

W THE WORKER

FOR WORKERS POWER AND INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM

The myths

DR GOEBELLS would have been proud of the job. Since around mid-'81 the 'normal' stream of gloom and doom propaganda has mounted in a crashing wave. It reached tidal proportions in the General Election campaign.

Four myths were, and continue to be, broadcast. One, that the International Monetary Fund was likely to intervene in the economic affairs of the country. So what's new? Inter-

national capitalist institutions have been determining, or co-determining, the course of the Irish economy since the birth of capitalism.

As regards direct IMP intervention, the fact is that the 26 counties have no overdraft with the IMF.

The second myth was that the foreign banks had almost reached the end of the lending road and could even foreclose on Ireland. In fact Ireland's International credit rating remains securely high. The prestigious journal 'Euromoney' places this country among the top 12 borrowing nations.

Thirdly, the EEC was poised to pounce on us. Oh yeah? The EEC has very little power to intervene in individual economies, beyond making recommendations. When Garret Fitzgerald first walled over how bad the books were, the EEC in fact dispatched a team of auditors here. But it was Belgium, not Ireland, that got an EEC recommendation on how to order its affairs.

Finally, the most outrageous myth is that Ireland's foreign borrowing is akin to Poland's. In February the 'Economist' published a table which showed the interest and debt repayments of various countries as a percentage of their export earnings. Poland's stood at over 100%. Ireland's was not on the list, because its ratio is only 4%.

Des Derwin

North and South

FIGHT FOR

THE RIGHT TO

WORK!

The dole queues are lengthening day by day. Thousands are being condemned to the miseries and hardship of the labour exchange.

In the last few weeks Clover Meats in Waterford, Mogul Mines outside Nenagh, Clondalkin Paper Mills and Semperit have all threatened workers with the sack. Gone is the big joke about 'full employment'. Instead a leading economist in the South has predicted that a quarter of the workforce will be unemployed in 1991.

The North has become a disaster area. British Enkalon, Mackies, Courtaulds and De Lorean have given hundreds of workers the boot.

Speaking on television recently, John Simpson casually announced that the verdict of economists was that 'young people seeking jobs should emigrate!'

But can anything be done? 'Make sacrifices in order to get new jobs,' scream the politicians. 'We will have to take lower

wage rises,' echo the trade union leaders.

It's a load of rubbish. We are already taking the wage cuts. In the South, the government's own figures show that the public sector wage bill will rise by only 9 per cent this year. Meanwhile inflation will shoot up to 20 per cent.

In this system there is no way that a reduction in wages gives more money for jobs. It is more likely to end up in the pockets of the property speculators like Paddy Gallagher. Every worker in every country is told to get 'competitive' by taking

wage cuts. In fact, the more we all buy that argument the less we all have to buy the goods that are produced.

There is only one answer. It is to organise and resist. We have no other choice. Our jobs and lives are more important than the profits and balance sheets of any company. We say:

'For any company that declares redundancies occupy it to demand its nationalisation. The Clondalkin Paper Mills are doing just that. Their example should be spread.'

'To create new jobs and

bring the thousands of young people in, fight for a 35-hour week.'

'Every hour's overtime is part of a job lost.'

'Many productivity deals sell jobs. Ban them and fight for a decent basic wage.'

The campaign against unemployment is starting. In the coming months preparations are being made for a march for jobs. Make sure your union branch, section committee or shop steward is supporting it. It is one way of bringing home the simple message: Unemployment—we have had enough.

Irish Labour Movement Conference

Over 400 labour movement delegates attended the February Conference in London to discuss the theme of *Ireland—time for Tory policies to go*. It was the most sober and representative trade union based conference on Ireland for years.

From Ireland Matt Merrigan (District Secretary ATGWU) stressed the vital role that British trade unionists must play in campaigning for British withdrawal and ending labour movement bipartisanship.

Enez McCormack (NI Regional Secretary NUPE) highlighted the need for a serious debate to be undertaken within the Northern Ireland trade union movement on the how and when of an eventual British withdrawal.

Trade union delegates and Clive Soley MP argued that we must withdraw the British guarantee to the Unionists if any sense is to be made of the official Labour Party policy of unity by consent. The most important immediate task highlighted was the need to break the trade union parallel to the Unionist veto on debate within the British trade union movement.

Traditionally the attitudes of Northern Ireland trade unionists have been used as an excuse to deny any debate on Britain's role by the majority of trade unionists at all major trade union conferences.

The conference was a success and a decisive step in the direction of building a mass trade union based British Withdrawal Campaign and thereby directly assisting the struggles of Irish trade unionists on the national and social questions.

Britain Get Out of Ireland

What we stand for

The Socialist Workers Movement is a revolutionary workers movement organisation which aims to organise the working class in the struggle for power and for the overthrow of the existing social order.

The system under which we live, capitalism, is based on production for profit and not for human need. It is a system that leads to poverty and war, racial and sexual oppression.

Only the working class can destroy capitalism and build a socialist society based on workers control of production.

Our political action to prepare the working class for that is based on the following principles:

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

There is no parliamentary road to socialism as the left in the Dail believe. The system cannot be changed by piecemeal reform. The state machinery—the courts, parliament, the police and army—are used to maintain the dominance of the ruling class. The real power lies in the boardrooms of big business.

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

NEITHER WASHINGTON NOR MOSCOW

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

A SOCIALIST ANSWER TO THE NATIONAL QUESTION

The six county Orange State is propped up by British imperialism. By bribing loyalist workers in the past with privileges in, for example, housing and jobs, Protestant workers have come to see their interests as being served by the British-backed Unionist boss class. This divides the working class and delivers a section of the workers as allies of imperialism. The Northern state is sectarian in essence and must be smashed.

The slow task of building working class unity against imperialism must be begun.

However imperialism must be fought in the here and now and we support all forces engaged in that struggle regardless of our difference of programme.

We stand for: Immediate withdrawal of the British Army. Political Status Now.

The Disbandment of the RUC and the UDR.

In the South, the bosses are junior partners with other European and American bosses in world capitalism. The main enemy is the boss at home. Nationalism or a united capitalist Ireland offers nothing to workers. The only republic worth fighting for is a workers republic.

WOMEN'S LIBERATION

We support feminism as being the legitimate progressive and necessary struggle by women against their oppression as women and believe that the self-emancipation of women as a sex is central to the meaning of socialism.

Only through socialism can women achieve full emancipation and therefore the women's struggle must be led by working class women as part of the struggle of the whole working class for socialism.

FOR A RANK AND FILE MOVEMENT

The main area of political action for socialists is the mass organisation of the working class, particularly the trade unions. We fight for the independence of the unions from state interference, democratic control of all union affairs and the election of all union officials.

We oppose all anti-union legislation and all forms of national wage understandings and wage restraint. We oppose all redundancies. We say: Occupy to demand Nationalisation under workers control. Fight for a 35 hour week. We support the building of a rank and file movement which draws together militant trade unionists to oppose the class collaboration of the union leaders.

FOR A REVOLUTIONARY WORKERS PARTY

The SWM is a democratic centralist organisation open to all those who accept its principles and objectives. The struggle for a workers republic in Ireland is inseparable from the international struggle. The SWM fights to build a mass party of the working class as part of a revolutionary international of working class parties.

THE WORKER is produced by the SOCIALIST WORKERS MOVEMENT. If you would like more information on our activities and policies, would like to become a member of the SWM or would like to take out a subscription to THE WORKER—£3.50 for a year—clip and post this form to SWM, 41 Herberton Park, Rialto, Dublin 8.

