms of employment, etc. This makes them binding.



WHEN JUDGING the role of the Labour Court, it is important to remember the circumstances in which it was set up. After World War II, the labour movement was bitterly divided into two rival Congresses, the Congress of Irish Unions and the Irish Trade Unions Congress. The C.I.U. was nationalist, anti-communist (even accusing the I.T.U.C. of being communist) conservative. It was dominated by the I.T.G.W.U.

Faced with this weak and divided trade union movement Lemass was able to replace the wartime Wages Standstill Order with the Industrial Relations Act of 1946. The idea was to channel disputes into the Court to have them fixed there by right wing union leaders mindful of the "national interest" — the bosses' interest.



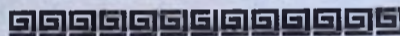
Right: Michael O'Leary, in whose offices (far right) the Labour Court is, so that he can protect its neutrality at first hand.



It is sad to record just how successful the move was. The union leaders co-operated in running the capitalist economy, while half a million people emigrated in the fifteen years after the war, and the unemployed took to the streets. When the economy turned upwards in the 1960's, workers demanded a bigger share, and there were more strikes. The Fianna Fail government reacted — in part to this and in part to other factors, by setting up the Department of Labour in 1966. The first Minister, Paddy Hillery — now taking the worker's side, he says, in Europe — immediately suggested the Labour Court should become a court of final appeal, which would mean that Labour Court recommendations would have to be accepted.

That suggestion was rejected, but the government continued to woo the union leaders to take responsibility for running their system. This culminated in the signing of the first National Wage Agreement in 1970.

The National Agreements have increased the role of the Labour Court. Anomaly claims, disputes over conditions, productivity agreements, incentive payment schemes, and flexibility agreements, come before it, if both parties agree.



WHAT CAN WE conclude about the Labour Court? Obviously it is biased in favour of the ruling class. It is undemocratic, with equal representation for employers and workers although there are only a few thousand employers, and nearly one million workers in the country.

It is a slow-moving device for settling disputes, a talking shop which removes disputes from the work-place, where the workers concerned can more easily affect the outcome. Because it pretends to be impartial, and because it delays action, it serves to put dampers on worker's militancy and to confuse them. There is an enormous social pressure, strengthened by the press and TV, for workers to recognise the Court as impartial, and thus to isolate themselves if they refuse to let their case go there, or to conciliation.

Exceptionally good negotiators may make marginal gains for the workers they represent in the Labour Court. They need to have well argued and well documented submissions, unfortunately all too rare, because of the lack of research service in the Irish trade union movement. If your case has to go to the Labour Court — that is if you have not got the industrial and bargaining strength to win your claims more directly, make sure your official digs out all the relevant facts and details.

In spite of all the pressure to take disputes to the Labour Court, and in spite of the National Agreements which add to that pressure, some groups of workers have been able in the last few years to get settlements outside of this apparatus over and above the terms of the National Agreements. They were prepared to use their power.

Industrial relations depend in the final analysis on that power, on brute force. Even the 'imperial' Labour Court has to be aware of that. It cannot but have been impressed by having to meet by candlelight during the ESB engineer's strike. With enough industrial strength — depending on the position within the economy and on organisation — the strongest can stay outside the Labour Court.

The fact that so many cases go automatically to the Labour Court or conciliation machinery reflects the weakness and the fragmentation of the Irish labour movement. It must be seen as a sophisticated tool of the bosses — a dangerous trap. Before any steward of official lets a case go to the Labour Court they should let the workers concerned know that their claims may yet need to be backed up by industrial action. Then the illusions about impartiality and the need to await politely the words of wisdom from above, might begin to be broken down — and a basis for strong trade unionism laid down again.

Some differences (FIGHT BACK / from page 1)

Unhappily, at that conference, there were some present who did not see it that way at all. They argued that acceptance of the agreement would mean that the shop stewards' campaign had failed, that it was more important to work inside the individual unions than "outside" in the shop stewards committee, and therefore the committee should be dissolved. Their proposal was clearly defeated (3-to-1).

In fact the people who put it forward had played little or no part in building up the committee in the first place. Many of them were attending their first meeting ever of the shop stewards. Others had joined the committee in the previous week or two. They were for the most part, members and supporters of the Socialist Party of Ireland (S.P.I.) and Official Sinn Fein.

It seems they had met before the conference to plan the end of the committee. They used the tricks

of trade union bureaucracy, waving around official credentials, saying these were more important than the active support of workers a steward represents. They attacked the committee because it is not entirely composed of shop stewards, and brought along students, unemployed, and inactive union members to vote for their proposals.

We can expect differences between various views in the working class movement, but these are not the methods to argue them out.

The major distortion these people made of the committee's work was to say that it was outside the trade union movement, and to suggest that it was contradictory to work inside it. Of course, that depends a little on what you mean by work inside the trade union movement. If you mean quietly getting people elected to positions, and winning over a few full-time officials, without ever publicly putting forward your policies,

then there might be a contradiction.

In fact, the coming together of shop stewards in the Dublin Shop Stewards Committee has brought together people in the same trade and same union who had not met before, and who have got from the committee the encouragement to organise for militant policies in their own particular field. The formation of the shop stewards committee has also given them the chance to exchange views with workers from many different backgrounds, and an experience of solidarity — so important at a time when the bosses and the union leaders seem to be doing everything they can to break it down.

We in the Socialist Workers Movement, who have played an active part in the Dublin Shop Stewards Committee, and who have initiated the efforts to get similar committees going in other towns, are convinced that the work to undermine the National Agreements and the policies

which have led to them, must go on both within individual unions and across the unions.

The demands put forward by Dublin Shop Stewards Committee provide a basis for groups to be formed within the different unions to organise the rank and file discontent that so obviously exists, and which keeps bursting out in an unorganised way. The time is NOW to set up these groups and start producing bulletins for members of the various unions to keep them informed about what's going on — because the union leaders won't do it.

The National Agreement will not get a smooth ride — mainly because the rises will not be delivered to our doors automatically. We are not entering the "era of industrial peace" which so many union leaders are looking forward to. That's not possible while workers are still exploited and oppressed. We need the solidarity

of ideas and action which the local shop stewards committees can give. It is some guarantee, too, against adventurist breakaway action, to which some people might understandably be tempted.

The acceptance of the National Wage Agreement is a defeat. There's no question about that. But it's one which we can learn, if we want to. And the main lesson is this: We will continue to be pushed around, we will continue to face bribery and thuggery from our own union officials UNLESS we are firm and organised in an effort to change the policies and push forward for a working class movement that is militantly committed to the interests of all workers, and totally independent of the influence of people who want to shore up the bosses' system.

That is necessary not only if we are to defend our living standards, and our unions against further encroachment, but also if we are to push forward the fight for a different system, one where the workers are in control — socialism.

MUSIC THE BOSSES LOVE

THE VINCENT FRANCIS jeans factory in Shantalla, Galway, is named after the two sons of its last manager. Not for the first time in the last couple of years, it has just changed hands. But with all the changes in management, the working conditions are just as bad as ever. There's a chance of change, however - the workers' have recently got organised in a union.

The canteen is dirty, and the food is terrible. The machinery old and out-of-date. The factory fills with dust when it's hosed down. The women workers get covered in the dye used in the making of the cloth, and they are not given overalls.

Management have refused demands for five minutes washing time at the end of the day. Work from 8.01 to 5.30 is strictly enforced. The bus taking workers home leaves promptly at 5.30 so that people have to return home covered in the filth from the cloth dyes.

None of this is surprising in a factory where all the emphasis is on production. If you are a mere three minutes late, your clock card is taken up to the manager's

office, and you are dragged to give an account of yourself - almost like being back at school.

There is a charge-hand to every ten workers (most of them women), and the foreman keeps up a constant pressure on all the workers to increase the output. Charge-hands go looking for people in the toilets, banging on the doors if they have been too long.

There's "music while you work" to calm the nerves after all this. But the music the management want to hear is the music they want the workers to make - "Make the machines sing" were the words of one of the managers, when he told the women what they would have to do to earn bonus.

Management also try to entice more out of the workers with 'prizes'. The person to think of the best name for a new brand gets the prize of a record. The best time-keeper gets the same prize. Like we said, it's like being back at school.

As soon as the management heard of the move to get the union started in the

factory they set up a works committee and selected their own people for it.

The union certainly has plenty of work on its hands. They must demand that shop stewards and workers have the right to discuss problems on the job. At the moment, a worker can't leave the job to talk to another without getting sent back straight away. The union will have to fight for better conditions, adequate washing time, and big flat rate increases across the board.

