



SOCIALIST REPUBLIC

Aug. '77 price 10p

movement for a socialist republic



**This man and his
Loyalist helpers
have already
killed
750 people**

**GET HIM
OFF OUR
BACKS!**

WHY FIANNA FAIL CANT
SOLVE THE
ECONOMIC
CRISIS



THE SASH WONT FIT



The attitude of the SDLP towards the RUC "we would support them, if....." has always provoked controversy. For the loyalists their ambivalence provides proof - if any is needed! - of their fundamental "disloyalty". Despite these attacks the party has consistently refused to commit itself one way or another on this question. In recent months this controversy has again surfaced. This time it is not only the loyalists who are taking up the cudgels but all sectors of "moderate" opinion. Journalists from Dublin and British newspapers who, despite the fact that after arriving in Belfast rarely if ever set foot outside the bar of the Europa Hotel, assure us that the "ordinary Catholics" want the RUC back in their areas. These same journalists are deeply upset that up till now the SDLP have lacked the courage to support this supposed groundswell of "ordinary Catholic" opinion, which of course begs the question - if the minority really do want the RUC back then surely the SDLP would not need any courage to go along with this demand? Despite this charade of hypocrisy and ignorance the question of the SDLP attitude towards the RUC is a vitally important one. It encapsulates the crisis facing the SDLP, and equally importantly demonstrates the extent to which British policy has shifted in the last three years.

CATHOLIC OPPOSITION TO THE RUC

The SDLP's dilemma is of course understandable. However much the media might like to portray the RUC officer as a nice 'bobby' helping children to cross the road, the nationalist community has a very different picture. For them, the RUC officer is a uniformed thug with a baton or a sten gun attempting to terrorise the minority into submission. They remember that it was the RUC who savagely attacked and broke up the first civil

rights marches in 1968. They remember also that it was the RUC who led an armed pogrom against the Falls in 1969, burning the Catholics out of their homes and firing indiscriminately with sub-machine guns into blocks of flats. And even if they had forgotten all this, they cannot fail to notice that in rural areas where the RUC roam freely Catholics are being subjected to continual harassment, physical attack, and occasionally, murder. It isn't that the anti-Unionist community have a prejudiced view of the RUC. The opposite is true; they see them for what they are - a major element in the repressive forces upholding the 6 County state. THAT is why the minority remains hostile to the RUC and why the SDLP finds it so difficult to give in to British and Unionist pressure (and we should be in no doubt that it is the British government that is behind the current 'controversy'). Five years ago, just after BLOODY SUNDAY, Gerry Fitt said on TV "If we talk now (to the British) we would represent nobody". The same is true today regarding the RUC. The SDLP won't come out calling for full support for the RUC because they would find their base in the Catholic community was rapidly eroding. They would represent nobody. The SDLP are aware of this and so is the British government.

THE SHIFT IN BRITISH STRATEGY

In 1974 when they were in government with Faulkner the SDLP maintained the same ambivalent attitude towards the RUC, arguing that with power sharing the police would gradually become a non-partisan force, but that until then they could not urge full support. While Britain was uneasy about this no effort was made to force the SDLP's hand; a lot of water has passed under the bridge since then and winning the consent of the minority to the state machine has ceased to be a priority for the British. Any Catholic representative who capitulated on the question of the RUC would quickly lose any credibility, so that British efforts to pressurise the SDLP on this issue must be seen as confirmation of the fact that power-sharing is not on the agenda.

The only role that Catholic ministers will play in any future government in the 6 Counties will be a cosmetic one; their participation would be useful for the purpose of providing a good public image in the South of Ireland and internationally to what would in

reality be a loyalist government. This is the choice which is open to the SDLP - to grovel before the Unionist-Loyalist bloc in the hope of getting a seat in the government and risk losing their mass support or to cling to their base in the Catholic community while observing the Cabinet seats they have coveted so much floating away forever.

THE SDLP - MAKE THEM FIGHT OR MAKE THEM RUN

Britain's turn from seeking the consent of the minority towards relying mainly on coercion has opened up a new situation in the North. We have seen Republicans and their supporters come to realise slowly that an armed campaign divorced from mass struggles is futile. But there are advantages as well as dangers. There is a real danger that these Republicans will become totally demoralised and will give up hope of defeating British rule and dismantling the Orange state. It is vitally important not to adopt a "wait and see" approach but to attempt to initiate new campaigns against the British Army and the RUC - today! It is only by getting the people back on the streets that we can turn the tables on the British. The Irish Front in Derry and the Relatives Action Committee in Belfast have begun the fight back; and showing the way forward to the entire Irish working class. However these forces risk becoming isolated unless they can draw the 'rank and file' supporters of the SDLP into struggle. This cannot be done simply by condemning the SDLP leaders from a height or alternatively just ignoring them. It can only be done by drawing the SDLP leadership into united action. Anti-imperialists must say to the SDLP leaders "Don't just speak on television about RUC brutality - join with us in organising a march to protest against it". Only by applying this united front tactic towards the SDLP can their supporters be drawn into struggle; and only through mass struggle against the British Army and the RUC can we win their supporters from their illusions in reforming the 6 County state.

DAVE COLLINS

**BRITISH
TROOPS
OUT NOW!**

Since January 1975 Britain's policy in the North has been designed to facilitate the recomposition of Loyalist control.

After the DUC strike (May 1974) it became obvious that any stable governmental formula would have to depend on Loyalism as its keystone. In short the only type of government which could now hope to succeed was one which aimed to preserve and strengthen the sectarian nature on the Northern state.

British imperialism instantly recognised this new reality.

But the immediate project of restoring Loyalist rule backfired owing to a crisis within the British ruling class (reflected at the time in the Tory leadership crisis and the paralysis of the Labour government) and the continuing combativity of the Catholic masses. Britain then developed a more long term policy composed of three elements. Firstly, an acceleration of the war of attrition against the Catholic minority and simultaneously the "Ulsterisation" of the conflict. Secondly, an increased emphasis on local government where the Loyalists had overwhelming control. Thirdly, the isolation of the SDLP so that political representation of the Catholic middle class could be dropped as an essential component of a governmental formula.

The DUC strike last May gave a fresh impetus to Britain's strategy on all three fronts.

GROWTH OF REPRESSION

Just as Mason was announcing his new "security package" during the Paisleyite strike the British Army was launching its new offensive. Symbolically it broke down the barricades of the North's remaining "No-Go area" in Turf Lodge and occupied the area against stiff civil resistance. Since then there have been a number of clashes in ghetto areas such as St. James's. At the same time the harassment of Republican and Socialist militants has been escalated to a new pitch. If the current rate of harassment continues then the number of arrests will be more than double last year's record figure.