I want to join: I want a subscription and enclose £2.50:

I would like more information about the SWM

Name.....

Address.....

Sean Corr victimised

SEAN CORR and Johnny White have been expelled from their union, NEETU. Both were members of their branch committees. Both had good records of organising the many small jobs around Dublin to win decent wages and conditions. And the reason for their expulsion? Fighting redundancies!!

The story began at the J&C McLaughlin factory in Inchicore. Eleven workers were made redundant there in December 81. They included the shop steward, Sean Corr. It was a clear case of victimisation. Overtime working was still available at the factory when Sean was sacked.

The union immediately went in to negotiate on redundancy payments. They refused even to sanction a ban on overtime. A central role in pushing acceptance of the redundancies was played by the NEETU Executive member, Thomas Moore, who works in the factory. Moore is also a prominent member of the SFWP in the Ballyfermot area. He was formerly an election agent for Tomas McGiolla.

The eleven workers placed a picket on the gates of McLaughlins. The officials in NEETU went on the offensive and used their influence to

stop the blackleg supplies to McLaughlins.

Just before Christmas, the management approached the picket. They offered a redundancy sum that was higher than the norm. They were given only a few hours to accept the offer, which was conditional on it being a final settlement. Because of financial hardship, ten of the eleven workers accepted. Sean Corr stayed on the picket line.

In January, Johnny White and Sean Corr were hauled before a kangaroo court in the union. They were charged with bringing the union into disrepute! After a very short hearing, they were expelled.



The national debt is £10 billion, and £3.7 billion of it is owed to foreign creditors. That is, 63% of the famous debt is owed to our very own Irish money-lenders. Last year, according to Barry Desmond himself, 87p in every pound of income tax paid by the PAYE sector went on interest payments and 23p of that amount went to foreigners.

No wonder the state coffers are empty—unearned income to moneylending leeches is eating up the state's income. The state financial crisis, explained so glibly as being caused by 'foreign borrowing', reveals one of its roots in the class system of usury, with the main proportion of interest going to Irish money-lenders and not nasty foreigners.

If the government has been overspending, a large chunk of it has gone in transfers to capital, above and beyond the interest rate referred to above. According to Christie Kirwain of the ITGWU, speaking at the 1981 annual conference of Congress, 'In the past ten years the state has contributed almost £1 billion for the promotion of industrial development by private companies.' Last year's Telesis report showed that only 30% of jobs paid for by IDA grants, between 1970 and 1978, actually existed in 1981. The IDA expenditure in 1980 alone was £169 million. Local authorities are forced to pay the artificial, speculative price of building land; public millions are lost in Knock Airport and the building of NET at Marino Point; re-equipment grants to Guinness and Irish Cement replace labour with machinery, and on and on.

The income side of state finances shows enormous untapped wealth. Throughout the seventies Corporation Tax accounted for only 5% of direct taxation. Multinationals were tax-free on exports and enjoyed 100% tax relief on new plant in the first year of business. Last year Corporation Tax was reduced to 10%.

Total bank profits for 1980/81 were estimated (in 'Liberty' November '81) at £160 million. Yet the banks have operated

substantial and legal tax-dodging, by leasing plant to firms rather than advancing them the cash to buy it. In the '70s a whole range of wealth and capital taxes were reduced or actually abolished, costing the Exchequer hundreds of millions.

Public sector workers and social service recipients have no more caused the financial crisis than private sector workers have caused the recession. But we must pay the price. Unless, that is, we organise in the workplace, the unions and on the streets, to resist the attacks on our living standards. One million poor and Irish Distillers has £6 million to spend on advertising and promotion in the US last year.

THE GENERAL workers in Dublin Corporation recently won a good victory on travelling time after picketing all depots.

Their claim was for a travelling allowance of one hour a day to be paid retrospectively to January 1st 1981.

The tradesmen in the Corpo had recently won their claim for the hour and had been paid from that date.

The Corporation were willing to pay the hour's travelling but wanted to cut down on back-dating the payment.

Despite the union official's recommendation to accept the offer and the fact that the army was scabbing, the workers overwhelmingly rejected it.

The business community in the city centre attempted to call in hired trucks and strike breaking labour to clear up the refuse.

But the workers responded by setting up special groups to watch for scabbing.

One man put it to me like this during the strike: 'We have had to deal with hired trucks before so the drivers know what to expect.'

More importantly, union officials were pressurised into



The NEETU has never had a reputation for union democracy. It has no union conference. They only appeal against expulsion is to the NEC!

If ever a union needed cleaning out it is the NEETU. Members of NEETU should immediately raise

resolutions in NEETU to protest at the expulsions and to condemn the executive's handling of the affair.

Any resolution should be forwarded to the Defence Committee, c/o I. Bawnlea Avenue, Tallaght, Co. Dublin.

calling on all workers at County Council dumping sites to black all hired trucks.

Unfortunately the tradesmen split on the passing of the picket. Only about half of them respected the pickets.

But if any kind of solidarity is to prevail between all workers in the Corpo, then an essential

ingredient of that solidarity must be respect for all pickets.

When the Stanley St Depot (Mechanical Section) were out for travelling time, the general workers demonstrated their support by contributing to a levy for the strikers.

The rank and file Craft Group did in fact call for support of the picket.

Johnny Byrne

Library pickets

Brid Smith talked to 'The Worker'

ON THE Monday when the IMETU went out on strike there were few libraries picketed. When library workers inquired of their union, the LGPSU whether or not to pass pickets where they existed they were told that they should pass the pickets and anyone who refused to do so would lose a day's pay.

On Tuesday when Ballyfermot and other libraries were picketed four LGPSU members refused to pass the Ballyfermot picket.

Two of them went into work when the picketers left later in the morning. The other two refused to pass and went home. The pickets were mounted each day after that. On Thursday the two members who had refused to pass were told to meet their union reps in the Personnel Dept as they were threatened with dismissal.

They were told that having disobeyed union instructions there was little or nothing the union could do to protect their jobs except to apply for special leave without pay on the grounds that the members had strong moral objections to passing strikers pickets.

Personnel managers then told them they would be granted leave without pay for the four days up to Thursday, that they had not worked but they must return to work the next day. This would mean passing the pickets. The union reps at a separate meeting argued and pleaded with the two members to pass the pickets and told the members of the possibility of an all out picket from Congress.

One member then agreed to go back to work convinced by the argument given by the union that as an activist he was badly needed. The other member Brid Smith still

refused to pass and subsequently learned she had been sacked.

The union told her that they would be appealing against her dismissal. The following day, Brid received a phone call from the union informing her that she had been re-instated in the job following industrial action taken that morning by LGPSU members who deal with salaries and wages for the Fire Brigade etc. The union had gone to Capel Buildings that morning and told members to down tools until Brid got her job back. The action lasted for about an hour and when fire brigade men did not get paid as a result, they too threatened to go on strike. Brid then got her job back as library assistant. She was granted unpaid leave for the duration of the strike.

The other members of the LGPSU who agreed to return to work must now be feeling very deceived by their union who had given no hint of any support for them.

Brid will be sent a letter reprimanding her for being a 'bold girl' and not complying with their instructions. But the attitude of the strikers is completely different. They saw her action in respecting their picket as a show of solidarity but felt at the same time bitter that so many had been pressurised to pass.

Reports by Kevin Wingfield

Reagan's bloody backyard

In the spring and summer of 1979 the workers and peasants of El Salvador were on the move.

Renewed militancy saw an increase in the membership and activity of trade unions and guerilla groups.

The position of the brutal military dictator, General Carlos Humberto Romero, became increasingly isolated.

