



the PLOUGH

TOWARDS AN IRISH WORKERS REPUBLIC

PAPER OF THE REVOLUTIONARY MARXIST GROUP

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LOYALISTS MURDER THEIR WAY BACK TO STORMONT!

The last three weeks have seen the resurgence of the assassinations of Catholics on a large scale. Many of the bourgeois politicians and the media have blamed the execution of two Belfast judges for setting off this wave of attacks. This explanation totally ignores the fact that there have been continual attempts on the lives of Catholics, and that many Catholic homes in towns like Antrim have been petrol-bombed, and many Catholic pubs — particularly in July — have been attacked without warning. The increasing viciousness is not something that exists in a vacuum, but is a significant development in the reassertation of Protestant ascendancy in preparation for a return to Stormont.

LOYALIST TAKEOVER

Britain's strategy since the U.W.C. strike is to hand back power to the Loyalists, and it is within this framework that the murders must be seen. This hand back of power will take place through the creation of a constitutional convention with a built-in Loyalist majority. To back this convention up there is an impressively armed police force being created with a reserve force recruited exclusively from Loyalist paramilitary organisations. An excellent example of this for those who harbour illusions in the Loyalist majority is the case cited in the 'Irish Times' of the 400 members of the Ulster Service Corps applying en masse to join the R.U.C. Reserve, once Rees opened the flood-gates. To make this hand-over as easy as possible, there is at the moment a two-pronged attack on the anti-Unionist minority.

CROPPIES LIE DOWN POLICY

The first method of eroding the morale in the anti-Unionist areas is the mass harassment of those who are known to have anti-imperialist views. This slightly more selective repression is designed to avoid the original errors which the British Army made by alienating the Catholic middle classes through their policy of total repression. Now it is aimed specifically at the working-class. The other prong of this attack is the assassinations which are being perpetrated on Catholics. Very often it is Catholics as *workers* who are being attacked, the frequency would indicate that it is rather more than coincidence. Rather it reflects the concrete reality of the sectarian state, where the Protestants although oppressed, can at least ensure that they keep what privileges they have in respect of job opportunities for instance. The attacks are a conscious attempt to drive the 'taigs' back into the ghettos. As the crisis deepens sectarian attacks will increasingly serve as an outlet for the frustrations of the Protestant working class, and will take pressure off the ruling class. It can be seen that British imperialism is well served by these assassinations enabling it in the short term to create an area of stability at a time when Britain itself is going through a very severe crisis.

UNEMPLOYMENT CONTINUES TO SOAR

The changing increasing figures for the level of unemployment in the South have been issued at such a fast rate, it is almost a daily task to try to keep abreast of them. For the last two months, the economists, Government and employers have been predicting a gloomy period ahead. And, in this they are not far wrong. The increase in unemployment for the last twelve months has jumped from 14% to 20%. Now, the Industrial Development Authority has announced that the increase by the end of 1974 will have reached 25%. "Around 15,000 jobs will be lost in Ireland during 1974, through lay-offs, non-replacement of employees and company closures" said Tom Killeen of the I.D.A. He went on to say "This would represent an increase of 25% in the number of jobs lost in 1973, and most of the fall-out is occurring in the traditional protected Industries." (Irish Times, Thursday 17th October).

Looking at the areas where unemployment is growing quickest, the building, car, footwear and textile industries, we can see that even greater numbers of workers are soon to be jobless. Forecasts, for example, on the footwear industry, indicate that 3,500 workers are threatened with short time working and inevitably redundancy. In the car assembly plants some 2,000 men are to lose their jobs; a loss which will have its effects on the near 10,000 workers in its ancillary industries. Predictions on the situation in the building industry have been estimated at 5,000 threatened redundancies. The textile workers within the E.E.C. are also soon to discover that the home industry is not able to compete profitably with European markets.

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UNEMPLOYMENT... CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

car workers march to defend their employment from EEC attack



There is also a remarkable increase throughout all industries, in short-term working. "On October 5th last year, there were only 37 short-term workers on live or unemployed Register. This increased to 1,484 on September 27th to 2,459 to 2,459 on October 4th 1974". (Irish Times October 16th).

GOVERNMENT POLICY

In view of this serious situation, what we may ask is the attitude of the Government and the employers? Firstly, we have been bombarded with claims that the crisis in the economy which has created so much unemployment is greatly aggravated by too high wages. Therefore, we are told, the real need is for greater restraint on wage demands. Scares about an intended deflationary policy are being circulated. These scares certainly have a foundation. In fact, the Government is currently actually implementing a deflationary policy (i.e. one of creating mass unemployment).