Meanwhile, as the repression is stepped up the process of "Ulsterisation" is driven relentlessly forward. In addition to increasing the RUC strength by nearly 20% and re-equipping and rearming it, the more openly Loyalist Ulster Defence Regiment has had its full-time membership increased by nearly 30%.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The results of the Local Government elections have confounded those middle-class politicians who tried to ease the Catholic Minority's fear of Loyalism with the argument that it was forever fragmented and impotent. Despite the break-up of the LURC the Loyalists continue to control the vast majority of local councils, and moreover with an even more brutal and vindictive hand. This has not deterred Britain in the slightest from pushing ahead with its plans for strengthening the powers of local government.

BRITISH IMPERIALISM

paving the way for Loyalists

The Labour government has openly and shamelessly entered into a pact with the Official Unionists to create a second centralised tier of local government in the North, which would guarantee Loyalism the fruits of patronage and sectarianism. An arrangement such as the "Molyneux Plan" may be a step in the direction of either "integration" or "devolution". But that is only a secondary question; what is decisive is that the Catholic middle class will be deprived of any control over the Northern state and more importantly the Catholic masses will continue to suffer the full rigours of Orange sectarianism.

CRISIS IN THE SDLP

In addition, and as a result of, precipitating a new wave of "Ulsterised" repression, and drawing the Labour government and the Loyalists closer together, the events of last May have also further undermined the political strategy of the SDLP. The escalation of repression and the local government deal with the Loyalists is further exposing the SDLP's powerlessness. SDLP politicians have been embarrassed into taking up cases of brutality and harassment. Even Austin Currie has been forced to call for the withdrawal of the British Army from Catholic areas. And after an initial attempt to modify their position on the RUC Fitt, Hume & Co. were forced to repeat their opposition. The isolation of the SDLP and the shift of the so-called middle ground towards the Loyalist fold was underlined by the bitterness of Alliance's rebuttal of the SDLP and the attempt by the

RUC Chief Constable to amplify the debate and further embarrass the SDLP before all "respectable citizens" in Britain, Northern Ireland, and the South. Nor does the success of the SDLP in the local government elections ease the crisis. On the contrary it only exacerbates their contradictions. Of the massive 30 seat gain all but three - Moyle, Larne, and Coleraine - occurred in militant Catholic areas. Huge successes were recorded in such areas as Armagh, Newry, and Fermanagh, as well as in Belfast ghettos such as New Lodge, Andersonstown etc.

These successes do not result from demoralisation of the Catholic vanguard. They are to be explained by the militant demagoguery of large sections of the SDLP who were sounding off about being ditched by British Imperialism. These successes will only encourage the dissension within the SDLP, and shove it further out of the orbit of Britain's strategy.

Although British Imperialism has been making steady headway over the past few years, the latest phase of its strategy of its strategy contains many weaknesses. These are the weak flanks through which the anti-imperialist forces can launch a successful counter-attack.

CUTTING INTO THE SDLP'S HEART

Since the abolition of Stormont the SDLP has been able to place itself between the Catholic masses in the North (and the South) and the militant vanguard in the ghettos. This division has been the single most important factor underlying the downturn in the mass anti-imperialist struggle over the past few years. But now conditions are maturing which will allow this gap to be bridged.

The more it becomes clear that Britain is backing some form of Loyalist control the less credibility the SDLP has. This can result in demoralisation, as exemplified by a section of the Catholic middle class, followed by a section of the Catholic masses, outflanking the SDLP by supporting the openly pro-imperialist Peace movement. But the continued resistance of a combative anti-imperialist layer can have an opposite effect - a return by broad sectors of the Catholic masses to a real struggle for democratic and national rights. It all depends on whether the anti-imperialist vanguard plays its cards the right way.

To play its cards right the anti-imperialist vanguard must cut right into the heart of the SDLP (especially the pseudo-nationalists around Paddy Devlin) to participate in a practical campaign for the removal of British troops and an end to the brutality of the security forces. It must be shown to the Catholic minority that if Devlin & Co. refuse to do anything about the troops and harassment it is not because Socialists and Republicans put sectarian banners in their way but because the SDLP "militants" don't really want to fight.

✦ by challenging them

JAMES CONWAY



For many people the general election was not fought over civil repression. Certainly neither Fianna Fail or the Coalition concentrated on this issue. Nonetheless, two things should be noted. Firstly, when repression was an issue the electors showed their dissatisfaction with the Coalition's record. Two of the three ministers defeated, Minister for Justice Cooney and Minister for Posts and Telegraphs O'Brien had been outspokenly ready to restrict civil liberties. O'Brien's defeat is particularly significant; he raised the repression issue so as to attack the alleged Republicanism of Fianna Fail's Charles Haughey. Haughey topped the poll in Artane while O'Brien lost his seat in the Clontarf constituency which had been designed for his particular convenience. In addition, James Gallagher, who had been rebuked during the campaign for pledging himself to oppose the Emergency Powers Act and, initially, the Offences against the State Act, was also returned to the Dail. On the other hand Fianna Fail will not be influenced by the results. Lynch has praised Cooney's record. In the new Dail, when Neil Blaney tried to get time to move the repeal of the Emergency Powers Act, (opposed by Fianna Fail), Lynch declared that his government would not move precipitately but wanted, firstly, to examine the matter.

FIANNA FAIL'S RECORD

In this, Fianna Fail is merely true to itself. Even allowing for its period in office being three times that of the Coalitions, its record is considerably worse than theirs. After a brief attempt to win to itself all militant Republicans in the early thirties Fianna Fail established special tribunals to sentence them. Later it was responsible for the Offences Against the State Act, from which all subsequent repressive laws have been developed. Fianna Fail introduced and operated internment in the forties and fifties and would have done so again, in 1971,

had it considered it politically feasible. Fianna Fail was the last government to hang anyone, even after the first inter-party government had hanged nobody. (It should of course be noted that it was only popular agitation that stopped the last Coalition from evening the score.) It was also Fianna Fail that last imprisoned striking telephonists and electricians. This inheritance is not some Fianna Fail "original sin" except in so far as it accepts capitalism. In Ireland this is a weak semi-colonial force which has never been able to solve either its economic problems or to unite the country. Any serious attempt to achieve either of these aims conflicts with capitalism's needs; it cannot afford to end unemployment because it needs it in order to discipline its workers; it cannot oppose imperialism because it shares its interests. In particular, the current struggle in Northern

Repression:

F.F. BACK

NOW COMES THE CRUNCH

Ireland has shown its potential as a stimulus for action (especially working class action) in the Republic - most notably in the 1972 General Strike protesting against Bloody Sunday. This is the context for intensified repression regardless of changes of government or Ministers of Justice. In 1970, Micheal O'Morain (Remember the Criminal Justice Bill and the RTE Seven Days investigation?) was replaced by Desmond O'Malley amid signs of popular relief. O'Malley "out-repressed" his predecessor with his Prevention of Forcible Entry Act, Prisons Act, Special Criminal Court and Offences Against the State (Amendment) Act. When Fianna Fail was defeated many expected much from his successor, Patrick Cooney, who had nourished a vaguely democratic reputation while in opposition. Cooney allowed prison conditions to worsen eventually, took responsibility for the Criminal Law (Jurisdiction) Act and the Emergency Laws. Now Cooney is succeeded by Gerry Collins. Nobody (outside Fianna Fail) expects much of him. It may be that people recognise that after all the Minister for Justice is but one member of a collectively responsible government. More likely it is based on Collins' known and proven record, as a hatchet person (within Fianna Fail after the Arms Trial and against RTE in 1972). Whatever the reason such suspicion is healthy.