There's no sign of these changes coming without a fight. Indeed, within weeks of the Guinness & Mahon take-over, time and motion men were brought in, to see if they push up productivity even more. After a couple of weeks of the men in white coats standing over the production workers with stop watches, 21 workers got letters through the post telling them they were sacked. No reason was given.

Some of the workers went to see the branch official of the ITGWU who informed them that they weren't long enough in the union for him to do

anything about the redundancies. The union official did nothing - but the women workers were not held back by that. They have now turned Vincent Francis into a closed shop; every worker is a union member.

INCREASE PROFITS

The Guinness & Mahon crowd have shown their teeth. They are quite willing to cut workers' living standards and jobs to increase profits. If they get away with it, the Vincent Francis workers could find themselves working under a productivity deal, which will cut back the jobs further. That must be fought now. The union organisation on the job must be built up, so that they can tell the official what to do, and force him to do it if necessary

Galway Branch S.W.M. recently distributed the first issue of a Factory Bulletin at Vincent Francis.

SHARKS DOGS AND TAILS

A GROUP of union officials went out shark-fishing in a boat at Ballybunion during last year's ITGWU Annual Conference. They caught nothing, but came back happy all the same, a fact which may have had something to do with the number of empty whiskey bottles washed up on the west coast over the next few days. Locals were heard to remark that there were more sharks in the boat than in the water.

The tales of fun and games in Ballybunion that came out of that conference are legion, but none of them are noted in the ITGWU Annual Report published recently. Just the bare facts and the boring speeches. It is useful, however, to have down in black and white the two-faced lying and the bland hypocrisy.

Would you believe what Fintan Kennedy said last June? "A wage policy on its own, even if we have a high measure of price control, does not make sound economic sense." Why then did he try so hard to push the National Wage Agreement through? Joe Meehan (Belfast Branch Secretary) can answer that one for you. While warning us that Cosgrave would not hesitate to pass laws to hold down wages he added this revealing comment: "I don't think (Cosgrave) would have very much doubt about what to do if we in the Trade Union movement don't do it ourselves." In other words, if the Trade Union leaders don't keep the workers in line, Cosgrave will have to do it himself. While THE WORKER has often accused union leaders of acting as policemen for the capitalists it's unusual to see one of the cops spell it out so clearly.

The report also shows how the union's National Executive got six resolutions on the National Wage Agreement virtually off the agenda by having one of their own resolutions passed on a National Economic Council. A handful of top officials apparently have more power than the entire membership of six branches. Some democracy.

It was, as one delegate said, the case that "the tail wags the dog, and a situation may develop where the Executive impose their views on an involuntary membership."

One of the ideas which decades of leaders of the ITGWU have been responsible for fostering in the working class movement is nationalism - local capitalism in preference to foreign. Those ideas were echoed by one delegate who having spoken of price control then went on to demand that "foreign-based exploiters be kicked out" and the economy placed in the hands of "the people who properly own it, namely the Irish employer." For "Irish employer" read home-based exploiter.

Undoubtedly the star turn at the Conference was dashing young Michael O'Leary who labelled opposition to a National Agreement as "the demagoguery of instant solutions or the iconoclasm of negative attitudes." Michael has been trying hard since then to trump that one. He went on, however, to squeeze James Connolly's name five times into two sentences - and this in a speech in favour of National Agreements!

ITGWU Conferences seem to be the favourite place for abusing the memory of that great trade unionist and revolutionary - a man who all his life fought against the type of bureaucrats who now sprinkle his name through their speeches like holy water, and who by their present behaviour insult his name and his contribution to the Irish working class movement.

Union conferences will continue to be the scene for this kind of thing, for double-dealing and manoeuvring until such time as there is a radical re-structuring of our unions. This can, and must, be carried out by the rank and file members organised into shop stewards committees and fractions within the unions with a clear set of goals.

The tail may be wagging the dog now, but, as the man said, if your tail offends you, cut it off.

FLEECING THE WORKERS

THE STRIKE by women hairdressers at 'Her Hair' and 'Take 5' saloons in Paul Street, Cork, has been going on since the third week of January. The owners, Mr. and Mrs. O'Connor, sacked the workers because they joined a union, and now seem prepared to let the strike carry on, leaving the business closed, until such time as they can take on non-union labour again.

The union had originally negotiated with Mr. O'Connor to let the union represent the workers. But when Mrs. O'Connor returned from holidays she announced that she had not been party to the agreement, and was therefore not bound by it. The workers resumed the strike they had started, and stopped.

O'Connor's is little different from any of the hairdressing saloons in Cork. The training period in these shops varies between one and four years. Some of the shops extract a sum of money from the trainees in return for training them quickly. They are paid £2 a week during the training period, but all the training they get in some places is shampooing.

Henri Michael of Patrick St. owned by Mrs. Reynolds, promises to train women in 10 months and demand £100 for the training. The women have promises of £20 a week and their £100 refunded held out in front of them when they complete their training. Many of them, however, are fired a month or so before the end of the training period, and so lose all.

Some of the more fancy shops like to send trainees to England or the Continent - expenses paid by the trainees, of course.

For those who do complete the training, there is nothing but slave labour ahead. Wages are around £12-£16 a week for the women, who work as much as 50 hours a week. On Fridays and Saturdays they often get no time off for lunch, and work through to 7.30 or 8 o'clock.

It is not too surprising, then, that the workers at O'Connor's saloons took the step of organising themselves. Many more need to take that step. United, they can force changes. Up to now the union officials have shown little interest. They claim that the majority of women finishing their training set up on their own and are no longer interested in being union members. In fact, the number who do this is small, and the FUE are making it more and more difficult by laying down more stringent requirements.

The hairdressers who have now joined unions will have to keep up pressure on the officials to recruit more members and organise a fight for better working conditions. Above all, they must put pressure on them to keep up the strike at O'Connors and to bring in more people on it, because it concerns all hairdressers.

The strike ended when O'Connors pulled out. The girls have kept their union membership and are virtually running the saloons for a new owner with no experience in hairdressing.

increase their output to make up for the smaller numbers. For this they accepted a miserable £2.60 rise. The way was opened for even worse.

Waterford has been hard-hit by redundancies in recent times - most recently 80 jobs lost with the closure of the American-owned Torsion Balance. It is hard to understand why the Tyresoles works committee did not demand the replacement of the men who had left, and even more difficult to understand why they agreed to increase output.

Their reason for accepting such a small increase on the basic wage may be that there is plenty of overtime. But nothing is calculated better to make the unemployed feel demoralised and cut off from fellow-workers, than for them to see others working 50 and 60 hours a week.

The Tyresoles workers have taken a bum deal. And it could have been avoided. They should have got into contact with other Dunlop workers to compare rates, conditions, etc. They should have looked for a big increase on the basic rate, and not leave men depending on overtime for decent earnings. And they should have looked for more jobs. Perhaps if the committee had been reporting back to the shop-floor more efficiently, some of these things might have been won.

The management must be congratulating themselves that they have had such an easy time with the union. The experience shows once again the urgent need for strong shop-floor organisation and for links between shop-floor representatives in a National Dunlop Liaison Committee.

J. C.



STUDENT GRANTS CAMPAIGN

IN THIS society, education is a privilege, not a right. It is not seen as a social need, as it should be. In Ireland in particular, working class youth are virtually excluded from higher education, and most of all from the universities.

Recently, students have been on the streets in big numbers to demand a comprehensive grant scheme. But how would that change the class bias of third level education? In isolation, it would not. That could only be achieved by a radical re-structuring of primary and secondary education where the real anti-working class bias begins.

The introduction of a grants scheme would certainly be a start, and the demand has to be supported. Many students do see that it is not enough in itself, though the Minister for Education, Dick Burke, would have us believe otherwise when he attempts to discredit those students who are demanding grants.

Students are attempting to end the present discrimination against the working class in higher education, and are demanding that education be open to all, and not just the sons and daughters of the rich.

When Burke says that the introduction of a grants scheme would mean increased taxation for the already over-taxed working class who subsidise education to a far greater extent than they participate in it, he is right. But then is that what students want? The answer is a firm NO. Students are rejecting the basis of the present tax system and demanding that the money comes from the 5% who already won over 70% of the wealth in this country. That is not - as we know too well - the working class.

The struggle of students for a decent standard of living is not an isolated struggle. The whole working class is having to defend itself against

attacks on their standard of living. And there is a growing awareness among students of the injustices and of the exploitative nature of the present system.

It is essential that the student's struggle should not develop independently of the working class's organisations, the trade unions, and ultimately the revolutionary organisation of the working class which we are trying to build. Then we may see the day when, as Matt Merrigan put it, the universities become the workshops of socialism.