In order to head off the agitation, a group of military officers overthrew Romero utilising some 'liberal' civilians as front men.

This junta promised reforms including the redistribution of land.

But the world-wide crisis of capitalism, which in the west is responsible for the millions of unemployed and falling living standards and in the east gave rise to the recent instability in Poland, holds the backward countries in an iron vice.

The junta was unable to provide any reforms and as fear in governing circles increased—the Nicaraguan Sandinistas are just across the border—a second junta was formed, consisting of the military and the Christian Democrats, in January 1980.

This coalition collapsed when the more 'liberal' wing of the Christian Democrats split the party. Since that time General Duarte has headed the regime.

All the while there has been raging a civil war between the Salvador military, largely funded by America and supported by US military 'advisors' on one hand, and the various guerilla bands, many of whose political leaders were in government until 1980, on the other.

The people of El Salvador are among the most impoverished in all of Latin America. Only 16 per cent of the employable workforce can find jobs that last the whole year round.

One out of four children dies before the age of five; the average lifespan is 46 years. Most Salvadoreans receive barely enough food to just keep them alive—some not even that. This contrasts with the 2 per

cent who own 60 per cent of all arable land and, with the handsome profits of the industrialists and businessmen.

The military junta rules on behalf of a dozen families, called the 'oligarchy', who control 80 per cent of all the wealth. They maintain their power by terror, pure and simple—death squads, assassinations, torture.

Salvador, however, is not an isolated conflict. The American involvement is motivated by their fear that the whole region could erupt in class conflict, threatening vital US interests.

In neighbouring Guatemala, the level of guerilla struggles has risen dramatically over the last few months. For the first time, the Indians—57 per cent of the total population—are actively involved in the guerilla struggles and 19 out of 22 provinces are in a state of war.

Next door in Honduras, land occupations through 1980 have been followed by workers' demonstrations and land take-overs by 500 peasants in the week before the recent presidential election.

Nearby Costa Rica, for so long called the Switzerland of central America, faces a profound economic crisis which has brought unprecedented workers' demonstrations against unemployment and the rising cost of living.

Not to mention Nicaragua, where the US-backed tyrant General Somoza, fell recently to the Sandinistas who now control the country.

Closer still to Reagan's heart, there have been massive demonstrations in Puerto Rico and the Borniquen Liberation Front have started guerilla attacks on economic targets.

For the region is America's backyard. But the general response of the US government has become less and less clear in recent weeks.

George Bush, the Vice-President, visited the Dominican Republic in October last year to warn them of the coming struggle against Cuba.

Haig has made increasingly threatening statements about



'OUR POLICY IS TO SHOOT FIRST AND ASK QUESTIONS LATER... ARE YOU FOLKS COMMIES?'

direct intervention against both Cuba and Nicaragua. And a two-month long joint US/NATO exercise which ended in mid-October was clearly a preparation for a direct attack against Grenada.

The clearest statement came, as usual, from Henry Kissinger. Addressing the Chilean Chamber of Commerce in Santiago, he called for all out war in Central America as the only solution.

In fact, the training of anti-Sandinista forces has continued apace. US military advisers are now working to reconstruct the Central America Defence Force first established in the early seventies to coordinate the class

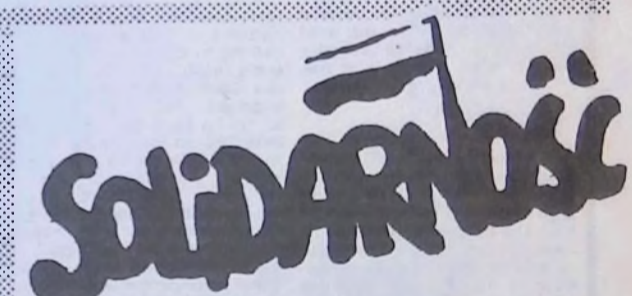
war in El Salvador and Guatemala.

The official position is in fact that its first detachment—the Allacatl Brigade—has already lost half its members

yet, despite this, and rising quantities of military aid, Reagan has seemed reluctant to back Haig's hard line.

Obviously his hesitation stems from doubts about whether the US should enter another protracted imperialist war, when it is clear that there can be no quick decisive victory.

Yet for the US the problem remains: the world-wide crisis of capitalism makes revolt from the mass of people in the 'third world' endemic.



The Socialist Workers Movement recently organised a highly successful speaking tour of the Poland crisis. The main speaker was Chris Harman from the Socialist Workers Party in Britain and author of the excellent book 'Bureaucracy and Revolution in Eastern Europe'.

The main theme of the meetings was that the state capitalist regimes of Eastern Europe had brought into existence a working class that would eventually overthrow them. The SWM argued that the attempt by some sections to moderate workers' demands had only weakened the movement.

What was needed was a small grouping inside Solidarity that would have argued that its goal should have been to break the state machine. When sections of the army and police were considering forming their own union, they should have been encouraged to do so by massive demonstrations outside their barracks.

There is now a desperate need for solidarity with Polish workers. The SWM is presently publishing a short pamphlet listing what can be done and providing names and the concentration camps of prisoners so that they can be adopted. Get you orders in now to our national address.

AS PART of the campaign in defence of trade union rights in Poland, the SWM will be printing a list of some of the imprisoned Solidarity activists giving their name, former workplace and place of detention.

Every effort should be made to get your trade union branch or workplace committee to adopt one of these prisoners; to write to them to let them and the Polish Government know that genuine trade unionists all over the world are concerned by the suppression of the Solidarity Trade Union.

Copies available from 41, Herberton Park Rialto Dublin 8.



41 Herberton Pk, Dublin 9

SINN FEIN THE WORKERS PARTY is known in Cork as the Poor Man's Fianna Fail. They call themselves socialists but just as one should never judge an individual by his own self-assessment so political parties should be treated.

They display remarkable similarities to Fianna Fail. They lay claim to be for a 32 county republic but with a socialist prefix, yet they attacked in every way they could the fight for the five demands of the prisoners in Long Kesh and Armagh.

Just like Fianna Fail did, only not with the same kind of vengeance. They have won support certainly in the East Cork constituency, by doing favours for the individuals who approach them, certainly not on their class politics.

But it cannot be ignored that it was working class votes that

secured three deputies in the latest election. Sherlock, De Rossa and Gallagher's success points to the disillusionment with the Labour Party and the emergence of new layers of class conscious workers who believe that they will have real worker representation in the Dail.

The SFWP now have a certain position of power. How will they use it? It is pretty certain that they will use their position to win small reformist concessions in return for keeping one or other of the businessmen's parties in power.

Forgotten will be the nationalisation of the banks and the massive job creation programme they promised.

It is an opportunity for real socialists to put forward Scientific Marxism.

JIM BLAKE, Cork



Paddy Gallagher

election a

We say You can't reform capitalism

THE ELECTION during the last year or so of left governments in France and Greece, the leftward move of the Labour Party in Britain and even the election of the left TDs, SFWP and independents, to the Dail have reawakened the hopes of millions of the possibility of Socialism.

The war-mongering policies of Thatcher and Reagan seemed to be winning all over the world and now at last there seem to be new possibilities. In such an atmosphere, groups on the fringe, like SWM who argue the need for a Workers Revolution look increasingly irrelevant and out-dated. Surely now, the argument goes, with our democratic laws and institutions it should be possible to win Socialism through the ballot box.

However those old seemingly irrelevant theories are still relevant and it is at times like this that it is most important to explain why there cannot be a reformist Road to Socialism. If it was possible to win Socialism through the ballot box it would already have happened; in Spain in 1936, in Chile in 1971 and in many other countries. But what was achieved in those countries was far from socialism. It was bloody reaction and fascism.