SCOPE FOR FIGHTING BACK

But what is even more hopeful is that such mistrust represents something greater than either of the above causes. Both it and the anti-government vote were an expression of a general unease. The Coalition's repressive package was met with working class mobilisations in several places. It was unable to realise the full complement of repressive laws e.g. by reviving capital punishment, mainly because of the

international campaign in support of the Murrys. The revelations about prison conditions and police brutality have gained a response wider than the supporters of those immediately affected. Something more promising than the essentially negative election result is the formation of the Trade Union Co-ordinating Committee Against Repression (TUCCAR). This body and other civil rights groups will have to move if their potential is not to be frustrated. The prisons of Ireland remain hell-holes. In the "Republic" hanging remains on the statute books. The southern state's repressive powers remain greater than the excessively restrictive Offences Against the State Act. Furthermore the British occupation is still the basic cause and incentive for repression North and South. In the North there are special courts, "criminalisation" of political prisoners, and now intensified persecution of anti-imperialist organisations (Peoples' Democracy and the Red Republican Party) whose defence is to try and organise mass action against repression.

Supporters of civil liberties cannot limit themselves to the lobbying beloved of the Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL). Their unease about repression must be turned into action. All trade unionists should be encouraged to join TUCCAR. Members of the Trade Unions and tenants and cultural organisations must work to involve these bodies in building an independent enquiry into prison conditions. In the meantime there should be a big mobilisation for the RAC march on August 7. Only through such initiatives will Irish Civil Liberties be strengthened and maintained.

Fianna
Fail -
wolf
in
sheep's
clothing



R. LYSAGHT

P.D. GENERAL SECRETARY ARRESTED



As promised during the Paisleyite strike last May the British Army is escalating its campaign of harassment against the Catholic minority in the North. It is no longer a matter of combatting the Provos - but, as the Loyalists demanded - intimidating the ghettos where a strong resentment of the British Army and British rule still flourishes. Already this policy has led to a series of confrontations in areas such as St. James's and the Turf Lodge. More recently the British Army has extended its field of operations into the South - the most recent example is the SAS kidnapping in Co. Louth. Now it seems the escalation of British Army harassment is to include renewed attacks on socialist organisations whose sole "crime" is to campaign against repression. This is shown by the emerging campaign to smash People's Democracy. Already this year a member of PD, Denis Murphy, was lifted during a mass raid and charged with the possession of a rifle and some illegal documents. Now, four months later, after several days of interrogation, PD's General Secretary, John McNulty, has been charged with the possession of the same documents! Although the Judge in the case told the RUC that they had very little

evidence they opposed bail. Then when McNulty was remanded in custody until September the RUC interjected to say that it would take rather longer to prepare their case. How long does it take to make a frame-up stick? (the arrest of Itis clear that McNulty is nothing more than a legalised form of internment. Protests have already been made about the abuse of remand. Representatives of the Movement for a Socialist Republic, People's Democracy and the Independent Socialist Party are currently in the United States taking up the case of McNulty and the remand issue with prominent civil libertarians there; similar moves are afoot in Britain where left-wing Labour MP's are being approached on the matter; and in Dublin the McNulty Defence Committee is seeking support from democratic and Republican-minded members of the Trade Unions, the Dail, etc.

**STOP THE HARASSMENT OF THE CATHOLIC MINORITY!
DEMAND THE RELEASE OF JOHN MCNULTY!**

Send messages of solidarity and support to:

People's Democracy, c/o Connolly Bookshop, Andersonstown, Belfast.

Workers' Research Unit,
52 Broadway,
Belfast,
21 June 1977

Dear Comrade,
We would like to inform you of the setting up of a Workers' Research Unit in Belfast, and through you seek wider support for our work. Our aim is to produce a quarterly bulletin which will take up some of the social issues which affect us in our day to day life, such as the crisis in the health service, housing etc. The other main aim of the group will be to provide a research service for those who need it and do not have access to the information since it is monopolised by the authorities and the employers. Thus we aim to help workers fighting for better conditions, against lay-offs etc. and other groups such as community and tenants' associations. The tasks we have set ourselves are quite ambitious, but they can and will be realised if we receive support from the organisations and individuals who recognise the need for this service. We need financial help of course, but we also need people to help and give their time, especially to provide information on the areas we are dealing with.

Yours Sincerely,
The Secretary,
Workers' Research Unit.

Irish front

c/o 3 Meenan Square, Bogside, Derry City.

A Chara,

The Irish Front in Derry City wishes to inform your readership that a march and rally will take place on Wednesday August 10th., assembling at the Oregan Shops at 2p.m. This demonstration has been called by our Central Committee which represents six anti-imperialist groupings in the city, to coincide with the arrival in the North of Elizabeth II, Queen of England. It is our intention to mark this date as a day of protest against the visit of the constitutional head of the British State, and as an act of solidarity for our hundreds of compatriots incarcerated in British and 'Irish' jails and camps. We feel that this visit by a foreign monarch, merely add insult to injury at a time when repression against the nationalist population is on the increase, political status has been denied to our political prisoners, and her Government and its agents have in recent days been found guilty of torture at the Human Rights Court at Strasbourg. In addition we can never forget

that this personage was responsible for decorating the COMMANDER of the 1st. parachute regiment which carried out the butchery on Bloody Sunday, January 31st., 1972, when fourteen of our fellow citizens were killed during a peaceful demonstration organised by the Civil Rights Movement to oppose internment without charge or trial. We hereby request and expect the full co-operation of all anti-imperialist organisations, who are invited to attend and display their respective banners. Bands which are available would be most welcome, as indeed would messages expressing solidarity with our endeavours for Ireland and its people on this occasion. All correspondence should be sent to the undersigned. Thanking you in anticipation,

Is mine,
Le meas mor,
George Henderson,
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
SECRETARY,
IRISH FRONT,
DERRY.

Fianna Fail's massive election victory has forcibly reminded everyone that since 1932 it has only been out of office for 10 years and that no Coalition has held office since it has gone to the polls. The complaints of Fine Gael and Labour that they were turfed out because of the economic recession do little to explain this and other related facts.