R. McD.

AT A MASS MEETING last month students in Waterford Regional Technical College voted overwhelmingly to occupy the building for two days as part of the U.S.I. Grants Campaign. They organised discussions and distributed leaflets to the public to explain the issues involved. A total of 1000 students - full-time, part-time and apprentices - were affected.

They are demanding a realistic grant which would cater adequately for the needs of all third-level students. Paddy McHugh - President of the Student Council, told THE WORKER "More money would be available for education if the government nationalised the mines and ceased to squander resources on defence."

Waterford students want democratic representation on the college board of management as well as proper recreational facilities. They are fed up with an education that gears them only to be efficient cogs in the wheels of industry.

DUNLOP BUM DEAL

THE Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union (ATGWU) recently signed a productivity deal with management for the workers at the Tyresoles factory in Waterford, a factory in the Irish Dunlop group. Nothing strange about that, you say - especially when you remember that the ATGWU signed the very first productivity deal in this country seven or eight years ago.

The union is supposed to have three conditions for accepting a productivity deal:

1. That it results in no redundancies;
2. That the workers get a minimum crease of 33 1/3rd% from the deal
3. That there be no worsening in the conditions of employment.

If the works committee were not aware of this union policy, then it was the job of the Branch Secretary to inform them. He obviously did not do this because in the case of Tyresoles none of these conditions was met.

In the weeks before the deal was concluded, about ten men left the job. The remaining 70 workers agreed to

UNION ACTIVISTS UNDER ATTACK

Waterford Glass Strike

THE FIRST full-scale strike at Waterford Glass in the company's 25-year history brought out 2000 workers in Waterford and Dungarvan for a week last month.

It was a test of the union organisation which has been developed throughout all sections of the factory in the last couple of years – and of the solidarity between these sections, between skilled and general workers, between male and female.

Indeed, management may have been quite deliberately testing that strength and solidarity, because it is an obstacle to their efforts to push up productivity and profits.

The shop-floor organisation got through the test, and the solidarity was shown clearly in the successful mass picket and in the support for the strikers from sections not directly involved. However, both still face attack not only from management directly but also from the elitist attitudes of some of the craftsmen.

Here, TOM HOGAN and DECLAN CHEASTY, shop stewards and members of the union Branch Committee, detail how the dispute developed.

THE DISPUTE arose from a grievance of the Lehr-men, who take glass out of an oven (Lehr) beside the blowing room, and who had been complaining about the lack of heating in their part of the factory since early last year. Management turned away all representations and demands. They even used the three-day working week in Britain as an excuse for not getting the necessary heating equipment.

ULTIMATUM

In February the workers concerned gave management an ultimatum to implement recommendations which they themselves had made to alleviate the bad conditions. But management only responded in a very half-hearted manner, and at 10.30 a.m. on Thursday, 7th February, the men stopped work.

Management got the windows in the area beside the Lehrs closed. But this immediately made conditions for workers in the blowing room where there are several large furnaces, unbearable. The blowers stopped work – and got the windows opened again.

The Lehr-men resumed their stoppage and floor managers were moved in to do their jobs. The five Lehr-men concerned were sent home – suspended without pay. The other Lehr-men struck in protest at this action.

Within minutes over 700 people were involved, blowers, Lehr-men, quality control and the glass-finishing sections. Management revealed part of their purpose when they said there were too many unofficial stoppages (there had been two in the cutting department in the previous two weeks), and they were determined to put a stop to it once and for all.

When shop stewards from the whole factory met the management, they were told that there would be no negotiation on the Lehr-men's grievance. However, they forced management to concede payment to the others for the hours not worked – which they had previously refused to do. The Lehr-men decided on strike action for the following day. At meetings on the job and in the union hall they got the support of all craft and general sections.

On Friday, 8th February, pickets were placed on all entrances and by 1 o'clock, 1700 were out on strike in support of the

men in dispute. The strike was 100% effective in the factory – one of the largest in the 26 Counties.

Over 1500 people attended a mass meeting that morning where the Lehr-men's dispute was fully explained. Support came too, from the maintenance workers, (members of NEETU and ETU), and from clerical and supervisory members of the main union, ATGWU. Workers at Dungarvan Crystal, a subsidiary of Waterford Glass, promised strike action on the Monday in support of their Waterford colleagues.

All supplies to the factory were cut off, including all supplies which are essential to keep the furnaces going. At one point the Managing Director, Noel Griffin, appeared at the picket line to plead with a driver to bring in oil supplies. He was told that if he wanted oil he would have to bring it in in buckets.

Only one group of workers passed the pickets that day – the office workers at the £1 million office-block near the factory, who are not members of any union. Over the weekend repeated appeals were made to them by the action committee, composed of branch representatives and shop stewards not to pass pickets. The appeal was supported by the Chairman of the Office Association, who had decided to join the union since the strike began.

MASS PICKET

To press the point with the office workers a mass picket was organised for all office entrances on the Monday morning. Between 350 and 400 workers manned the pickets that morning, while a couple of dozen Gardai looked on helplessly, unable to enforce picket regulations. Faced with this effective picket, which meant that the Sales Director Con Dooley could only get in with police protection, management decided to send home the remaining office workers on full pay, in order to prevent further 'disturbances'.

They then contacted the union District Secretary, Matt Merrigan, saying the situation had got out of control and looking for a meeting with full-time officers of the union. Merrigan agreed to this without any reference to the strikers. However, the local Branch Secretary, Con Donovan, knew better the militancy of the workers and persuaded management and Merrigan to have the elected Negotiating Committee in on the meeting.

Here it became fully apparent what the management's real interest was. Without much fight they agreed to make an ex-gratia payment to the men in dispute, but placed a whole string of other conditions. As far as they were concerned, 'the union' (meaning the full-time officials) was no longer in control of the membership; the grievance procedure was not being properly observed; there was too much unofficial action on the shop floor. They wanted the union to give a guarantee there would be no further unofficial stoppages, and they wanted to draw up a new agreement of procedure with the union which would be registered with the Labour Court and therefore legally binding.

REJECTED

The Negotiating Committee rejected these conditions, and forced management to concede a number of points as a basis for a return to work: an ex-gratia payment for the men in dispute; a day's wages for the blowers who, due to the working methods, would not be able to start on the same day as everyone else; recognition of new union members in the office; no victimisation of anyone in connection with the dispute; provision of adequate heating arrangements. That was the basis on which the strike was ended.

The determination and solidarity of the workers had forced management to retreat. They had not realised just how strong the chain of solidarity built up link by link by the union activists – now being called "extremists" was. It had become blatantly obvious that they want a new procedural agreement – and of course, they will work to get one.

DEFEND SHOP STEWARDS

Rights which have been won in the last few years must not be sold or given away. The right to take official or unofficial action to protect conditions must not be abandoned. The whole factory will have to defend the shop steward's freedom to operate on the shop floor. The solidarity which was demonstrated in the strike can, and must,



Above: Noel Griffin, Managing Director, Waterford Glass. Right: 'O Sole Mio'—Matt Merrigan, ATGWU District Secretary, who wanted to sing solo.



be built on to make sure the strength of the better organised helps everybody towards better pay and conditions. No doubt the management will now come with a 'poor mouth' attitude because for the first time in many years they have not been able to get the usual enormous increases on profits. That should not hold anybody back for pushing to improve conditions.

Since the strike ended with a defeat for management, the story has been going around the factory and the town that it had been brought about by left-wing members of the Branch Committee, who were using the situation to further their own political ends. The story was no doubt inspired by management.

and has been propagated by a small elitist group in the cutting department – people who not so long ago were preventing apprentices exercise full union rights.

The answer to this story must come loud and clear from all the rank and file members of the union – that the people who are now being called militants, communists, extremists, and so on, in an attempt to discredit them, are the people who over the past couple of years have built up the union organisation which is the only defence for all the workers against management's attempts to screw more out of every one of them. The possibilities for extending and strengthening that organisation have been seen clearly in the recent strike.

Review

McCann's book must

I COULD, I suppose, start by recalling how I first met Eamonn McCann at a London Trades Council demonstration against the Heath Government's Industrial Relations Bill in December 1970. That would be in the style of the first part of his excellent book. There, he sometimes reduces, sometimes amplifies, the gigantic events of the past few years in the North to anecdotes, personalities, curious incidents.

IRRITATING

I have to admit I occasionally found this irritating – perhaps over-anxious that the orthodoxy of a revolutionary position should be clearly spelt out. The anxiety was misplaced. A revolutionary perspective on the Northern events and on Irish society – in fact, the revolutionary Marxist perspective – emerges quite unambiguously from the book as a whole.