Marx in his history of the Paris Commune of 1871 and Lenin in his book 'State and Revolution' argued that the State is not neutral. The capitalist state with its laws, prisons, army etc. exists to defend capitalism. It is not possible to turn those institutions into defenders of a Workers State. For the achievement of Socialism those institutions must be destroyed and new ones built up. The tragedy of Spain

and Chile was that they believed that they could build Socialism while still allowing parts of the old capitalist order to exist.

In Spain, despite the election of a left government Franco, who was notorious for his bloody suppression of a workers uprising in the Asturias region in 1934, still held the rank of General in the most important section of the Spanish Army. In Chile, Salvador Allende, in an effort to reconcile the different sections of society, brought some of those very generals, who several months later were to lead a military coup against him, into his government.

This is not to say that there will be a military coup against every left government. To argue that position would be ultra-left. But what we can say with certainty is that if Capitalism feels itself threatened then it will fight back and fight back most violently.

In the book 'Blood of Spain' about the Spanish Civil War, there is an interview with the former Public Prosecutor of the High Court of Madrid whose sympathies lay with Franco although he was critical of him—"I had occasion to witness the repression that was being carried out in both zones. In the nationalist zone it was planned, methodical, cold. The authorities didn't trust the people and imposed their will through terror. To do so they committed atrocities. In the Popular Front zone atrocities were also committed... the difference was that the crimes were committed by an impassioned people, not by the authorities. The latter always tried to prevent crimes... It wasn't so in the nationalist zone. There more people were shot, it was scientifically organised."

When the opportunity comes, our task as socialists is to make sure that they will not have that chance to fight back.

For United Working Class Action
For an independent fighting trade union movement

For the economic and political equality of women
For a 32 county Workers Republic

The SWM is a 32 county Socialist Workers Organisation. We organise around these demands.

If you agree with the above demands and the ideas expressed in this paper, send off this form.

NAME

ADDRESS.....

UNION/ORGANISATION

send to 41 Herberton Park, Rialto, Dublin 8.

TWO GENERAL elections in less than eight months. And both have ended in hung Dails. The south of Ireland has entered a period of political instability. Not because they are faced by any major working class challenge. It is simply that none of the two main bosses' parties can win dominance over political life.

The truth is that they have nothing left to offer. Take the last election. It was brought about by the toughest budget since the founding of the state. In 'normal' circumstances, that should have

handed victory on a plate to the then opposition party. But even with their half baked populist rhetoric, Fianna Fail could not seize it. They certainly tried the more humane image of more borrowing to reduce unemployment. But from a capitalist standpoint the question was: how were the interest rates and the massive debts to be paid back? Fianna Fail's answer was not much different to the Coalition's—more taxes. And less publicly, they were for lower public sector pay rises than the miserable ones the Coalition were offering.

The mounting crisis in the South's finances may not lead to a collapse into a

'banana republic'. But it does shorten the margins of manoeuvre of the politicians. They dare not make promises. At the height of the boom in '77, Martin O'Donoghue proclaimed that there would be full employment in 1982. Those little jokes aren't cracked any more.

The absence of an even reformist working class alternative meant that the election was conducted in purely ruling class terms.

The artificial debates helped to unleash a barrage of ideas that will be used to enforce further wage cuts. The failure of the Labour Party to stand up for anything that would not meet the approval of the international bankers has sealed its fate.

A DYING LABOUR PARTY
The decline in votes was not as dramatic as many expected. Its ability to dish out favours through its participation in government,

How the Stickie came unstuck

The Irish Labour Party in the best tradition of a social democratic party moved rapidly to the right over the past decade and is now seen by thousands of Irish workers as no different from Fine Gael.

Both in and out of Coalition with Fine Gael it has proved itself incapable of representing the wishes of Irish workers in times of capitalist recession.

Its representation in the Dail has even dropped since the sixties. Its share of the vote during each election continues to drop. The decline of the Labour Party can be best illustrated by Barry Desmond's famous remarks on the shutdown of the Clondalkin Paper Mills, where he insisted that it was not up to the state to interfere with private enterprise.

He of course expressed 'concern'

about redundancies but insisted the 'Irish taxpayer' should not interfere. With 'socialist' friends like Desmond the Clondalkin workers do not need enemies.

When one considers the state of the Labour Party and its involvement with Fine Gael, the rise of Sinn Fein the Workers Party comes as no surprise. At election time many working-class voters long for a change.

Because of the dominant ideas within capitalist society parliamentary elections are seen as the only method of getting that change.

It is true that working-class voters—or at least a small section—are beginning to see the difference between the two main capitalist parties is nil.

As the Labour Party subordinates itself to Fine Gael, SFWP fills a gap in Irish politics. SFWP has therefore embarked on winning votes away

from the Labour Party and getting prominent positions within the trade union movement.

It is the same style of social democratic logic as that of the Labour Party, only with a more worked-out industrial strategy and position of the sectarian state within the six counties. In short SFWP in its attempts to become a strong reformist party of the left has worked out a programme which it believes will win over the working-class voters and at the same time gain a stronghold in the Irish trade union movement.

It is a far cry from ten years ago when it was seen by many as the main organisation to the left of the Provisionals. In order to gain respectability the Official Sinn Fein had to move fast. It disbanded its army, and welcomed as progressive moves by the British government to reform the Northern state.

It began to have talks with leaders of the UDA, seeing that organisation as working class and therefore progressive.

As the British military machine in the North moved towards crushing whatever resistance was left to its rule and removed political status from republican prisoners the officials had moved so far right that they supported British attempts to crush the hunger strikes which followed.

SFWP thus turned full circle on the nature of the six-county state. The task now, according to the party, is to work for reform in the North, while in the South concentrating on bread-and-butter issues.

Reforming the Northern state in SFWP terms means supporting a revival of a majority rule Stormont regime. Because of this the party is now in decline in the North. The constant list of statements issued by the Republican Clubs differs only slightly from what the SDLP has to say.

It is in the South therefore that the SFWP hopes to make real gains with its new brand of reformist politics. With the election of Paddy Gallagher, Proinsias de Rossa and Joe Sherlock, it has got off to a good start.

The price, however, has been enormous. In its attempts to gain influence at the top layer of Irish society it has been forced to in practice back pedal or oppose workers' action against redundancies, a working-class socialist position on the Northern question, and it has no time to support the attempts of workers to fight the constant erosion of their living standards.

Instead socialism through reform and sweetheart deals with Fianna Fail or Fine Gael it has come from

the top down. To do this SFWP has adopted a conscious policy of infiltration as a political method. In RTE and the press their influence is growing—usually with reactionary spokesmen such as John Feeney of the Evening Herald.

In the trade union movement the party has been attempting to win a foothold in the bureaucracy. Again it has been successful to the extent that it has now taken a position of condemning strikes. The most notable was the oil tanker drivers' strike of 1980.

A couple of quotes will be sufficient. 'The oil dispute shows the dangers of a traditional response to what is not a traditional problem.' 'The day when a localised free for all can produce large increases in real income for the working class is gone. There is obvious need for class conscious leadership but not for left-wing fantasy strikes which simply inflict loss of wages and credibility on the trade unions.'

This means a fight by a section of the organised working class to raise their living standards is dangerous to SFWP because it upsets the leadership at the top of the trade union movement.

Any rank and file response by workers on wages or fighting redundancies upsets the prestige jobs of SFWP trade union officials.