Fianna Fail is a party of big business but continues to support of the majority of the urban working class, the small farmers, and a wide cross-section of a number of other classes - in short a classic populist party. It was formed after a split in the anti-treaty wing of Sinn Fein in the 1920's and won its wide social base by pursuing a policy that was relatively more independent of British Imperialism than Fine Gael while crushing the Republicans. It was distinguished from Fine Gael and Labour through its "Republican" rhetoric and in the 1960's, when it began to tone this down and help Britain to tighten its grip on the Southern economy, many thought that the National Question was no longer relevant and were taken in by Fine Gael's "Just Society" and Labour's "New Republic". These trends were interrupted as the fight of the Northern minority to smash the 6 County statelet, which had reared then so badly, rocked the stability of the 26 Counties. Labour and Fine Gael stepped in during the 1970 Arms Trial Crisis to condemn Jack Lynch's "ambiguous" approach to IRA violence and, once elected in 1973, subordinated all their policies to the one aim of preserving partition.

THE COALITION PLAYS ITS ROLE OUT

The flood of repression they introduced was initially justified in the context of reforming the 6 Counties and later placating the extreme loyalists to stop them gaining power. In the past year however it has become obvious to all that the era of reform is over, that Britain is, to say the least, shifting towards the loyalists, and that it plans to reach a settlement in the 6 Counties without ridding it of its sectarian features. Sections of the Southern ruling class are very uneasy about the effects this could have and began distancing them-

the meaning of the election results

selves from the draconian efforts of the Coalition. This was seen most clearly in the row over the "Emergency" legislation and the provision for 7 day detention, which culminated in the O'Deaigh-Donagan affair when the President resigned and the law was partially curbed in the Supreme Court. The basic thing about the election result then is the fact that it fits in neatly with the need for a new tactical turn by the ruling class - in a survey of major business firms over 60% wanted Fianna Fail back, only 20% favoured the Coalition, and the rest were undecided.

BIB GAINS FOR FIANNA FAIL

But how can we say this after an election campaign fought mainly on economic issues, and

just after the hunger-strike at Portlaoise had failed to force the government into even a token enquiry? After all there has rarely been less interest in the North and the Republican movement is becoming steadily more isolated. Such points show us that the majority of people have been so demoralised by the avalanche of repression, unemployment, censorship etc. that they are only beginning to realise what has hit them, slowly seeing that there is a reason for all these things happening at once, and that they are here to stay - not some temporary period of difficulty.

This extremely uneven and confused response to a steadily worsening social crisis are easier to see by breaking down

Of the 350 or so candidates who contested the General Election, the number fighting on a working class programme was very small and confined to small pockets throughout the 26 Counties. The basis on which Sinn Fein - the Workers' Party contested the election was to compete with the bigger parties on an electoral programme of "More Jobs and Cheaper Food" while having no chance of forming the next government - a precondition for the implementation of their limited programme, which only mentioned the North in the context of building support for "peace politics". The Communist Party, while supporting national unity, made no effort to independently organise the working class. The chair in the Dublin-Wicklow area was confined to the Independent Labour candidates and Seamus Costello, chairperson of the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP).

THE LIMERICK CAMPAIGN

Joe Harrington, in Limerick, the Socialist-Republican candidate sponsored by the working class and trade union paper, Bottom Dog, centred its campaign on demands for National Liberation, Women's Liberation and the defence of small farmers. Its demands for the right to work were based on the need for the workers' movement to organise independently of the state, as this was the only way in which the demands could be met. It also stressed the point that workers should place no illusions in the reformists and bureaucrats within the labour movement as it was proved by their record that they were in no way hesitant when it came to selling out to the government and the employers. Although the vote cast in favour of Joe Harrington, 122, was small in a constituency with no less than 6 independent candidates, the campaign proved very successful in developing and popularising the

main issues facing the Irish working class. It provided the militants of the Bottom Dog with an opportunity to take advantage of the election atmosphere to take their programme into the working class estates. During the campaign 6,000 copies of the platform were distributed, and 4,000 copies of Contraception Action Programme election leaflet were given out. 1,500 posters calling for self-organisation as well as a vote for Joe Harrington were put up around the constituency - these covered issues ranging from the need to raise the defence of the Northern minority as an issue to the defence of women's right to the right of those who work the land to own it. In South-

the city, 1,200 leaflets were distributed calling on tenants to organise independently rather than on the patronage and promises of capitalist politicians. As a direct result of the intervention women in the area have organised a petition demanding that the quarry convert a dangerous and barren of the area. The women become rather cynical about the promises of local politicians to fill the quarry filled in.



the election
Fianna Fail
first prefer
crease of 4.4
election in 197
of their best



Bottom Dog
fights back!

its. 50.6% of the votes, an in- the last el- and just short er performance.



The losses suffered by Fine Gael (35.1% to 30.1% - down 5%) and Labour (13.7% to 11.6% - down 2.1%) were significantly bigger than Fianna Fail's gains and must put seriously into question any new coalition gaining power even if support for Fianna Fail declines. Besides this the Coalition does not have the social base necessary for pursuing the type of repressive measures needed by the ruling class in the next few years. Fianna Fail can because of its social base. The Coalition could not have done so - it would have needed the allegiance of a significant sector of the working class. The Labour Party, which was supposed to fulfil this need, has steadily lost its weak working-class base to the point that 3 of its 6 Dublin TD's (Horgan, Quinn, and Desmond) depend on a small stratum of the petty-bourgeoisie which finds Fine Gael too conservative on social issues. Despite this and the good showing of the independent Labour candidates (Noel Browne and Matt Morrison), not to speak of the overall increase in support for independent candidates, Sinn Fein - The Workers' Party actually lost a little ground in Dublin. It did best in two

areas, Waterford and Cork North-East. It would be premature to generalise from this however. Joe Sherlock, their Cork candidate, did not use the "Workers' Party" tag and another of their candidates who did well, Donnachadh Mac Raghnaill in Louth, used election posters dominated with a tricolour symbol. Just how far this party has strayed from Republicanism can be seen from the fact that Louth was the only area in the country where it gave a heavier transfer to Fine Gael than Fianna Fail. Its support in Dublin seems to be based on people mildly dissatisfied with Labour who then

give their transfers to both Coalition parties. Their evolution shows exactly why the National Question is so important. The only road to Socialism in Ireland lies in resolutely opposing partition and defending all those attempting to end it. Those who stray from that road end up as the "left" cover for Labour, or worse still, Fine Gael, and fail to weaken Fianna Fail's hold on the working class. It is to that task revolutionaries in the South must direct themselves with renewed energy in the years ahead.