This book is a must for every socialist – and for a good many others who claim to know, and to have fundamental objections to, the Marxist standpoint, but have never confronted it, argument by argument. Not only is it by far the best thing to be written about the current crisis in Ireland, and the background to it,

but it contains one of the most impressive and most readable historical analyses of any society from a working class viewpoint that I can remember reading in recent years.

The apparent triviality of many of the incidents McCann relates is deceptive. They do illuminate the bigger social and political happenings. Although the question is never posed in such a pompous fashion McCann allows us to see what the state of consciousness was of the working class people of the Bogside. That is an enormously important factor not only to judge the success of ruling class political manoeuvres but also to point the way for revolutionary socialists. The people who say that McCann is an "instant revolutionary" – and if they have not yet gone into print to say it, they will be rushing to do so – have got to show that they have a more adequate appreciation of the needs of the working class and of the consciousness of the working class. In his account of the "stages theory" which have guided, or misguided, the Official Republican movement over the past couple of years, McCann shows how the notion itself is logically incoherent and remote from the real awareness of the people who are supposed to be led to revolution by it.

There is one way however, in which McCann's view through-the-eyes-of-a-Bogside limits the perspective. This relates to the most crucial weakness of the book. The Bogside is not a coherent section of a coherent industrial working class. A

very large proportion of them are unemployed. Those that work change jobs frequently, are in unskilled work, or in declining industries. However fervent their commitment to "getting the Brits out", their social situation limits the scope of their vision.

Not being at the centre, or the head, of the industrial working class, it is more difficult for them to envisage the kind of direct worker's action which could bring the system to a halt, and which could overturn the existing relations of power and ownership. They do not in their majority have direct ties with those workers most strongly organised in industry and in their unions. So it may be difficult for them to conceive of a 32-County working class strategy based on the power of workers in the work-place. From their point of view unemployment and housing must seem the most important issues.

McCann reflects that situation in the final part of his book where he sketches the way forward from the present crisis in his historical account of the Southern state, and to a lesser extent in his account of 50 years of the Orange state. Although he speaks about class struggle and a movement based on the working class, he does not make this struggle come alive as effectively as the recent events in the Northern struggle. He does not give us any account of the major problems facing the working class in its day-to-day struggles or of how these can be raised to questions of "who rules?".

SWM

I wish to have further details of the Socialist Workers' Movement

NAME _____

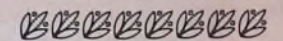
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NORTHERN EXECUTIVE CAN'T MEET PROMISES

SDLP STRIKE BREAKERS



OVER HALF of the people who voted in the North in the Westminster elections voted for right-wing loyalists. That is how unstable the Sunningdale solution is — for it was designed to bring together the Catholic middle class and the 'moderate' Unionists. In the election, Faulkner's supporters could not get one single seat, and his allies in the SDLP only got one. This puts both of these parties in a very delicate position. The SDLP built up their support on the basis of promises to re-dress Catholic grievances, being peace and eventually re-unite the country through the Council of Ireland. Faulkner, on the other hand, had promised there would be no "sell-out to republicanism". British imperialism cannot provide the goods the SDLP has promised without endangering Faulkner. The more they try to keep in with the hard-liners by maintaining internment and repression, the more they undermine the SDLP.

by an alliance between anti-imperialists and right-wing loyalists. It is quite possible that the situation could develop where the British ruling class is forced to shelve its present plans either through a big loyalist victory in Assembly elections or through loyalists violence on the streets if no election is called. That in itself would not be a victory for those of us who opposed Sunningdale from the point of view of the fight against imperialism and capitalism. The British Government could fall back on some version of the 'Boal Plan'. If they do pull out in favour of some federal solution it will only be under conditions where there is no threat to their vast economic interests here. The Provisionals are helping nobody by campaigning for a "federal Ireland" without explaining any of these dangers. If for any reason Sunningdale had to be re-negotiated, there is no guarantee that the 'respectable' politicians would continue to be as hostile to the Boal plan as they are now.

It is the job of all of us who see that British imperialism is more than troops and political administrators to dispel any illusions there may be in the Boal plan. Such a plan can only serve to cement sectarian divisions, maintain repression and exploitation, and keep British imperialism in control.

There is another thing that is undermining the attempt to get stable imperialist control through a middle class coalition in the North. That is the state of the economy. The Executive has made lavish promises to "achieve rising standards of living, sustained full employment and the greatest possible measure of equality of opportunity and social and economic justice."

Many working class Catholics obviously have accepted those promises at face value. They have supported the SDLP in the belief that they can meet the promises. There has been talk of a "revolution" in house building and "the best social services in Europe".

The major reason why the Executive cannot hope to fulfill its promises in this area is the difficulties which British

capitalism now faces. The economy is moving into a serious recession. The Tory government made big cut-backs in public spending; it's doubtful whether Labour can afford to restore these. In any case, we can "look forward" to increases in unemployment and factory closures. The whole of Ireland will be affected by this. The SDLP is not going to be in a position to reform capitalism in the Six Counties.

The Executive aims to attract foreign investment on the same scale as before, in spite of the fact that it also aims to achieve parity in wages with Britain. In the past, the low wage-rates have been a major incentive for outside investors, so the Executive's aims are contradictory. If there is a cut-back in public expenditure this will also hit the grants available to investors.

The Assembly's promises are like castles built on sand — and the tide is coming in relentlessly.

The SDLP have shown themselves to be partly aware of these problems, having skilfully avoided introducing the three-day working week in the North. One of the publicly stated reasons for this was that it would result in increased numbers of discontented workers on the streets, further undermining stability.

CRUMBLING CAPITALISM

The SDLP are determined to bolster up crumbling capitalism. They will have to find ways of justifying attacks on workers' living standards, and postponing the grandiose schemes for "a better tomorrow". The illusion that the SDLP can ever be won to our side must be exposed, and their every anti-working class move opposed vigorously.

The trade union leadership has given its support to the Assembly-Sunningdale package and will obviously do nothing to threaten its stability. Unless there is serious organised rank and file opposition they will be prepared to sacrifice workers' living standards at the altar of stability and peace.

Workers in the South have shown the way forward here by setting up Shop Stewards Committees against the wage agreements. In the North there is a crying need for organisation on the same lines, drawing in workers from all sections of industry, from all unions, and expressing rank and file discontent within the working class movement.

Nobody who fails to take account of the attacks on workers' living standards can ever hope to contribute towards working class unity. "Loyalist" workers will suffer as much as Catholic workers. The right-wing loyalists leaders have nothing to offer on this score. Through economic struggles Protestant workers will eventually confront the power of British imperialism. In the past they have usually backed down rather than take action that might appear to play into the hands of 'republicans' by weakening the Northern state.

ALTERNATIVE

It is the task of socialists to fight for a clear understanding of the issues and to press forward the socialist alternative. Practical links with workers in struggle in the South can help this greatly. The fight against the state in the Six Counties can have some effect of winning loyalist workers away from supporting imperialism. But only a 32-County struggle, firmly based on the working class, can consolidate any success.

Socialists must aim at involving Protestant workers in the struggle against imperialism — the Catholic workers cannot defeat it on their own. That depends on turning the anti-imperialist struggle into one against capitalism. And that is why a strong working class movement in the South, building links to the North, is essential to the development of the fight against repression and imperialism.

The SDLP's share of the poll — over 156,000 votes — suggests that their supporters are still prepared to believe that a lot of the promises can be met. So far the SDLP have maintained that the only reason why repression has not ended is the continuation of the Provisional IRA's campaign. This excuse for inaction must be wearing pretty thin in the light of the loyalist victory. Repression continues so as to keep Faulkner in favour with the remaining Unionists and to prevent any further desertions to the far right. The SDLP knows that any concessions on internment would weaken their partners in power. So they do nothing, and blame those who continue to struggle against imperialism, for the continuation of repression.

The first political illusion that has to be dealt with is the notion that Sunningdale and all that it means can be beaten

be read

In particular — and this would be a criticism of McCann's overall viewpoint — he does not seem to see the central importance of the Southern working class's role. He talks of how Cosgrave (the older one) and De Valera helped buttress the Northern state, of how all the real evidence of 'Rome Rule' in the South, and the poor living and working conditions fanned Protestant mistrust, and how it is necessary to confront the power of the Catholic Church. But nothing can be confronted at all, and the mistrust cannot be counteracted, unless it is on the basis of working class politics, the working class's struggle to cut back exploitation, improve its living standards and develop its political organisation to the point where it can take power.