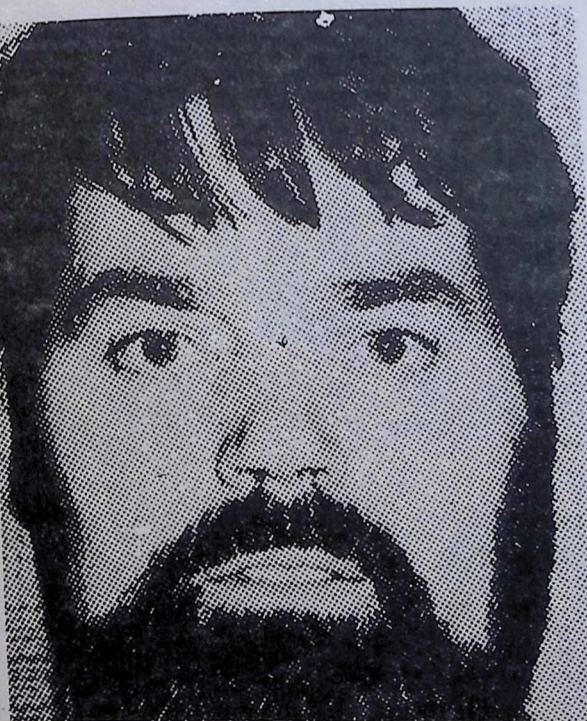
The same can be said of parliament. Just as O'Leary and Desmond would condemn oil workers, ESB workers, corporation workers for upsetting the economy, so too will SFWP in the Dail.

At first no doubt they will remain neutral and turn a blind eye, but as the job of replacing the reformism of the Labour Party with a more flashy variant gets under way, SFWP TDs, like their trade union leaders, will have no choice but to condemn strikes.

The real problem for left reformers is stabilising the economy and making the capitalist system work.

A strategy of winning non-elected full time posts in the unions and doing deals with Fine Gael or Fianna Fail on the economy and supporting National Understandings which do not benefit the working class is part of a strategy which sees socialism as not the working class fighting for demands and carrying out that fight against the system but rather as a set of reforms to be handed down from the top on behalf of the 'apathetic workers'.

SFWP has gained influence in the South by saying that what's happening in the North has nothing to do



Proinsias de Rossa

analysis

helped to preserve its rural base around particular personalities. But in Dublin over the past decade its vote has been halved—in an expanding city!

The decline of the Labour Party has become one of the pivots of Irish politics. For now it has been the strictly right wing parties which have gained. The striking fact is that in an election where there were no promises or hope, Fianna Fail and Fine Gael between

them command 80% of the votes.

Fine Gael are dropping their ex-blueshirt image and re-moulding themselves as the more rational managers of Irish capitalism. As part of that, they have stood for more reforms on divorce, corporal punishment and contraception as a trade off for increased misery in living standards. They have increased their appeal to many white collar workers who might previously have

gone to Labour. Fianna Fail's brand of populism also means that they are often seen as the 'lesser evil'.

A VACUUM

The decline of the Labour Party has left a vacuum on the left. Sinn Fein the Workers Party have taken a big stride to fill it. With three TDs in a hung Dail, they look set to become the focus of workers' demands for reforms. The 'Stickles' cannot ultimately deliver on that. Their politics put them in direct opposition to the aspirations of anti-unionists in the North and to all those militants in the South who are opposed to the trade union bureaucracy.

That is not to say that they will be immediately seen for what they are. There are enough 'hangovers' in Southern capitalism to allow them to tack left without hitting at the core of things. The Southern ruling class stretches downwards to include the gombeen men, the property speculators and the tax fiddlers. The SFWP's policies of cheap food rather than subsidies to the farmers, of curbing bank profits, of imposing rent control can have mass appeal. As long as the working class does not feel confident enough to militantly oppose the attacks upon it, the SFWP will look more and more like the credible soft

alternative.

The present situation offers many possibilities and obstacles to those revolutionaries who stand to the left of the SFWP. But the nettle has to be grasped. It is no longer possible to wait for a spill over from the Northern struggle to expose the weak points of the SFWP. The votes of H Block candidates were halved this time around. The SFWP—particularly in towns like Waterford—regained most of those votes. It is no longer enough to hold up the banner of 'anti-imperialism' against the Stickles.

They have to be fought on their own ground—in the unions and in the work-

places.

It is no use simply saying that unemployment and wage cuts will be needed in a united Ireland. Our arguments have to rely on pushing the most militant struggles with the goal of a workers' republic. The SFWP have already shown that they regard that militancy as ultra-left. Increasingly, they will argue for reliance on their parliamentary representatives in a hung Dail.

Above all it demands building a political organisation with a class analysis of the struggles north and south. The Socialist Workers Movement has made a small start. We appeal to others to join us in that fight.

ies

with workers' interests. It has moved more towards a 'two nations' position and welcomes reforms from Britain mixed in with a barrage of anti-Provisional Sinn Fein propaganda.

There is no doubt a section of the Southern working class that has distanced itself from traditional nationalism. This indeed is to be welcomed. Yet the real situation in the North needs to be explained.

No real gains can be made by leaving it at that. The presence of British troops in the North, the sectarian divide, and the sectarian nature of the state continues to exist because the capitalist system North and South continues to exist.

The British army in the North are not simply fighting 'nationalist gunmen' as SFWP maintain, but are trying to stabilise a situation for the ruling class in Britain and indeed for the Charlie Haugheys of this world.

The six-county state is merely the extreme form of exploitation and oppression which workers face in Britain and the South of Ireland. Therefore to tell workers to concentrate on 'bread and butter issues' alone in no time comes up against a huge contradiction.

The southern army has been used—as SFWP point out—on numerous occasions to break strikes, the corporatist dispute being the most recent.

The nature of capitalism is such that workers begin to draw conclusions. If workers conclude that

indeed the southern army should not interfere in strikes, they may also conclude that the British army must be doing a lot more in the North than 'keeping the peace'.

To ignore the North is not the answer. To take up the military regime in the North as a priority that confronts all workers, North and South, is the only way possible to advance the cause of the workers' republic.

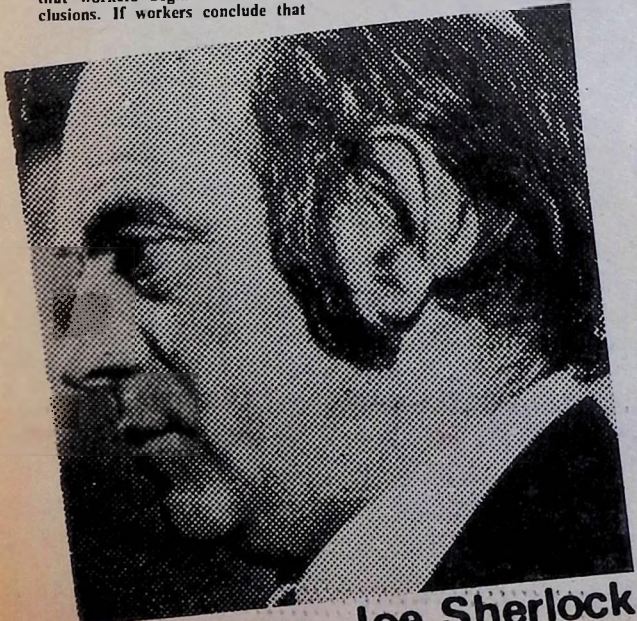
The 'socialism' of SFWP has very little to offer Irish workers. All their methods point to a type of society in which the working class will be no better off than they are now. State-run industry and a more undemocratic trade union movement have little to do with socialism.