DAVID CARROLL

LABOUR PARTY



As a large part of the constituency is rural 2 meetings were held in Doon and Cappamore as well as the distribution of over 500 leaflets to small farmers in the area. After-work meetings were held in Berekenny and Krump, 2 of the largest factories in the region. A number of meetings were also held outside the Labour Exchange where the Button Dog is regularly sold - during the campaign sales there went up by 80%

SOCIALIST UNITY

On the Saturday prior to polling-day an open air rally was held in at Thomas St. corner which was attended throughout by a crowd of four to five hundred people. Among the speakers were Bernadette McAliskey (Devlin) who also addressed a late-night meeting of 100 women outside a bingo hall in the city. The most striking lesson however was the impact that revolutionary socialists can have through united action. The campaign was supported locally and nationally by the Movement for a Socialist Republic, People's Democracy, the Independent Socialist Party, the Socialist Workers' Movement and Revolutionary Struggle. Along with this individual members of the IRSP actively worked for the campaign. A sizeable number of independent militants were also involved. If this unity can continue on a nationwide level on the issues of repression, unemployment and trade union struggles the weak and divided revolutionary left can begin to move away from a position of being peripheral to one of having a substantial if still modest influence in the workers' movement.

PAT O'CONNOR

The Irish Labour Party occupies a peculiar political position in a country where a straightforward bourgeois party commands the support of the majority of the workers and small farmers. It is not a Social Democratic party since it is not based on the ideas of the Trade Union movement or its bureaucracy (at last year's conference a request by the unions for a quota of the seats on the Administrative Council was dismissed by the party leadership). While it does receive financial support from the unions there is very little overlap of activists between the two spheres. Unlike its English counterpart it is far from indispensable in the implementation of wage agreements. Fianna Fail can fulfil this function just as adequately.

HIG TRANSFER TO FINE GAEL

The heterogenous of LP support may be seen by examining the level of transfers to its Blueshirt coalition partner after 4 years in government. In 1973 the national average of transfers was 70% whereas in 1977 it was 59%. Only 11% of LP voters became alienated from a party whose leader voted against contraception, which did an action replay of its 1930's origins with a Blueshirt rally at its last Ard-Fheis, and whose record on all other issues has remained unrepentantly right-wing. The fact that the LP failed to maintain a real independent identity in Coalition (in other words it was not seen as a coalition of opposed parties but as a fusion of close if distinct parties) provides an explanation for the youth vote going to FF.

AN UNEASY AMALGAM

The LP has more to worry about from the election results than its slightly decreased overall vote would indicate. The support which it claims as its defining feature - its working-class base - has again decreased and the only new

Dublin seats which it won were in the middle class constituencies of South County and South East, which returned John Horgan and Ruairi Quinn. Labour's Dublin vote went down from 22% in 1973 to 17% in 1977, while in the urban centres in the rest of the country the results were even more disastrous, falling to 10% of the vote in Cork, 8% in Limerick, 6% in Waterford and a mere 5% in Co. Louth. The TD's who got a high number of first preferences such as John O'Connell, Eileen Desmond and Joe Harrington did so more on the basis of a personal following and hard constituency work than on an identification with the principles of Labourism. It is perhaps characteristic of the confused origins of Irish Labour, which got a lot of its support from ex-Republicans, that even today the LP contains a mixed bag of liberals, socialists, anti-nationalists, semi-Republicans, rural bigots, trade union officials, intellectuals, and semi-literate who have infinitely more to divide them than unite them. Conor Cruise O'Brien favours all "necessary" repressive legislation. Stevie Daghlan courts the fanatically Catholic Limerick Confraternity, Dan Spring conveniently absented himself from the debate and vote on the government contraception bill, Brendan Corish says he is a Catholic first and a Socialist second. The

CONTD. II



WEST BELFAST WORKERS SHOW THE WAY

On June 2nd, 26 workers from Eastwood's scrap-metal firm in Andersonstown went on strike over union recognition. On the 13th, their union, the Municipal & General Workers' Union (MGWU) made the strike official. On the 26th, the strikers voted to return to work having achieved recognition and negotiating rights. The significance of this apparently minor action cannot be overestimated in terms of the impact on the workers of West Belfast. Like many other firms in the area, Eastwood's made their profits out of a workforce where unionisation was either non-existent or weak and disorganised. They made a habit of employing ex-internees and prisoners who could be expected to accept low pay and rotten conditions since they could find little alternative employment. Labourer's rates were paid for skilled and semi-skilled work - basic pay £35 a week. No washing facilities existed for a workforce of over 70, 3 outside toilets were supposed to suffice; contrary to law no registered nurse was on the premises; a grant from the government for a canteen was used instead for a store, while an old refrigerating van served as a canteen.

seriously injured after drums of chemicals being put through a fragmentiser exploded; he came in 50 minutes late the following morning and was promptly sacked. Conditions at the yards were not the only aspect of the workers' lives being put at risk: the drivers were consistently threatened by loyalist paramilitaries in the ship-yard and at Sandy Row. At the same time a group of workers were summarily sacked; among these was Mike Collins, a shop-steward dismissed for alleged theft, despite the fact that nothing was removed from the yard, and that there were witnesses to prove Collins' innocence. At this point the 26 MGWU members struck. Help was offered by the local Unemployment Action Committee (UAC). Leaflets were chucked out to publicise the dispute and galvanise support in the area. Local shop-stewards and rank and file militants organised solidarity in their own workplaces, and on June 16th, the Eastwood's picket line was reinforced by a massive display of solidarity, as they were joined by 500 workers marching in their own

contingents from their separate workplaces, with placards designating their various unions. It was this example of organised mass militancy and the threat to repeat it that forced the issue. Eastwood's management agreed to negotiate with the MGWU boss, Minnis; and although the first meeting broke down after a few minutes when management objected to the presence of 'sacked' shop-steward, Mike Collins, the continued work of other shop-stewards in the area resulted in Eastwood's agreeing to union neg-



DIRECT ACTION GETS RESULTS

Matters came to a head when one of the workers, Colum Donnelly, was

BEHIND FF's ECONOMIC

The backbone of Fianna Fail's economic policies rests on the belief that the cloud of economic gloom that has shrouded the international economy for the last few years is about to dissipate. As a result an automatic decrease in inflation and a major expansion in international trade is anticipated. In this context the essence of Fianna Fail's policy is to gear the economy up for an export-led boom.

in international trade. So leaving aside the feasibility of Fianna Fail's proposals in the long term, a favourable international conjuncture in the short

term is indispensable if any headway at all is to be made.

INTERNATIONAL CONTRADICTIONS

Behind the international economic recovery lies a series of unresolved contradictions. This can be seen in the rivalry between

the United States on the one hand and the Western Group (especially Germany) on the other which surfaced last July at the annual meeting of Finance Ministers from the OECD (Organisation of Economic Co-operation & Development) countries. The United States, when it couldn't really afford to, helped the world economy out of the 1974-75 recession by buying and borrowing from the rest of the world. It ran up a record deficit of \$497 million. If the US fails to get rid of this deficit its economy threatens to grind to a halt in the second half of this year. This would benefit neither the US or its capitalist partners. As a result the US wants countries such as Germany and Japan, which have built up surpluses out of the recovery, to 'open' some of it and thus give the US some scope for continuing its own economic activity. But the Western European capitalists and the Japanese are dubious about this solution. They believe that any major new impetus to the international economy, that would result

ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

On the face of it Fianna Fail's policy seems well-founded. The 1974-75 international recession is over and all the major economies have experienced a perceptible increase in production and an easing off of inflation. This has been accompanied by a 15% upsurge in international trade last year.