The Southern state is in many ways the core of the British imperialist strategy for Ireland. The possibilities of building the kind of revolutionary movement which McCann sees the need for are greater in the South than in the North. After the defeats of the last year or two in the North it is difficult, to say the least, to see the revolution developing according to McCann's pattern: its centre in the North, and an extension to the South. This at least is how he recently represented it on RTE.

This criticism is made in the spirit in which McCann makes his own "contribution". He makes it unsafely and openly without disguising the mistakes he thinks he and others with him made. I will leave



1968: Civil Rights demonstration at The Diamond, Derry.

to other people more interested in such sterile exercises the counting up of other mistakes they made, or what they said on this or that occasion.

McCann's contribution, it must be said, is also highly original. There are, it is true, parts of the historical analysis which are known, though not necessarily understood, in left wing circles. Some of the material has been the subject of articles in papers circulated to a couple of hundred readers, or speeches to meetings of a

couple of dozen. But nobody has dared string it all together, and indeed much of it has never been committed to paper in any form before.

One thing he brings out especially clearly, and that it is worth drawing attention to, is the extent to which official anti-Catholicism in the North was intended to bind Protestant workers to the state — as much if not more, as it was intended to keep the Catholics down. It is an explanation in class terms, and

one that it is wholly adequate to deal with the known facts. In this, and in other points, McCann shows well how nationalist mythology, as he appropriately calls it, cemented the barbaric construction of Orangeism. But while he pursues this line rigorously, indeed ruthlessly, he nowhere falls into the trap of some people who are so pleased with themselves for having escaped the influence of that mythology that they make it into the main enemy and make of the separation of church and state in the South the main immediate target in a so-called, 'communist' strategy.

If Eamonn McCann never made another contribution to the socialist movement in this country he would still have done it an important service. However, he can make a more lasting contribution to the building of a "mass, revolutionary Marxist party" by joining those of us who have set ourselves that objective with much the same understanding of the task as he has. Now that McCann has committed himself to paper more fully than previously, he will find it difficult to flit from 'contact' to 'contact' in different organisations. The serious patient work he advocates is being done.

I have rarely wanted to recommend a book so wholeheartedly as this one. I very often feel that books are twice the length they need to be. Here is one where there is hardly a word wasted. It must be read and re-read to get the full value from it. It comes on the "bookless" Irish left like the formation of a revolutionary party will come on the Irish working class as a big step forward.

WAR AND AN IRISH TOWN. By Eamonn McCann. Penguin Special. 40 Pence.

JOHN HUME, the strike-breaker — that fits everything else we know about the man. When the miners in Britain were considering strike action for their pay claim, Hume was considering ways of keeping up coal supplies in the North with 'black' coal.

Speaking in the Northern Assembly he discussed "whether we could obtain supplies of coal from sources other than the NCB, for example Poland."

"There are difficulties," he went on, "in the organising of such supplies at a time when there is considerable demand." Another difficulty, he explained, was "the solidarity of the international trade union movement which could lead to a reluctance by other coal exporting countries to supply us." Against this, however, he was "encouraging the coal importers to explore other sources of supply and I (Hume) will support them in their search."

Paddy O'Hanlon, "well known for his strong socialist views", according to one paper, weighted in with an extra problem — there might be "solidarity strikes by people on the docks." How could they get around that one, he wondered.

At no point in Hume's or O'Hanlon's speeches was there even the slightest hint that the miners might have a just claim, that their strike should be supported, or that workers elsewhere might be right to take solidarity action.

Four weeks after this 'debate' the 'Irish Times' had this little news item: "Coal — a shipment of 800 tons of coal from Germany arrived in Derry yesterday."

Derry docks have been run down to next-to-nothing over the years, and trade unionism there is weak. The importers must have listened well to Hume's and O'Hanlon's tip-off.

Seeing as "socialist" Poland was mentioned as a possible source of supply, the next question might be: Does "Germany" mean West or the "socialist" East?

NORTHERN JUSTICE

THE SDLP and Faulkner Unionists never tire of telling us that everything has now changed in the North, that the era of 'partnership without conflict' is about to dawn, and the only thing holding it up is the pig-headedness of the republican 'extremists'. But the following examples of 'justice' in the courts of the Six Counties shows that the old corrupt practices which moved so many people into open revolt are still in existence.

At the Belfast City Commission on 4th March Judge Richard Chambers presided over two cases in which two men were charged with possession of arms. The first man, Anthony McKiernan an unemployed labourer, was found guilty of possessing one rifle and 15 rounds of ammunition. McKiernan, a Catholic was sentenced to FIVE YEARS imprisonment.

The second man, Edward Crothers, also an unemployed labourer, was found guilty of possessing one rifle, one shotgun, one pistol and 377 rounds of ammunition. Crothers, a Protestant from the loyalist stronghold of Ballysillan was sentenced to 18 MONTHS.

Chambers also sentenced a young Catholic in Derry to 6 years imprisonment on a charge of causing an explosion. The most serious aspect of the "crime" according to Chamber was that the bomb had caused £32,000 worth of damage. To men like Chambers the savage repression by British imperialism which drives people to fight back for their rights is perfectly honorable and legitimate. But attacks on the property of the class whom Chambers and all his cronies represent in the courts has to be punished with more savage repression.

a book every worker
should have

WORK DANGERS EXPOSED

THIS REVIEW was almost not written at all — I couldn't get my hands on the book for long enough as brothers, sisters, firends and neighbours "borrowed" it to show to work-mates. They all reacted in the same way. After opening the book at random, reading a few bits here and there, they immediately turned to the Index to check on any number of things which were relevant to their own jobs. They usually ended up pretty horrified at what they found out.

This is a book which every worker will find indispensable. Just to list the aspects of our working life which it covers would fill this page. It doesn't confine itself — as employers and governments do in their statistics — to simply the physical hazards, the things we can fall off, or over, the injuries and the diseases. These are all there — and the things like mental stress, disruption of ordinary family and social life and the tiredness that leaves you fit for nothing, other than the daily stint at the work-bench.

Shift-work, for instance, is something any worker will tell you disrupts your

whole life, and has an effect as bad as any physical one. The book has one whole section of *Patterns of Work*, of which shift-work is just one. They say: "in terms of damage to physical, mental, and social well-being, shiftwork is probably the worst of all work patterns." The fact that we have a system which can ignore the workers' health and safety in the drive for increased production and bigger profits is shown very clearly in one example quoted.

Recently, experiments were done to discover how bad was the disturbance to physical and mental performance caused by flying across time-zones in Jumbo-jets. Of course, this is more usually suffered by business executives, wealthy bosses and Government ministers; but on a London-to-San Francisco experiment it took four to six days for people to recover full mental performance after one flight.

As the book points out, this is just a short taste of what it is like to be on shift-work, and that without the drab surroundings and the hardwork.

In fact shift-workers suffer from permanent tiredness, irritability and constipation. More seriously, they are 40% more likely to have nervous disorders, than continuous day workers, and 81% more likely to have peptic symptoms. This section also points out the dangers of piece-work, the Lump, work measurement, automation, and very importantly, productivity deals. One begins to see that even workers who work in clean "safe" jobs, can and do suffer from a system which puts productivity and profits first.

Another section deals with physical hazards, some of which even the workers themselves accept as just an inconvenience, and not very important, like noise. Noise which affects hearing is very common in industry. In the heavily industrialised North of England, for instance, the amplifiers in cinemas are set at a higher level than in the South. Among the things dealt with in other sections are Diseases, Chemical Hazards, Accidents, and a very interesting piece on Statistics.

Even from reading Government Statistics, one gets a horrifying picture, but

the statistics are very misleading, and it is, as they say, sometimes hard to believe that the system is not designed to conceal the truth. Certainly, one has to search hard for facts and figures among numerous different Reports. Even then, factory owners for example, report only about 60% of the injuries they are required to report, and as far as diseases are concerned they are only required to report "notifiable" diseases. This distorts figures enormously, because in England for instance, pneumoconiosis, the most important industrial disease, is not a notifiable disease at all and so no figures are included. (Pneumoconiosis is the name given to a group of lung diseases caused by dust from coal, asbestos, silica, mould spores, etc.) Facts like these should help workers in deciding that they have nothing in common with the system which cheats them even on matters of health.

It is when one gets down to the detailed facts and figures that as Irish workers we are going to suffer from frustration with the book. There are excellent chapters on *The Legal Machine*, *Safety Law*, and *Winning Damages*, which may not be accurate on details as far as we are concerned. Even so, they are useful to us in the general outline they provide. Irish Safety Law is the same general design as the English; our Factory Inspectorate, Office and Shops Inspectorate, etc. operate in the same way, and, of course, the inadequacies are equally disastrous for us. In any case, it is well to remember one of the main points the book makes — the law, as it stands, is no real safeguard at all for workers.