No longer finding it profitable to produce, the employers intend to rationalise production, i.e. cut down on the number of workers employed. To explain further, statistics have been issued that reveal that there has been a real decline in consumer demand "The volume of retail sales has fallen by something over 7.1% during June as compared with June of last year" "This fall accords with the generally accepted view that there has been a falling off in domestic demand this year". (Central Statistics Office '74). This reduction in demand in turn aggravates the problems in the rest of industry, and so the crisis deepens.

The Confederation of Irish Industry has already complained; "the Confederation blames the current liquidity problems facing industry on the squeezing of profit margins as a result of low demand". (Irish Times 18th October).

IF THE PROMISES ARE REAL

The great promises we have been treated to about maintaining employment are just a load of old hogwash, a cover-up. Irish promises are a total contradiction to the actual practice of the present

Government. Clearly there are certain alternatives open to them, to relieve the current situation. Firstly, they could re-introduce tariffs on all imported goods. Within the E.E.C. national interests have been sacrificed for the sake of so called European unity. Any resort to such arguments are flatly contradicted by what has actually been happening within the E.E.C. Secondly, since it took office, the Government could have also introduced subsidies for industries to make them economically viable.

One might ask, just where is all this money going to come from? A source of finance exists in the £428 million external reserves, that the Free State has built up through credit during two World Wars. This would be one source at least. But, in actual fact, the Government is not simply intending to raise these tariffs or give these subsidies. That's how serious they are about fighting unemployment!

In the last issue of the *Plough*, we raised certain demands that workers faced with redundancies should carry out. These, we stress, are the only real way in which unemployment can be fought. As for the Trade Union leadership; the latest call by John Carroll of the I.T.G.W.U. "to provide an emergency fund to tide industry over the present crisis", is a step in the right direction. *But the continuing participation of the Trade Union movement in the Redundancy Appeals Tribunal, is a looming contradiction. This body will be used more and more to legitimise the deliberately created unemployment policy of the Government and employers. No longer can Trade Unionists accept the concept of being redundant workers. The crisis is not of our own making, therefore we should not accept any responsibility for it.*

We must continue to fight, to take the example of the Danus workers, and refuse to become redundant.

THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT MUST WITHDRAW FROM THIS REDUNDANCY APPEALS TRIBUNAL NOW!

SHARE ALL WORK WITH NO LOSS OF PAY!

OCCUPY, AGAINST THREATENED CLOSURES!

NATIONALISE ALL INDUSTRIES!

FACTS IN BRIEF

EMPLOYMENT AND FOREIGN INDUSTRY

Successive Governments have boasted of their feats in creating employment by attracting foreign industry. In fact, between 1960 and 1973, 64,600 new jobs were provided by foreign firms. However, a report of the *Organisation of Economic Co-Operation and Development*, on manpower policy in Ireland (published at the end of October) says that these jobs are not likely to be permanent. "The O.E.C.D. Committee of Experts", the Report says, "believe that since many foreign firms may have invested because of the incentive grants, and second because their decision making centres will remain abroad, their permanent job-creating ability can be doubted".

OFFICIAL NON-WORKING DAYS

According to the Official Journal of the European Communities, Ireland has one of the lowest number of public holidays in the E.E.C. The numbers for each country are as follows:

Belgium	—	10 days
Denmark	—	10 days
Britain	—	7 days
Germany	—	13 days
France	—	10 days
Luxemburg	—	10 days
Netherlands	—	8 days
Italy	—	16 days
Ireland	—	8 days

TAXATION

Ireland is noted for having one of the highest rates of taxation in Europe. The following statistics show why. Taxation per head of population is £278. This means that on average everybody in the country pays out £5.35p in tax each week.

MINIMUM WAGE

In a period of rapid inflation it is essential that the least organised workers be protected by Statutory Minimum Wage Legislation. At the moment in Ireland there are very few safeguards in this area. Only workers who come under the Joint Labour Committees or the Agricultural Wage Board have any protection — inadequate as it is — at all. Presently this represents only 125,000 workers or 16% of employees.