So far the Irish economy has been responding favourably to this international change. An exceptionally high growth rate of 5% is expected this year and the volume of exports is expected to increase by 21.4%, while inflation is down to below 15%.

The general upturn is the only lever Fianna Fail really has. If their proposals for reducing inflation by 5% next year are looked at carefully it will be seen that only 2% is expected to come from their much acclaimed tax reductions while the remainder is expected to occur as a result of international change. Likewise their proposal to increase the level of exports by 10% above the current high rate for the next three years is dependent on the continuation of the boom



Grost cartoon.

otiating rights for the MGWU, and to improve conditions and facilities in the yard.

WEAKNESSES

At the same time the strike revealed serious weaknesses in organisation and direction. Originally management claimed the strike was an inter-union tussle, between the MGWU and the Amalgamated Transport & General Workers' Union (ATGWU); they claimed to have a closed-shop agreement with the ATGWU. This was a lie and as the strike showed signs of gathering momentum, the ATGWU formally stated that they would not stand in the way of the MGWU's attempts to secure recognition. The ATGWU did not however actively support the strike, and refused to order their members in Eastwood's out in solidarity. Though in the event this betrayal did not drastically affect the outcome, the demoralising sight of workers day after day crossing the picket line would have worn down the strikers' militancy in the absence of outside support. In fact, the ATGWU has a disgraceful record in the yard; the MGWU members are all former members of the ATGWU, and eventually left in disgust at the unwillingness of their leaders to accomplish any real improvement in their conditions. The MGWU leadership is not much better. Minnis refused strike pay, using the membership time-

clause - a weapon in the hands of the union bureaucracy to seriously weaken any upsurge in militancy in newly unionised layers. Minnis also refused to wage any battle to have Mike Collins reinstated. Instead he 'represented' him at an industrial tribunal which not surprisingly rejected Collins' case. Minnis' excuse was that he had not been at such a tribunal before! Furthermore the strikers decided to return to work without getting any commitment from management in writing. This allows Eastwood's to go back on their word at the first sign of a decline in workers' militancy. The blame for this cannot be put on the inexperienced workers, but must be laid fairly and squarely at the feet of Minnis and the MGWU leadership.

BASIS FOR FURTHER ACTION LAID

Despite the passivity of the bureaucrats the strike not only achieved its principal goal, but has laid a sound basis for waging a general struggle at Eastwood's for all-round improvement. More importantly, it has shown that the only way forward for workers in West Belfast is their own independent capacity to struggle outside the rigid confines laid down by the union leaderships. The formation of the Workers' Action Council (WAC) - drawing together the shop stewards who mobilised



support for the strike - is potentially a huge step forward in an area of mass unemployment, low wages and harassment of workers to and from work by the British Army. Currently the WAC is concentrating on consolidating itself among rank and file workers in West Belfast, trying to increase its representation, and encourage unionisation; it has not yet worked out any programme of action to present to workers.

THE ROLE OF THE WAC

In a climate of rising industrial militancy in Britain and Ireland, where previously demoralised layers are looking to the Trade Unions for leadership for the first time, in the battle against rising prices and unemployment, and where the bureaucracies are intent on reaching any agreement with the state in order to curb this militancy, the WAC can lay the basis for building a class struggle opposition inside the unions. In the occupied 6 Counties, where the trade unions have consistently refused to oppose the presence of British troops in the areas and workplaces of anti-unionists, the WAC must show its determination to lead rank and file workers on this front too; all the signs are that the time is approaching for a fight-back by the anti-unionist workers on all fronts - the WAC can be the focus and leadership for this struggle.

MIKE PINTER

- (i) Elect a delegate from your workplace to the WAC
 - (ii) Send money to the WAC
- Address of WAC:
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The fight is
on for the
defence of
living
standards

POLICY

from an immediate reduction of surpluses, would be premature and would only result in an inflationary boom that would inevitably plunge the world into an even greater recession than in 1974-75.

EXPORT BOOM

Attempts to escape the consequences of the last recession cannot succeed. The choices are a slump in the US or inflation in the West. Thus the prominent European business magazine "Vision" warned "Among the industrialised countries as a whole, a four year cycle between the recessionary low-points has appeared. The last dates back to 1974-75. So watch out for 1978-79." If the policies of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are anything to go by then the next recession is likely to begin with a slow-down of the US economy. Earlier this year the IMF opted for a cautious approach and imposed stricter monetary control. As far as Ire-

land's interests are concerned this will not only make borrowing terms tougher but will also depress the international trading situation - thus the growth of international trade for 1977 will be only half of last year's. Next year's growth is expected to decline yet again. And so far as an export led boom for the Irish economy goes, the Irish employers' magazine "Business And

Finance" laments "This optimistic export scenario could well turn sour if a too sluggish world trade recovery peters out because of a failure to reflate the major Western economies".

WAGE NEGOTIATIONS

When the state of the international economy over the next few years is looked at objectively it becomes clear that there is no realistic basis for Fianna Fail's economic strategy. They certainly don't provide the basis for any future wage negotiations. Yet the leaders of the Trade Union movement have equivocated and given the impression that a modified version of the Fianna Fail package would be an acceptable compromise for further wage sacrifices by workers. Any such suggestion must be firmly repudiated. The bankruptcy of Fianna Fail's policies are only a reflection of the bankruptcy of the Irish economy and the chaos of the international capitalist system. Now, more than ever it is necessary for the trade union movement to elaborate its own economic and social plan based on the needs of Irish workers and small farmers and not on the needs of the employers. It is this economic and social plan - and not Fianna Fail's doomed and inept package - which should be the basis for future wage bargaining.

DARA MACEVOY

Soweto: Freedom Fighters Must Win!



Once again, on the first anniversary of the June 16 Soweto uprising, violence flared in the Soweto township. Or, more accurately, death and destruction have again been dealt out in one of the most repressive states in the world.

The continuing revolt is a reflection of the growth of Black Nationalism, particularly amongst the youth, in recent years. Inspired more by the black consciousness movement than by any remnants of opposition since the days of Sharpeville, the upsurge spread rapidly to include the coloured and Asian communities for the first time. The immediate cause was the imposition of the hated Afrikaans language - an aspect of oppression we in Ireland can readily sympathise with.