The very best things about this book are the chapters on "Action" and on "organising". The first of these contains an exhaustive checklist which will make it very easy for each worker or group of workers to pin-point exactly where their

job and work-place falls down on safety.

The chapter on Organising points out ways in which the fight against bad conditions and for health and safety can be successful. How the trade union movement ought to be used, to back the workers in their demands, to help them with information, training etc. What you should demand of your trade union, something more than just winning the best compensation for your injuries after the event. In fact, the point is made that "the offensive against hazards can only be fought and won on the shop floor". The dangers of accepting that your employer is as interested in your health and safety as you are, are obvious, and when conflict arises, "joint" committees which management are not going to fight as hard as your own committee would. Suggestions are made as to how to go about organising a committee and the role of safety stewards. In a last section the demands which workers should bear in mind on this issue are outlined.

Perhaps the best thing to be said about the book has already been said, the reaction of the workers who have read it. All felt it was useful, the general index made it easy to find immediately what was relevant to you, and the demands and suggestions for action after each section helped their own thoughts and what needed to be done. One Shop Steward from W.U.I. came back after a few days with an order for "3 copies, at least".

MARIE McADAM

THE HAZARDS OF WORK: HOW TO FIGHT THEM by Patrick Kinnersly (Pluto Press; Workers' Handbook No. 1) 90p. Copies of the book are available from WORKER BOOK SERVICE, 95 Capel Street, Dublin 1.

WRITE NOW! LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

IN THE widespread distribution of our paper there are bound to be bureaucratic blunders and cases of subscribers who change addresses without telling us. One such case produced the letter below. We print it not at all because we sympathise with the viewpoint it expresses, and not at all because the writer understands our position (which she plainly does not) but because it is a genuine reflection of the confusion which so many people in Britain feel about the situation here. Their confusion and prejudice is being strengthened daily by politicians and press, while the forces acting against it in the British working class movement are, unhappily very weak.

Dear Sir,

Do NOT send your WORKER paper here. The one you sent it to does not live here any more. Also I usually burn them as we have no interest or time for the IRA you write for — they are men of violence and I don't think you are helping anyone with your hatred of British or anyone else.

Your motto is 'Get out British'. Where would your family be? What other country would hand out family allowances and social security to your families who do nothing but preach and practice violence.

I have been reading your 'Provs Fight On', as I am Scots/British and proud of it. The Catholics and Protestants live in peace here — also the Irish Catholics — but you IRA army of murderers like to cause hate between different religions.

One just needs to read and see on TV all the damage, misery and loss of life you have caused — particularly for our soldiers. You are bent on destruction. What good is it causing less work by damaging all the shops — blowing up innocent people and homes? Big heroes sending young child to plant bombs and throw bricks at our soldiers.

You are only making the children grow up murdering, violent men like yourselves and it shocks me to see Irish priests helping. They are no Christians.

We are also working people and have many Catholic friends who think the same. All the money you have spent on guns, bombs and violence. Why don't you give to the poor or build the houses with it? Then you would have some good even if the homes were for Catholics.

Give them money for food and clothes. You even murder your own if they don't practice violence. I don't forget the three young Scots — you dirty cowards.

Anon.
Doncaster,
Yorkshire

Dear Comrade,

I would like to reply to the points raised in a letter in the last edition of THE WORKER with reference to the article on Tanzania (WORKER, No. 18).

The article stated that the so-called socialist government was determined to suppress independent working class activity. Your correspondent regarded this as an oversimplification, and pointed out that the working class revolt against non-socialist managers was "not unconnected with official government policy."

This is true. The ruling party — and the ONLY party — TANU, did encourage some working class action in this area, but they had intended to keep it in check i.e. to ensure that it never became independent. When workers started going outside the established and bureaucratically controlled government structures to press their case, the government came down on them ruthlessly.

Although small in numbers, the Tanzanian working class is a crucial political force. The Nyerere government is determined to prevent it developing its own organisations — hence one state-controlled union, one political party, etc.



The second point raised by your correspondent comes when he says that "the belief that TANU can be turned leftwards is a myth" amounts to "an unqualified assertion". The article did not trace the origins and history of TANU and may not have explained the position sufficiently. TANU is a nationalist party attempting to cut across class lines. It is dominated by the national bourgeoisie who see their role as one of "developing" the country as rapidly as possible.

Such a party could only become socialist if the bulk of its members were expelled, and all its policies overturned. That is not "turning TANU leftwards", that is destroying TANU. It may be that in a country where all opposition parties are banned, revolutionaries would have to work in TANU at some point. But if they aim to 'convert' it to socialism, they are doomed.

All they can do is build support around themselves, with clear and distinct policies, and split away.

The final point raised by your correspondent was that a worker's state in a country like Tanzania would undergo Stalinist degeneration very rapidly because of the under-development of the economy.

If a worker's state were isolated, then this is, of course, possible. Alternatively, the bourgeoisie would regain control. But we do not imagine that socialism can be built in one country — especially a backward one like Tanzania.

The spreading of the revolution internationally is vital for the success of worker's states anywhere. But it is a fact that only the working class can have such an internationalist perspective.

Their coming to power — even in backward countries — can give the prospect of international revolution a boost.

Yours fraternally,
Mike Miller,
Belfast.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

SOCIALIST WORKERS' MOVEMENT

The SOCIALIST WORKERS MOVEMENT is a revolutionary workers' organisation, which aims to organise the working class in the struggle for power and for the overthrow of the existing social order. All its activities, its methods and its internal organisation are designed to achieve this purpose.

The system under which we live, capitalism, is based on production for profit, not for human need. It is driven by the capitalist's need to amass more and more profits. This makes capitalists compete with one another for markets and for political control, both nationally and internationally. The fruit of that competition is seen in war, poverty and crises.

The capitalist class controls this society by its ownership and control of the means of production; that in turn is based on their exploitation of the working class. The capitalist class is a tiny minority governing the lives of the majority, and claiming to have 'democracy' on its side. In Ireland, 7 per cent of the population own 70 per cent of the wealth.

The working class — and only the working class — has the capacity to end exploitation and oppression. In Ireland its confidence and its strength have increased enormously in recent years, and the working class is now the largest social class. What our class lacks, however, is a political leadership with the influence to resist all ruling class pressures on our actions and to point the way clearly towards socialism as the only solution to the working class's problems, and those of any social group oppressed by this system.

A working class organised independently of the middle class in its own fighting organisations in the work-place, and in its own democratically controlled socialist party can create a society based on production for human need. The establishment of a Worker's Republic the necessary goal of the class struggles, would not mean merely state control of investment and of industry, but workers control, from the bottom, of all aspects of society.

That kind of socialist society does not exist anywhere today. The attempts of the Russian working class to build socialism were halted by the failure of their revolution to spread, and by the actions of the Stalinist rulers, who established a new type of society based on exploitation and oppression. We oppose the Moscow regime as we oppose those of Washington and Peking.

Because the capitalist system itself is international, and the world economy is increasingly dominated by a couple of hundred companies, the fight for socialism must be organised on an international basis too. A Workers' Republic in Ireland could not survive without the aid of the British and Continental working classes. In supporting all genuine anti-imperialist struggles, in Ireland or anywhere else, we hold that imperialism and capitalism can only be defeated by world-wide worker's revolution. For imperialism is simply the form which capitalism takes today.

The SOCIALIST WORKERS MOVEMENT fights to unite the working class irrespective of religion and sex in struggles to cut back exploitation and improve living conditions. We fight to make the

workers' organisations, the trade unions, completely independent and democratic in order that they may play an effective part in these struggles. As immediate aims we fight for a minimum wage of £30 for a 35-hour working week, for rank-and-file control of the trade unions, and we oppose all anti-trade union legislation. We oppose redundancy, unemployment and lay-offs.

On the national question, we believe that the present leadership of the anti-imperialist movement has shown itself incapable of maintaining a consistent approach because it is incapable of recognising the class content of the question. The national question can only be solved in the working class's struggle for power, and that can only be won by a united working class. As immediate aims, however, we fight for an end to internment and to repressive legislation North and South, and for the withdrawal of the British Army from Ireland. We support the self-defence of working class areas against military and sectarian attack. We fight for total separation of Church and State.

The SOCIALIST WORKERS MOVEMENT is a democratic centralist organisation open to those who accept its principles and objectives, who work in one of the units of the movement, agree to recognise its discipline and to pay dues. Along with revolutionary organisations in other countries, with whom we have fraternal links, we are striving to build our own organisation to gain such support as to work meaningfully for a revolutionary international of working class parties.