WORKERS AND EDUCATION

The "Educational Opportunity in Dublin" report that 40% of the population of Dublin had no formal certificate of education. The report clearly showed up the class nature of education. For example, 86% of the adult population of Ballyfermot, and 73% of the adult population of Dolphin's Barn, had a national school education only; the corresponding figures for Dun Laoghaire and Blackrock were 45% and 31% respectively. By contrast, the percentage of adults in upper-class areas with complete secondary education was 32% in Killiney, 27% in Dun Laoghaire and 25% in Ranelagh, Milltown, Terenure. However, the corresponding figure for working class districts such as Bluebell, Crumlin and Walkinstown was 8%, while it was as low as 1.5% for Ballyfermot.

Interestingly enough, figures for the 1972-73 financial year show that while the working class contributes most in taxation, Government expenditure on national education is only £76 per pupil, while it is £155 per pupil for secondary education and £321 per student for University education. Is it not time that workers learned something?



In the article below the Trade Union caucus of the Revolutionary Marxist Group examines the nature of the crisis affecting Irish capitalism. The main point stressed is that this crisis stems from a falling rate of profit.

BEHIND THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

According to the politicians and the news media Ireland is in the midst of the greatest economic crisis it has experienced for twenty five years. Workers need only look at spiralling prices and unemployment to understand this. But it is much more difficult to understand what is at the root of this crisis.

According to the economists, not to mention the employers and government, the basic cause of the crisis is that wages have been rising too fast. Because wages are too high the price of Irish products are too high and cannot compete on foreign markets. This puts Irish industry out of business and results in unemployment. In addition, because wages are increasing faster than production the value of money decreases in relation to products and we get inflation.

In such a simplistic sketch the government, the employers and the economists sum up the crisis that is ruining the lives of thousands of workers. In line with their analysis, the only solution they can offer is to restrict wages i.e. more misery for workers. But really, in trying to unload all the blame on workers the government and its propagandists are attempting to cover up for the bankruptcy of the capitalist system itself.

A falling rate of profit

Just take for example their argument on inflation. Wages are increasing faster than output, they say. One would think from this that workers could

determine the level of output where as in fact output depends mainly on the plant and machinery supplied by the employers. Workers have no say about the type of equipment they use; the employers jealously claim total control over this.

Why are Irish employers slow to use more and better equipment to increase output? Because the type of industry they have become involved in during the sixties, demands very expensive machinery which more and more wears out quicker in relation to the amount of value they can be expected to help create. Originally employers could get back in output maybe double what they invested in machinery. But that is no longer possible today. The last census of industrial production shows for instance that to increase output by 14%, the employers had to increase spending on machinery by 12%. A supplement to the "Business and Finance" journal (May '74) put its finger on this problem when it acknowledged that "increasingly it is being accepted that any benefit there maybe in owing plant — and it is difficult to see what those might be (!) — are offset by the problem of purchasing it". The problem is that at one time a machine that might cost say £1,000 would fall in value over perhaps five years but in the same period it would create £1,500 worth of value leaving a surplus of £500; now however, it falls in value much faster, in three years instead of five, creating only £300 surplus instead of £500.

Of course no machine can produce value by itself. It takes the labour-power of workers to set the machine in action. It is precisely this labour-power which creates value and profits. So when the employers say that machines are getting too expensive, what they are saying in reality, is that they are getting too expensive

in relation to labour. They have to spend relatively more on machines than on employing labour. They have less money to invest in exploiting labour and consequently they experience a fall in their rate of profit.

In short the hub of the problem in Ireland, as indeed it is throughout the world, is that capitalism is not only incapable of ensuring a decent standard of living for workers, but that it is even incapable of making profits!

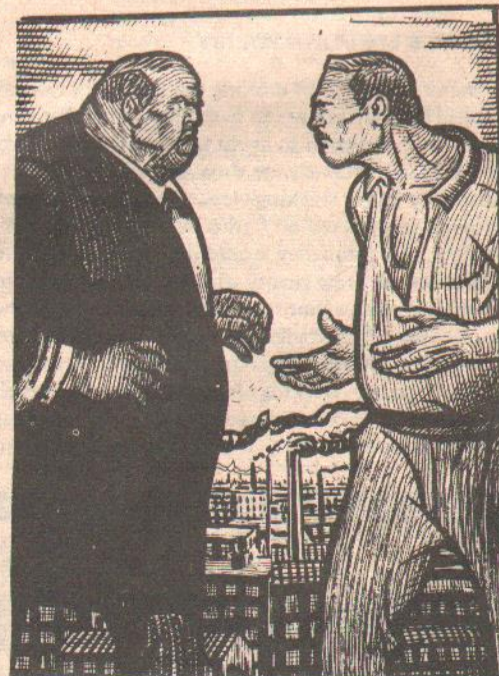
Profits and problems

It is the falling rate of profit which is responsible for all the key problems of the Irish economy today, namely inflation and unemployment.