APARTHEID'S IMPERIALIST BACKERS

The uprising came at a time when South Africa was pressing ahead with its policy of creating Bantustans - token, domesticated, Black "homelands". The Transkei's birth, as the first bantustan, was greeted by British Petroleum with a full page "congratulations" in the South African "Financial Mail" on December 22 1976. The 68% state-owned BP is one of 500 British companies with investments worth over £2,000 million in South Africa. These imperialist investments, from British, American, West German and other companies yield some of the highest profits in the world. The Apartheid system plays no little part in crushing the black worker into submission. Un-

like other neo-colonial states, (for example India), the absence of a native exploiting class meant that Imperialism had to rely on the white population as a mass base, to repress the black majority.

South Africa's industrialisation gave birth to a sharp division between white skilled labour and black unskilled labour. A rigid colour bar was established between these two sectors and a dual labour market was formed. The wage ratio between white and black workers is now between 5 and 20 to 1 depending on the industry. This enormous discrepancy has created a white labour aristocracy and ensures its loyal participation in the maintenance of the racist system. A similar imperialist strategy, while not as sharp, has been successfully put into operation in Northern Ireland.

THREAT TO STABILITY IN ALL OF AFRICA

The uprising in South Africa threatens Imperialism's hold on the rest of the continent. Since it threatens the strongest state, itself an imperialist power, it must be crushed. But that is reckoning without the endurance of the long suffering and viciously oppressed black working men and women. There are many parallels between their oppression and the repression meted out by British Imperialism in this country. Strong support and solidarity for black Azania (South Africa) can play a vital role in defeating imperialism and its bloody pawns.

FRANK O'DONNELL

EQUAL PAY FIGHT GOES ON

In a situation where unemployment is soaring, it is not surprising that it is the issue which played the centre stage throughout the election campaign in the South. It is unlikely either, that as the crisis of the economy continues to escalate that any attempts to juggle cash in order to decrease pressure will affect the lengthening dole queues. As workers living standards slide backwards, and pressure for jobs increases, the search for a scapegoat becomes more pronounced, and the struggle of women workers takes on a resounding significance. One of the surest, and best practiced methods which the bosses and the Government will use to defuse the pressure for jobs and force back living standards, is by playing on the weakness of male workers and the refusal in most cases, of the male dominated unions to fight for the rights of women as workers. It is women who will find themselves increasingly being used as the scapegoats of the crisis, being forced to accept greater wage differentials in order to get jobs, and having to fight their own fellow workers for the right to work.

The strategic significance of the Equal Pay struggle at the present time rests in the fact that it is a vital

testing point, not only for women, but also for the Government and for the Trade Union Movement. The forced acceptance of the Equal Pay legislation within the EEC, has left the economy with an explosive bill which it is totally unable to pay. At the same time, it has awakened expectations and demands among organised women workers, which given the appalling conditions which the majority of women work in, and the massive wage differentials, could only lead with even one major success, towards a generalised breakdown of restrictions on women at every level throughout the workforce, and huge political repercussions in terms of the division of labour within the economy. For women it would be a turning point in confidence, and their consciousness of their own value as workers and as trade unionists.

But the reverse is also true, and if the defeat of this longstanding struggle was to come about, it could only pave the way for a reactionary onslaught against women and an increased reliance by the Government and the bosses on the reluctance of the T.U. movement and male workers to support the struggles of women wherever they arise. The role which the T.U. movement has played so far, in its acceptance of the no strike clause in the National Wage Agreement the brakes put on the telephonists by the P.O.W.U. in spite of there being 2000

women prepared to fight, and the absence of any spontaneous show of solidarity within the movement as a whole, is an indication of the pressing necessity for co-ordination to be built by women themselves, and the male workers who support them within the Labour movement. An initial step towards advancing this co-ordination has already been taken with the establishment of the Equal Pay Support Group, an initiative taken by Irish Women United in conjunction with women and men workers who have taken action on this issue. The intention of the group is to fight both inside and outside of the T.U. movement to win support for struggles already taking place, and to give confidence and backing to women preparing to make claims. If this campaign is to be built it requires militants within the unions, the women and the student movement willing to fight within their branches and organisations for active support donations and sponsorship. More than anything else it will require active recognition on the part of socialists and trade unionists, that the struggle for Equal Pay is a central class issue one on which hinges the living and working conditions of tens of thousands of women, and the ability of the working class as a whole to defend their living standards.

THE INTELLECTUAL AND THE CLASS STRUGGLE

The occupations of intellectuals vary greatly, but have certain things in common. Apart from what we noted previously about their bourgeois origins and so on, they have a common difference from workers, in that it is not just their labour power that they sell to their state or commercial/industrial employers, but their mental capacities.

These capacities are not merely acquisitions from universities but are closely related to personality and personal mental activity, including attitudes of all kinds. The political and social attitudes of a factory worker are of no concern in themselves to an employer (though militant action arising out of those attitudes may be of great concern). But the political and social attitudes of an intellectual are of concern in themselves to an employer.

The factory worker has the disadvantage of inadequate education, of being constantly and insidiously discouraged from thinking independently, of alienation from intellectual life.



The intellectual, by contrast, is well equipped to understand socialism in detail and how it relates to his/her own aspirations.

But life, even for intellectuals, is never pure intellect. For them to grasp socialism means to break as individuals from their own class in an isolated way which is likely to threaten their livelihoods. For workers to grasp socialism is to recognise the interests of their own class; and even when they may have to fight an isolated battle for their ideas, the sense of

class solidarity and class destiny can be a very real strength.

The socialist-inclined intellectuals are first and foremost traitors to their own class. Yet they are also strangers to the life of the class with which they identify politically. There has long been a tendency both amongst radical intellectuals and in socialist movements to say that they should "immerse themselves in the masses". This is largely a naive and romantic notion which, while it can be valuable as a short-term educative exercise, leads sooner rather than later to frustrations and distortions; and it fails to recognise the potential value to the working class of the specific skills and capacities of the intellectuals.

At the other extreme from the idea of the intellectuals trying to transform themselves into worker activists, is the notion of expressing one's socialism in a purely ideological manner within the context defined for one by the bourgeois structures - of, for example - the university. Both these notions fail to tackle the extremely difficult and complex task of relating the intellectuals' role and activity as producer to the fight for socialism.

One person in whom we can see elements of this relationship working themselves out at a particular stage of his development is Wilhelm Reich, the psychoanalyst. His later career, in America following the tragic smashing of the Austrian Social Democratic Party, illustrates the way in which the trajectory of intellectuals is closely dependent in many cases on the strength and credibility of the socialist movement. The defeat of the working class in Austria was a defeat also in terms of the development of his ideas.

But the period I want to briefly mention is that of the rise of Austrian Social Democracy and that of the progressive development of Reich's theory. In the late 1920s he wrote "Dialectical Materialism and Psychoanalysis", joined the Social Democratic Party, and started up a workers' sex clinic which provided information on contraception, abortion, and sex education.

As well as giving out information at the clinic, Reich was able to observe at close quarters and in detail the nature of the sexual repression of the workers. It was a major stimulus to his thought, which led in the direction of understanding the specifically historical character of sexual repression and its importance as a weapon of bourgeois power.