OIL CRISIS BRINGS NO GAIN TO ARAB MASSES

In many peoples' minds it was "the Arabs" who gained from the oil crisis. It is "the Arabs" who opposed Israel in the last Middle East war. But in neither case was the whole population involved in a solid unified way - and contrary to what some people think the Arab countries still have undemocratic class systems.

The increased oil revenues will not be going to the Arab peoples of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Abu Dhabi, etc., but to a tiny minority of the Arab people who rule those countries. In fact, the main gains from the oil crisis were made by the oil companies, whose profits rose by 52% last year.

THE Arab countries are ruled by backward feudal regimes or by capitalist ruling classes who go under the guise of "Arab socialism". They are ruled in the interests of the imperialism of the industrialised nations. In Egypt, the Sadat government has drawn up plans for the thorough redevelopment of the Suez Canal Zone which consists of a \$ 7 billion dollar programme designed to attract Arab and Western capital into Egypt. To encourage foreigners to build hotels, resort complexes and industrial plants, the land will be almost free. Between 1957 and 1969 Nasser received in loans and credit facilities (excluding military credits) 7,825 million Egyptian pounds from Western states and 4829 million Egyptian pounds from Eastern bloc countries.

FAVOURABLE

The political set-up in the oil-producing countries is highly favourable to the oil companies, who made 9000 million dollars out of the Middle-East in fifteen years after World War II. In the late sixties the cost of producing one barrel of crude oil in the U.S. was 1.63 dollars while it cost only 15 cents in the Middle East.

SPANISH WORKERS STRUGGLE

Report from a Spanish
Correspondent

The assassination of Carrero Blanco by the ETA has been recognised by the international working-class and the Spanish working-class as a victory in their struggle. The international bourgeoisie and their Governments could do no more than expressly verbal sympathy with the Franco regime. Carrero Blanco, the man who directed the repressive policies of the regime, with all the tortures, incarcerations and assassinations; the man with the blood of so many Spanish workers and activists on his hands, could hardly be presented as the innocent victim of "terrorism".

However, the liquidation of Carrero Blanco, the change of Government, and the right-wing reaction have all gone without any organised action on the part of the working class, or any of the political groups who claim to represent the class. For this reason it is an opportune moment to examine the state of the Spanish working-class.

When Spanish workers are spoken of outside Spain, it is usually in terms of admiration. The reality is somewhat different. Certainly, in a country without even the vestiges of bourgeois democratic 'liberties', the struggle is difficult in the extreme. In this situation it is true that the number of strikes is very high; strikes which very often end

The minute sheikdoms depended on aid from the oil companies and Britain - which officered their armies and to-day uses the RAF against rebels in Dhofar. In 1958 U.S. marines flew into Lebanon in case the new Iraqi Government nationalised the oilfields.

ROYAL PALACE

The mass of the Arab peoples have gained nothing from oil-revenues and very little from Arab nationalism and the so-called 'revolutions' in Egypt, Iraq and Syria. In Saudi-Arabia £25 million was spent on building a royal palace in the mid fifties while the mass of the people lived below subsistence level. In 1970 only 10,000 boys and 700 girls were getting secondary education within Saudi-Arabia.

The rulers of Saudi-Arabia, Kuwait or Abu Dhabi actually have so much money that it is causing them a problem. Lacking any notion of sharing this wealth - and under capitalist economics it cannot be shared out - they invest it abroad or add to their car fleets. The present wealth of Kuwait, with 700,000 inhabitants, would nearly double the national income of nearby Iraq. Saudi-Arabia's expected



Franco—not long before he goes too.

in imprisonment, almost always with the sacking of the most active workers, and some times with deaths. At present, the Spanish workers have to pay a very high price for even the smallest advance. They fight for economic advances, for security of employment, medical benefits, better working conditions. Issues such as the right to form Trade Unions, the right of free association, a free workers' and revolutionary press, are not taken up directly by the workers. It is difficult to raise these demands, to take up other struggles which require a greater consciousness and a higher level of organisation.

The strikes of recent years show the limits of spontaneous action, how easily it is assimilated by the system, and also the problems of organising on a national basis with a perspective for the struggle.

The only "working-class" party with roots in the whole country is the Communist Party. However, their task,

income for 1980 would nearly double the national incomes of Egypt, Syria and Jordan combined.

All strikes and union organisations are banned in Saudi-Arabia. The religious police still stop women in the streets and order them to lengthen their skirts. It is a criminal offence to possess alcohol and a thief can have his hand cut off.

DISPOSSESSED

The workers and the peasants are equally dispossessed in the other part of the Arab world, the part which has reached the nationalist stage. In 1952, a revolt led by Nasser, overthrew King Farouk in Egypt and established a political programme of social reform, and anti-imperialism. Action against imperialism was inadequate because Nasser could not mobilize the workers and peasants against imperialism. Soon after came the huge loans from the imperialist nations abroad. Egypt has maintained friendship with the U.S. and just re-opened diplomatic relations, despite its war with Israel.

Nasser couldn't mobilize the workers and peasants because his reforms at home left power and ownership untouched. The land reform campaign was limited and in 1952 striking workers were arrested and three of their leaders were hanged. Working class living standards stagnated in the sixties and workers' political organisations were banned. At the end of the sixties the top 3% of the Egyptian population were 'earning' 845 Egyptian pounds each per year, while the industrial workers, who were not the poorest section, were earning 60 Egyptian pounds each per year.

International News



Left: Arab rich enjoy proceeds of oil sales while masses live in hunger. Right: Khaddafi of Libya.



'Revolutions' in Iraq, Algeria and Syria went the same way: Land Reform in Iraq was a total failure and in Syria 50% of the population ended up landless. The establishment of the new independent state of Algeria also brought the smashing of workers' opposition in the trade unions.

The struggle within the Arab world is shown clearly in the treatment of the Palestinian guerrillas by King Hussein of Jordan. The Palestinian Arabs, who were pushed out of their land at the beginning of the Israeli state and whose demands are central to the Arab struggle, had guerrilla camps in Jordan. In September 1970 King Hussein set out to exterminate the guerrilla movement - 5,000 Palestinians were massacred. All the Arab states - except Syria - stood and watched. Only the anger of the people in the streets stopped them.

The social order of the Arab states weaken them in their struggle against Zionism because it makes them unable to exploit the contradictions in Israel society. Israel also is divided between bosses and workers. In fact the wars in the Middle-East have kept the Arab masses behind their kings, sheikhs and military men. The U.S. Secretary of State Kissinger has engineered a phoney peace in the area, with the collaboration of the Arab rulers, in which oil can again flow freely with the new higher prices going to the U.S. oil companies. The Palestinians are still left without a country. The Arab revolution requires the overthrow of the Arab ruling classes as much as the smashing of the Israeli state.

DES DERWIN

PHRC

ST PATRICK'S DAY saw the biggest demonstration in nationalist areas of Belfast for quite some time. The main banners on the march, which came from several points of West Belfast to the Falls Park, were those of the Irish National Foresters. For the rest, there were the usual political banners and pipe and accordion bands. The march was calling for the release of internees, but that would not have been clear to anybody watching it, as there was not a single placard or slogan being carried.

The internees are still inside. The courts are still handing out their discriminatory sentences. The killers - in particular, the army killers - are still on the streets. And the SDLP is not going to be able to do anything about that. A militant mass movement could force changes.

The Political Hostages Release Committee, set up last year, has set itself the task of re-building that mass movement. It is a united front of a number of political organisations, each of them clear that the job will not be done any old worn-out slogans, but requires much more deliberate political work. A conference of the PHRC, held the day before the St Patrick's Day march, showed some of the problems it faces.

Up to last month, the PHRC had, through the affiliation of Sinn Fein (Kevin St) access to a wide audience, Sinn Fein have withdrawn from the PHRC for reasons best known to themselves, or certainly very inadequately explained in their state-

ment on disaffiliating. It is hard not to think that Sinn Fein was concerned at the development of political discussion in the PHRC, (very necessary in the present circumstances), and was unable to present a coherent face. Whatever their reasons, it has certainly been a blow to the PHRC.

The PHRC has, however, set itself the task of organising local committees - the basis for some exists in some parts of Belfast, and outside - and organising a couple of demonstrations on key dates in the coming six months. The 'demo' obsession has been put behind, and the PHRC has committed itself to a much more deliberate, planned approach.

Resolutions passed at the conference also took up the question of links with anti-repression groups in the South, and the first steps have been made for a meeting with the Executive of ICRA. (Irish Civil Rights Association). On co-operation with organisations fighting repression in other countries, or supporting the struggle in Ireland, a speaker from the Socialist Workers Movement suggested taking up the case of the building workers who have been under attack from the British courts and police for picketing activities during last year's builders' strike.