In its efforts to advance the development of state industry SFWP has asked for more sacrifice by workers in return for a greater political voice in the running of the economy. It will not be long before the Sherlocks are asking workers to tighten their belts for the good of the Irish economy.

As the leaders of the Irish Labour Party, people who think that reforms can be got by getting to the top whether in the labour movement or in the Dail come unstuck. In trying to reform they begin to compromise.

In their lust to compromise they become more and more conservative and as they become more conservative they become the upholders of the capitalist system and condemn workers' actions as disruptive.

Dermot Byrne



Joe Sherlock



INDUSTRIAL NEWS

When Clover means bad luck

"The company have squeezed so much out of us over the last five years, they can squeeze nothing more out of us now, only blood."

That was how one worker at Clover Meats expressed how vicious Clover management were... and how much they have drummed down the workers.

The dispute goes back to January when Clover management presented a so-called 'rationalisation' plan to the workers. This 'White Paper' amounted to an all-out attack on the workers: cuts in bonuses, changes in normal working practices and procedures, and a series of redundancies which ignored the last in first out principle. To boot, the Company said that if it were not accepted, the factory would close.

The workers refused to accept the 'White Paper'. They were promptly met with 140 lay-offs.

•Whose benefit?

Then, when these 140 workers made claims for benefit at the Department of Social Welfare, they were told they were not entitled to any benefit. Why? Because Section 35 of the 1980 Social Welfare Act says that benefit is not given to those "participating in or financing or directly interested in (!) trade dispute which caused the stoppage of work". In other words, if you fight redundancies, you won't get any benefit. Or, more exactly, even if you're concerned in the dispute over the job loss, no dole money for you. (See box.)

But as yet there was no dispute at Clover Meats. The workers had simply not accepted the proposals. The Union, and even the Company, gave evidence that this was the case. Yet still the appeals decision went against them. By now, the remainder of the Clover Meats workforce had been laid off and were picketing the Social Welfare Office in support of their claim.

The Social Welfare Office then becomes the centre of the struggle. The workers decided to shelve any decisions on the future of the factory until the dispute with the

department had been settled. Very quickly the question of benefit once they'd lost the job became the issue rather than the job itself. Fighting the closure by occupying the factory, demanding nationalisation, slipped into the background while the unions talked of delegations to Congress to point out the implications of the Social Welfare act and try to get it amended. The workers themselves lost their appeal in the High Court and the men are now back picketing the employment exchange.

•Fight-back

At a special meeting of the Waterford Trades Council, the ITGWU official for the Clover Workers, John Dwan was asked why the workers weren't directing their fire at the Clover Management over the closure as well as pursuing the dispute with the Department. His answer was that the workers were afraid that if they picketed or occupied the factory, the management might bring in the liquidator and the workers might then lose their redundancy entitlements.

Many of the delegates at the meeting were very disappointed at this cautious attitude. With the seriousness of unemployment in Waterford, it was felt that now more than ever was the time to fight back on job-losses, and launch a campaign around "Save Clover".

The Clover Workers have certainly been militant around the town over the last two weeks, blocking Redmond Bridge twice and bringing the city to a complete halt. They have also picketed the labour exchange and during the elections all the party offices. But this has all been in pursuit of their social wel-

by Waterford Socialist Workers Movement.

fare benefit, and not in an effort to save the factory.

•Their crisis

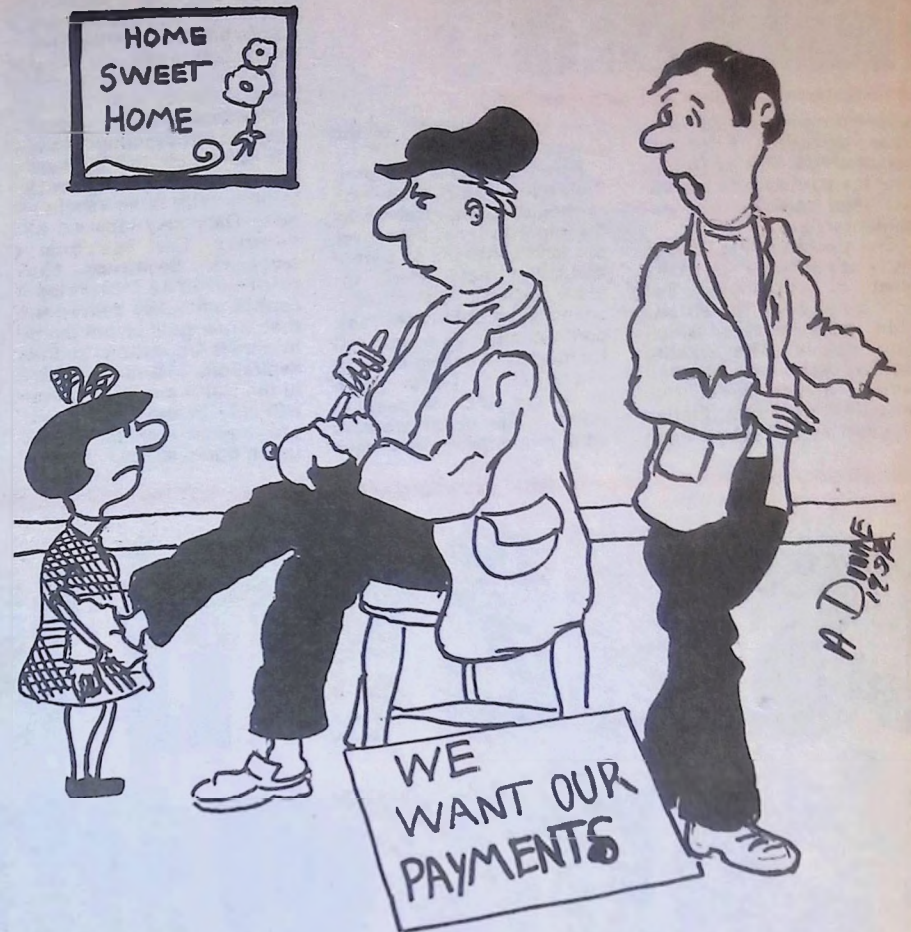
The Clover management took on a fight head on with the workers because they are in serious financial difficulties. In the mid seventies they borrowed heavily, invested in new plants and bought other companies such as Lunlams Burks and Donnelly's. To get the returns, they put the screws on the workers in the form of productivity deals—which were accepted. The workers literally bent over backwards for productivity, including offering £2.00 per week from their own pockets to put the company back on the road.

But the banks were squeezing the company for repayment of the £9 million loans and no amount of productivity deals in the world could solve that, whatever the management had said in the past. The workers are now currently picketing the banks in Waterford in an attempt to get them to take off the stops. But as workers in all too many "viable" firms know, solving problems for management doesn't automatically solve the problem—of working conditions, pay etc—for workers.

•Smuggling

Much has been made in the press about the smuggling and exporting of live cattle as a reason for the crisis that Clover Meats finds itself in. This, though, is only part of the problem. In fact, figures released by the Department show that last year there were fewer cattle exported from Ireland, than in the previous years. In 1978 for example, cattle exported reached 556,000 whereas in 1981 it was down to 300,000. In the sixties the figures were as high as 800,000.

The reason the current figures are



causing so much concern is that the national herd is very much down on previous years. A lack of confidence among the farmers about three years ago saw many de-stock their herds—fearing for their profits—and many cows were slaughtered. Hence the smaller number of cows ready for slaughter now.

Smuggling has been with the meat industry since the foundation of the state. It has always been a problem because farmers are getting more money exporting their cattle than they would normally at Clover. However, Percell, the cattle exporter did offer Clover 1,000 head a week at his price and the offer was not taken up. So smuggling alone does not explain the full story.