While it stimulated his most productive theoretical development, it also revealed the limitations of his activity as an intellectual. He did not make the mistake at this stage of believing either that his theoretical work was enough, or that his clinic was going to solve the problems of sexual repression. He recognised both the value and the limits of his work: "For precisely the social consideration of these questions leads to recognition of the extreme importance of the proletarian movement, of the proletarian class struggle, so that in this area solutions to the question can only be expected in connection with the proletarian revolution."

STEVE MCDONOUGH

CONTINUED FROM P7

most surprising thing about the LP is that it has not split into a thousand parts before now.

A LEFT-WING ALTERNATIVE

This is the context in which Noel Browne (probably the only LP TD with a consistent historical following in the Dublin working class), Matt Merrigan and Dave Nelson were forced to run campaigns independently of the LP because of the bureaucratisation of the Head Office. This process has more relevance than the apparently incidental nature of its genesis might lead us to believe. The non Social Democratic nature of the Irish Labour Party has always created strains, whether in the constituency parties (as in the Socialist Labour Alliance (SLA) in 1971) or in the Trade Unions (who have always maintained both their political autonomy and an ambivalence towards the lack of democracy in the Labour Party). These tensions have been exacerbated by the exodus of radical militants out of the party in the 1970's, and many of those who worked for Browne and Merrigan in the election have been demobilised politically in the last six to seven years. The estrangement of the Browne-Merrigan wing proves to

us that there is no future for socialist militants in the Labour Party as presently constituted.

FOR A DEMOCRATIC WORKERS' PARTY

In considering the question of staying in or leaving the Labour Party there must be no renunciations made to the bureaucracy's undemocratic manoeuvring. This was an error made by the SLA when they asked to be allowed to stay in the Labour Party on the grounds that they did not constitute an organisation but an alliance. Apart from demanding the essential right to exist so as to organise their support, the Browne-Merrigan wing must take advantage of the inter-sectional tradition of real-political as well as financial backing from the trade unions for a workers' Labour Party. This sort of party would encompass all the best traditions of the Irish working class allowing for a flexible affiliation structure to get over political sectarianism. Only through the construction of such a party, that would be responsive to the political needs of the workers, can the division between "social" and "national" politics, (a factor which also shows itself organisationally), be transcended.

SIOBHAN BILLOM



This man will never give to the fund drive or subscribe — why don't you!

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TURF LODGE UNDER SIEGE

Throughout the last nine months the unquenchable militancy of the women of Turf Lodge has burst into flame time and again as the British Army has sought to jackboot its authority over the area and demoralise the spirit of the resistance. With the notable exception of St. James, Turf Lodge has been the only area in Belfast to organise openly on the streets against escalating harassment by British troops, to try to throw them out of the area, and to keep alive the traditions of no-go areas of the early 1970s.

But, as we said in the Socialist Republic 3 months ago, Turf Lodge cannot win on its own; the greatest danger is that the British will succeed in their aim of demoralising the people by default - simply because the undoubted sympathy which exists throughout the anti-unionist ghettos is not transformed into active physical solidarity.

RELATIVES ACTION COMMITTEE

This point has been made very clearly in the last few weeks. Following the Loyalist "strike" repression has escalated on all fronts - raids and arrests, torture in Castlereagh which to date has driven two men to near-insanity, fresh attempts to re-introduce the RUC. In Turf Lodge raids were carried out with increasing frequency, women started getting beaten up, school-kids were deliberately provoked as they were coming out of school, causing riots which gave the troops an ever-ready excuse to step up their violence.

At the end of May the women decided they had to organise again in protest at this fresh wave of terror. The local Relatives Action Committee (RAC) branch called a meeting to discuss their response, but with a poor turn-out and lack of organisation, the meeting launched a petition demanding withdrawal of British forces from Turf Lodge. Two days later the more militant women decided on a course of direct action - the RAC branch organised a series of road-blocks - two a day, one in the morning, one in the afternoon - to protect kids leaving school and to prevent military harassment. These roadblocks were planned to continue indefinitely, until a satisfactory response was forthcoming from the troops.

On Wednesday night the troops tried to intimidate the people with a show of strength - one person's arm was broken in two places, a baby in a pram was hit by a plastic bullet. On Thursday the women went to the nearby Fort Monagh barracks to demand an end to such terror. That day and the next saw the largest turn-out to the roadblocks. Yet by the end of the next

week, the roadblocks had come to an end through lack of numbers; and at the time of writing there are no organised protests going on on the streets of Turf Lodge, and the level of military terror is as high as ever.

NEED FOR POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

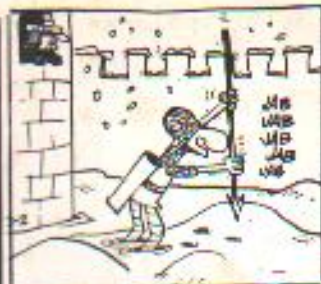
But Turf Lodge has not been defeated - and it is quite probable that its underlying militancy could erupt at any time in the near future. So, the question must be asked: Why did the protests come to such a speedy end, despite the unrelenting hostility of the mass of the people of the area to the presence of British troops? The answer lies in the isolation of Turf Lodge, the fact that no leadership came forward to mobilise anti-unionists from all areas in support of the struggle taking place in Turf Lodge.

It wasn't as if the local militants weren't conscious of the necessity of breaking down that isolation; or that they didn't try to call for the sort of support they needed. Mid-way through the protests the Socialist Committee for Anti-Imperialist Unity held a public meeting in the community centre on the theme "The Loyalist strike - the way forward." The Committee's aim was to emphasise the need for the unity in action of all anti-imperialist forces behind a programme which would reverse the decline of mass militancy; at the meeting it put forward a call for a conference of all these forces: e.g. the Irish Front in Derry, the Irish Civil Rights

Association in Dublin, the RAC in Belfast.

Over 100 people, mainly from Turf Lodge, and including a sprinkling of representatives from all the anti-imperialist forces, turned up, making it one of the largest indoor political meetings for a long time. There can be no doubt that the large attendance from Turf Lodge was a clear illustration of the militancy of the area, and more importantly, demonstrated the need for political leadership and direction. Hence the meeting was an ideal opportunity for a wide discussion about the struggle being waged in Turf Lodge at that time and how to take it forward, build support, and generalise it.

Unfortunately, the meeting took a long time to discuss this, for the most time concentrating on a propagandistic line of calling for "unity" but not giving any real immediate lead to the militants from Turf Lodge. However, eventually a proposal received virtually unanimous support: - to campaign throughout the 32 Counties for a demonstration in Turf Lodge itself, to demonstrate in practice that wide support did exist in Ireland but that it had to be organised and given direction. It was agreed to attempt to push this proposal through the RAC. MIKE PENTER



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