The Conference called on those trade unions (ITGWU and NEETU) which have taken a stand for the return of the Winchester prisoners to the North to organise protests on these demands, and called on trade unionists who support the PHRC demands for an end to internment and to repressive laws to win support for them in their own organisations.

the worker

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Galway:

Sacking provokes strike



GALWAY CRYSTAL was established in the 1960s, to take some of the cut glass market from Waterford. Skilled men were brought from Waterford to get the factory going. Up until recently, however, they were only doing the cutting and finishing in Galway and not blowing the basic shapes.

Now there is a blowing Department — and, as a result, furnaces to be tended — and it is around this that a dispute arose in the factory in early March. It looks like a clear case of management provocation, aimed at testing the strength of the union organisation which has been built up recently.

On Friday night, 1st March, a furnace man — one of three who worked shifts — was told by management that he was sacked. He had been asked earlier to give a written explanation as to how the temperature of the furnace had fallen the night before. But before they could get this report from him they had prepared his cards and money.

The particular furnace he was working on was made by Pen Electro, of Southend-on-Sea, England, and is the only one of its kind in the country. The nearest qualified people to deal with any major problem in the furnace have to come from England. The factory electrician does straightforward maintenance work.

This is not the first time that the temperature fault in the furnace has arisen it even happened once when Pen Electro engineers were working on it. Management also had problems with it, and only a short time ago it went on fire. In spite of all this, one worker was left holding the baby; when something went wrong management blamed the man, and not the machine.

The union representing most of the workers, ATGWU, has a procedure agreement with management which contains a grievance clause. But management ignored all this completely and thus provoked a strike.

All the union members working at the factory stayed out the following week, demanding that the furnaceman be re-installed. The union was even prepared to



Galway Crystal workers on picket. They returned to work on 13 March pending a decision by the Labour court.

concede that he might be transferred within the factory if it could be shown that he had been negligent.

One of the notable things about the strike was the support for the men most directly involved from the girls in the office, only recently organised into the union, and from apprentices, who make up a large proportion of the workers.

Dublin:

UNION DRIVE AT FINGLAS LABS

SOME MONTHS AGO THE WORKER reported a successful attempt to get a union organised in Finglas Laboratories, the Dublin firm processing plant, under the headline: 'Dublin anti-union firm defeated'. We were just a bit quick off the mark, because, soon after, the management got rid of all the union activists at the end of the summer season.

For a time, the boss, Geoffrey Stead, was left without a union to worry him, but now it's back with a vengeance. The discontent among the workers left there after the summer came to a head with

incidents like the sacking of a splicer for making a mistake, the 'persuasion' of the chemist to leave, and the appointment by the company of supervisors from outside over the heads of the people there with long service.

Fifty to sixty men and women have joined the No 7 Branch of the ITGWU, which makes the union stronger at Finglas Labs stronger than it was last summer. At that time the members were mainly temporary workers, but now they are all permanent.

Finglas Labs employ about 150 on a

permanent basis, and take on an extra 100 in the summer. It is one of the largest plants of its kind in Europe. The company which has its headquarters in Glasgow, under the name Gratispool, has always resisted union organisation.

When the union was organised in Finglas Labs last summer a whole number of points were agreed by the management. Only some were actually implemented.

Now the new, stronger organisation has the job of chasing up each one of those including the right to put up union notices on the job, which Stead agreed to. It is entirely in the members' hands too, as the Branch Secretary, Mick McEvoy, has let the matter drift since last year.

All of this coincides with a unionisation drive in Gratispool in Glasgow, which has even more workers. The Finglas workers must get in contact with their fellow-workers in Glasgow. They can then make sure that work is not moved around between the plants to suit management's needs. With a strong union in both places, the company will really have something to think about.

McCallum, convenor from the John Brown engineering works in Glasgow. The main question which arose at the meeting was how the British situation would affect Irish workers during the coming months.

There are many ties binding Irish capitalism, North and South, to the British economy even though they are becoming slightly weaker because of the penetration of the Irish economy by international capital.

In their efforts to avoid the effects of the coming recession, Irish bosses are likely to aim at one main target; jacking up productivity and speed-up for Irish workers, a process which is helped on by the Third National Wage Agreement.

As the British recession does begin to affect the economy, it will lead to some lay-offs, particularly in plants which are direct subsidiaries of British companies.

It is essential that rank-and-file organisations like the Shop Stewards' Committee extend and consolidate their influence in the next year as an extra shield for workers against productivity concessions. It will be all the more necessary to exchange experiences and solidarity at a time when the trade union leadership is tied more and more to the State. It will also be necessary for workers in British-owned factories to forge contacts with colleagues in the parent plants.

This system is not ours, but it is up to us to protect our living standards against its attacks and in the process to convince wider sections of workers of the possibility indeed, necessity, that workers organise for an alternative socialist society based on human need and not on profit.

PAUL GILLESPIE

Cork:

NEED FOR FIGHT BACK AT FORDS



THE ONE-WEEK strike at Fords of Cork at the end of February started when management by-passed the established roster for overtime work. The roster was set up by the workers on the basis of seniority, and had up to then been generally observed by management.

STRIKE SPREAD

On Tuesday, 26th February, a man who had been working in the stores for only three weeks was given overtime work. Management must have known what the response to this move would be — and they got what they expected.

The next day, the strike by men in the stores gradually spread to all sections of the factory. The full-time official for the 500-odd members of the Cork No. 6 Branch of ITGWU, Liam Beecher, arrived on the scene. He went straight to management, and didn't even speak to 'his' members. Later he made a public statement that the strike was unofficial.

The attitude of the full-time official has been well known, but unfortunately the shop-floor organisation is not strong enough to force him to act. When the strike committee called a mass meeting for Thursday it was so poorly attended that they postponed it until Saturday. But the factory was still at a halt.

On the Saturday the strike committee put forward a number of points as a basis for a return to work. As well as demanding observance of the overtime roster and no victimisation over the strike — which they had reason to fear — they raised demands on other issues of working conditions, which reflect the petty and arrogant attitude of the Fords management and the frustration of the men over many other things apart from overtime working.

The points included a demand to end the practice whereby men phoning out of

the job have to state their business, and a call to end the probation period. This now stands at 12 months in Cork, whereas Fords of Dagenham in Britain have only one month. It is an extra means for the management to intimidate workers, and to make sure they are not going to challenge their control of the situation. The one year's probation follows intensive screening in interviews before anybody gets into the job. The company also seems to operate a 'black list' to keep out any workers prepared to stand up for his class. The demand should be to get rid of the probation period altogether. Management should be given no chance to ensure that the factory is manned by yes-men only.

The points drawn up by the strike committee were to be presented to Fords management for negotiation on Monday. The committee recommended a return to work on that day. In the event, the strike fizzled out. Irregular overtime working started again in the stores, and the committee did not report back on the Tuesday as they said they would.

WEAK ON THE LINE

The combination of mean management and uncaring trade union officials over the years has meant that the organisation of the men on the line has been weak. Anybody prepared to learn the lessons of the strike must see that the immediate job is to build up that organisation, get shop stewards who are going to push for changes and keep all the members involved. One of the tasks which a stronger union on the job could take up must be to make sure workers no longer depend on overtime to get decent earnings. Overtime is a tyranny which depresses the basic wage, which divides workers and undermines their solidarity. Militant organisation can get substantial increases on the basic rate, and that's what is most needed.

Printed by TU Labour



Above: Miners on strike. They were mainly responsible for bringing down the Tories.

LABOUR CHANGE (from page 1)

To meet these guarantees, Wilson will have to lean heavily on those sections of the trade union bureaucracy which have co-operated in offering him a "social contract", according to which the TUC will arrange "voluntary" moderation of wage claims in return for a repeal of the Industrial Relations Act, increased pensions, frozen rents, etc. Heath's Phase 3 will probably be retained in some form.

With inflation likely to run in the next year at a rate of 20% on workers' living standards it will be difficult to

make this bargain work. The miners have a further claim coming, as have engineering workers, post office workers, railwaymen, to name only a few. The workers' organisations will need to be strengthened at the rank and file level and in the work places so that workers do not pay the price for solving the crisis of a system for which they have no responsibility.

The Labour Party will have to play its tune very rapidly. The chances are there will be a summer or autumn election which will give Wilson a "mandate" to freeze the real living standards of British workers.

LAST MONTH, the Socialist Workers Movement organised a public meeting in Dublin in support of the miners' struggle in Britain. It was addressed by Jimmy