The stopping of smuggling would obviously ease the situation. But so too would the proper planning of sustaining the national herd. The point is that smuggling has to be stopped as part of a forceful campaign by workers to change the capitalist priorities that operate in the meat industry—which includes nationalisation and workers control in the industry, and at Clover Meats.

Kill this evil Act

KILL THE SOCIAL WELFARE (CONSOLIDATION) ACT

In 1980 Fianna Fail brought in a nasty piece of legislation. It hits directly at laid-off workers—as Clover workers have discovered—and holds the axe over workers who try to fight their job going.

It is an act that trade unionists must fight to get wiped off the statute book, for it is a basic attack on the right of workers to organise. The high court ruled against the Clover Workers' right to claim benefit. That means that the state, through the Department of Welfare can now pressurise workers into accepting any proposals by management under threat of losing social welfare if they lose their jobs, in that dispute.

For example an employer proposes a cut in wages; the workers refuse; the boss sacks them; and the workers are refused benefit. Hardly a recipe for the much needed fight-back on redundancies. We print below some of Section 35 of the Act. Quote it at your trade union meetings and try to get through a resolution condemning it.

FIGHTING FOR THE RIGHT TO WORK MEANS FIGHTING THIS ACT

- Social Welfare (Consolidation) Act 1980
- Section 35 (1)

A person who has lost employment by reason of a stoppage of work which was due to a trade dispute at the factory, workshop, farm or other premises or place at which he was employed shall be disqualified for receiving unemployment benefit so long as the stoppage of work continues...

In this section "trade dispute" means any dispute between employers and employees, or between employees and employees which is connected with the employment or non-employment or the terms of employment or the conditions of employment of any persons, whether employees in the employment of the employer with whom the dispute arises or not.



Des Derwin

Clondalkin paper workers demand jobs

If you are an active trade unionist, get involved with the Clondalkin Paper Mills occupation now. If the CPM workers win your job will be a little more secure.

Because the spell will be broken. A section of workers will have thrown themselves before the ever-rolling wheel of unemployment and stopped it in its tracks.

Because the way to resist redundancies will have been demonstrated.

The CPM sit-in is indeed a beacon. A workforce, united across unions and sections, from middle management to the sweeper, is demanding nationalisation if the company or any other company is unwilling to keep the mills open.

A well-organised Action Committee, not content with keeping the struggle to the narrow confines of the plant, is touring docks, warehouses and workplaces throughout the country seeking wide support for their struggle.

They realise the significance of this fight and their stand has apparently struck a note among shop stewards and activists all over Ireland.

All the docks (except Larne) have undertaken to black imports of CPM paper, as have Dublin warehouses, (again except one).

Their fight has taken on a political dimension, both because many of the workers see that the issue goes beyond trade unionism alone and because they have used the leverage allowed by the general election.

Some Fianna Fail candidates have pledged to support nationalisation. Whether they follow up their promises is another thing. The workers have seen Michael O'Leary refuse to back nationalisation.

They made a contribution to the election fund of their consistent supporter, the independent-minded Labour TD, Mervyn Taylor.

A delegation from the sit-in spoke at a public meeting of the unemployed candidate, Sean Corr, in Ballyfermot. But the workers stress that they refuse to allow any political party to jump on their bandwagon.

Two or three fulltime officials (the General Workers are represented by the ITGWU and the FWUI, with the usual craft unions and TASS also present) are giving active support, which is more than can be said for the upper echelons of the movement.

John Carroll of the ITGWU told the workers out straight that the Union would not institute an official blacking of imported paper, due to the Supreme Court ruling in the Talbot case. Retreat from injunctions, even before any injunctions.

The FWUIA is following a similar policy. But the CPM people have gone direct to stewards and found more backbone there.

Closing CPM shows the insanity of capitalism in a nutshell. Even in capitalist terms it could be viable, especially with the co-operation the workforce have been prepared to give. CPM would follow the long line of paper mill closures, ending the last plant manufacturing their type of paper in the country and abandoning a large paper market to imported substitutes with the loss of 470 jobs.

According to the Action Committee the closure would mean:

- *The loss of £2 million in PAYE and PRSI to the exchequer
- *The loss of £2 million in unemployment benefit etc
- *The loss of £25 million turnover
- *Higher priced imported paper and loss of business to printers and converters
- *A blow to the national resource of forestry
- *Loss of business to shipping companies, service industries and a worsening of the famous balance of payments deficit.

CPM is a computerised plant with cheap Kinsale gas passing

its very doorstep, negating the 'dear energy' argument for its closure.

How often are we told that sacrifices by workers will help secure their jobs? The Clondalkin workers were willing to accept cruel cuts in earnings, conditions and even jobs to keep CPM open. Wage restraint? How about a seven-month pay pause till May '82, followed by 14 per cent until 1984?

That's what the negotiating committee were prepared to put to the workforce, along with savings on bonus schemes, a new health agreement, £700 per employee into the plant and a reduction of 157 jobs.

Not only was the plant closed on 22 January but the workers' efforts were met with insults. The media painted a picture of workers blind with greed for bonuses of £50 per week, choosing closure rather than cuts in bonus.

The unions were forced to place their own statements in the newspapers, at enormous expense, to counteract the propaganda campaign and tell that their bonus earnings were £24 per week on average and their basic wage was £85.40, not £150.

In fact the unions were willing to allow the ICTU to come up with bonus savings. But, in order to offer some flimsy excuse for its determination to close no matter what the company fouled up the negotiations by demanding a new bonus scheme.

They offered no explanation for their claim that the new scheme would save £500,000 a year and withdrew from the talks.

It had been previously agreed that 45 per cent, 45 per cent and 10 per cent financing by the company, state and workers respectively was feasible. But with the withdrawal of the company, the state has since refused to accept the responsibility of a majority stake in the mills.

But the case for nationalisation of CPM under the control of the workers themselves is overwhelming.

The Action Committee is—at time of going to press—considering a match in Dublin supported by workers from throughout the city. An organising meeting of stewards from all over Dublin is under consideration. This would provide a powerful focus for a new beginning, a big step in turning the tide of redundancies.

In your workplace, committee, union branch or trades council organise collections, messages of support and delegations to meet the Clondalkin workers. Refuse to handle paper normally supplied by CPM.

Leaflets are available from the Action Committee. Donations and messages of support to: Clondalkin Action Committee, CPM Social Club, Nangor Road, Co Dublin. Phone line to Action Committee Dublin 592937.



THE WORKER

FOR WORKERS POWER AND INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM

NATIONALISE DE LOREAN!

John De Lorean's little dream is shattering. And it's the workforce in the black spot of unemployment in West Belfast that are paying the price. 1,000 workers were laid off in February and 1,560 more were put on a one day week. A further 80 workers were let go from one of the suppliers to De Lorean, CP Trim in Belfast.

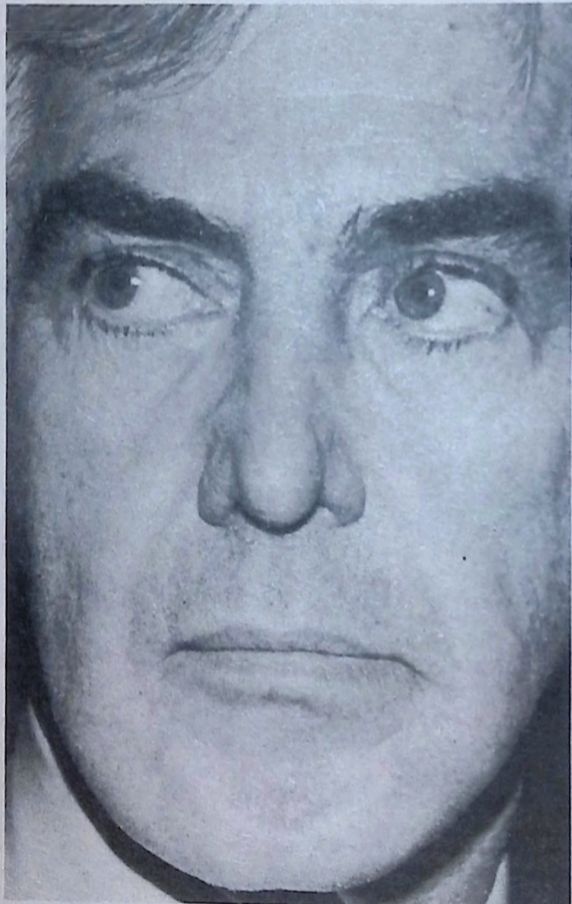
De Lorean has always been a chancer. His ambition was to produce the dream sports car that could break into the American market. De Lorean's problem was that he was big on ideas but short on capital. He said himself: 'Back in the sixties, any moron with an idea could raise capital. Now it's impossible.'

But John wasn't giving up. His speciality has been to pressure the state authorities in areas of high unemployment to hand out the necessary cash. He firstly tried Puerto Rico, then Detroit, then the IDA in the South. He finally found the burly Roy Mason who not only offered him £50 million immediately but also was

prepared to turn a blind eye to the problems of getting the project off the ground.

Since then De Lorean has gone from strength to strength. His initial plan was to employ 1,000 in the first year; 1,500 in the second year and 2,500 in the third. In fact, he ended up exceeding 2,600 workers in 11 months. Why? Had he become converted to the right to work? Not at all. More workers meant more grants. And De Lorean was finding that he was again running short of cash.

There is no doubt that the whole De Lorean project is in deep trouble. De Lorean claimed he could sell 20,000 of his sports cars a year, on the American market. But



the recession in the States lengthened and deepened. And De Lorean was starting from scratch in a very limited market where well-known companies like Jensen and Austin Morris were selling between 8,000 to 9,000 cars.

The prospects for De Lorean workers now in West Belfast are bleak. They have been used as pawns in De Lorean's little gamble. The factory is now in the hands of Mr Cork, the receiver, who is ominously known as the 'undertaker' in Belfast circles. Most workers believe he is simply taking his time about winding the factory down finally, while he roves back and forth to America negotiating with speculators.

But what can be done? When the first wave of the redundancies were announced a minority of the shop stewards were for sitting in. Many, though, felt that a sit in would jeopardise

the 90 day notice period. The fact that the massive redundancies in February went without resistance has now led to demoralisation. Indeed, the cynicism about the De Lorean project in the first place has also strengthened this feeling.

But in an area like West Belfast, any jobs have to be fought for. There are upwards of 500-600 of the expensive sportscars (valued at £13,000 each) stockpiled in the factory or in the docks. An occupation to demand the nationalisation of De Lorean could have some bite—particularly if it was backed up by a campaign throughout the island to expose the scandal and corruption of the whole enterprise.

No one is saying that winning nationalisation would be easy. But with so much state money in De Lorean, there is a real case to be made. A De Lorean worker

New H-BLOCK CAMPAIGN strategy needed

THE SOUTHERN elections showed that the H Block vote from last summer has halved.

This performance confirmed what the movement itself knew—that the massive support demonstrated on the streets, in the areas and at the ballot-box has floundered since the ending of the hunger strike.

The campaign is fragmented. Only isolated support has been rallied for the 20 arrested demonstrators to the British Embassy. They now face, almost alone, the vicious sentencing of the Special Criminal Courts. Action groups around the country, rather than having been given any clear lead from the campaign, have been left to their own resources, or asked to mobilise only for commemorative events. Independently, a group of women have organised the traditional international women's day march to Armagh Gaol on March 7; the success of it does more credit to the sheer perseverance of women on the ground, who have consistently pushed Armagh onto the campaign's agenda, than it does to the campaign as a whole.

Of course, commentators are only too quick to jump on this weakness. The 'economic' climate of the elections, they say, ousted the question of the North. There is a grain of truth in this. Admittedly the way Fine Gael and Fianna Fail raised economic issues in these elections—the tweedledum and tweedledee of VAT now or VAT later—left very little room for wider political issues. On the other hand, candidates who supported the prisoners tended to talk no economics at all, and talk exclusively in terms of either the prisoners or partition.

Class issues—unemployment, housing, redundancies—were what everyone, including supporters of the campaign, wanted to hear about, and the links, say, between De Lorean and Semperit—both on short-time working—should have been made. The H Block candidates who ignored this did so at a cost—the strengthening of the Stickies.

Other more hostile commentators have explained the fall-off in support by the 'emotive' nature of the whole hunger-strike campaign. Once men stop dying, the movement collapses. These cynics have forgotten, if indeed they ever knew, that the thousands that marched for the prisoners were not marching for the five demands alone, nor even simply to save the prisoners' lives. It went further. The hunger-strike spearheaded a movement against the presence of the British in the North and the nature of the Northern State itself. 'Brits out' was the unanimous call from the people in the campaign.

What then are the real arguments? Why hasn't the H Block campaign, massive and widespread as it was, consolidated the gains of last year? The reality is that a mass movement cannot be turned on and off at will; it has to be given a clear lead and presented with demands that that movement can win.

A sudden switch, for example, to a prioritisation of the military of-

fensive leaves the mass of that movement passive, since, to put it bluntly, they are left with nothing to do.

Or again, to maintain as some sections of the leadership of the campaign did, that the movement has to stay on fighting for the total winning of the five demands, when for many that seems unwinnable, leaves the movement suspended. Or, again, to suppose that candidates from the movement can simply stand on the prisoners' ticket here in the South, without making the wider political arguments about why their very supporters are now unemployed and under attack, is to underestimate people's real concerns. Many, sadly to say, forgot in the confusing election blurb from Fitzgerald and Haughey about children's clothing, that those ten hunger strikers did die.

And you don't refresh people's memories by simply saying 'remember them'. You do it by making the connections in workers' minds about how fighting for the prisoners, fighting for the withdrawal of the British army from the North is the same fight as fighting down here for decent housing, the right to a job and the right to control our lives.

The lack of these political initiatives made the National Question intervention in the elections a weaker one. It has to be rectified if the campaign is going to consolidate anything like the support it had last year. That means the setting here and now of clear demands for the campaign in the future. A British Withdrawal Campaign would provide that focus towards a unified and forceful campaign. Having learnt the harsh lessons of the past three months, it should consolidate its support and point the way forward to a new, if smaller, political campaign that will get to the root of the problem—the presence of the British in the North.

That transition will not be easy. It demands clear leadership from the campaign. Simply shelving the decisions while political organisations go their own sweet way results only in the fragmentation that we are now witnessing. Illusions about the campaign being somehow vaguer or softer than a British Withdrawal campaign, in the hope of winning over gentler sections of Fianna Fail or the SDLP or indeed the Catholic Church must finally be dispelled. The importance of the Trade Union Movement must be recognised, not paid lip-service to. Only then will a solid and clear movement be built.

Noone expects that this campaign can be rebuilt and strengthened overnight. The conference in Dublin on March 14 we hope will point the way forward.

MARNIE HOLBOROW

the worker

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