Because the rate of profit is falling, the employers are afraid to invest their money and increase and expand production. Workers, due to their trade union strength are all the time increasing their wages and are able to demand more goods for consumption. The result of all this is that a relative scarcity of goods and because goods are scarce the employers are able to force their prices up. So, if workers buy the commodities they want, they are forced to buy goods produced in Ireland with artificially high prices and import goods from abroad which, due to international factors, already have inflated prices. It is this process that has given Ireland one of the highest inflation rates in Europe.

In addition to inflation, unemployment arises out of this process. When the employers can't get satisfactory returns on the capital they invest, they withdraw their capital from production or at least slow down the rate of investment. Jobs are lost and any increase in production does

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THE NORTH: elections warn of confrontation

Following the elections in the North a number of things have become clear . . .

- (i) The trend towards complete polarisation continues.
- (ii) Within the framework of that polarisation the Loyalists, supported by Britain, are taking control of the situation.
- (iii) The minority is determined to fight for important changes, and within the minority there has been a shift towards the revolutionary wing.

POLARISATION

With Britain's original plans it was hoped to break down sectarian barriers by creating a *centre party* that could outflank, or at least hold the balance between, the traditional parties of the S.D.L.P. and the Unionists. When the Alliance Party and the N.I.L.P. together got only 12% of the vote in the Assembly Election it was considered disastrous. In the recent Election the Centre did even worse getting only 8% of the vote. What this decline shows is that the Centre is not only small but that it has lost its appeal. The ideas of "moderation" and "reconciliation" which gained ground after the abolition of Stormont have completely lost their attraction.

What must be answered now is: *Why this polarisation?* The likes of Conor 'Collaborator'

O'Brien will say that it occurred because of the activities of the "men of violence". But this is nonsense. The armed struggle was at a higher pitch during the "period of reconciliation" (between the fall of Stormont and the Assembly Elections) than during the period of polarisation.

The real reason for the polarisation is that Britain has abandoned her plans to carry out even limited reforms in the North. This had demoralised the "moderate" Unionists and inflated the moral of Loyalists. Like rats deserting the sinking ship the Faulkner Unionists are shifting over to the Loyalist camp. At the same time the S.D.L.P. finds itself left in the lurch. So to cover up its past it is taking on a left and Republican image to retain its support among Catholic workers who have become disillusioned.

Following the Election results, therefore, we put the blame for growing sectarianism where it clearly belongs - with the British State and its collaborators.

LOYALIST POWER

The fact that the polarisation in the North stems from Britain's capitulation to Loyalism is confirmed by the dramatic revival of Loyalism in recent times. In the Assembly Elections the combined Loyalist forces got only 30.6% of the vote, while the Faulknerite Unionists got 30.7%. But the fragmented nature of the Loyalist block meant that although its vote was equal to that of the Faulknerites, they were still in a much less favourable situation. In the recent Elections, however, the Loyalist Coalition got 58% of the total poll, and completely mopped up the Faulknerite vote. This was indeed an

unprecedented performance.

Naturally the Loyalist take-over is not seen merely in its massive increase in votes. The real expression of the Loyalists success is to be found in its continuing shifts to the extreme Right. Every victory for the Loyalists brings a new shift to the Right. Already they have rejected power-sharing and the Irish dimension. During the Election campaign Powell announced that the Loyalists would not bother contesting the Convention Elections. Although he was contradicted on this by the U.U.U.C. leaders, prominent Loyalist spokesmen such as James Kilfedder have also said that they have an open mind on the subject. This equivocation can only mean that if the Loyalists feel strong enough they will cut short all negotiations with the minority and press for the full implementation of their own policies, i.e. the restoration of Stormont.

The fact that the Loyalists gained almost undivided support in the Protestant community, amounting to well over half of all the electorate, puts a question mark over the future of the Convention. The only issue at stake is whether they will try to sweep the Convention aside or use it as a launching pad for a provisional Government. But there can no longer be any hope of reconciliation on a democratic basis between the two communities.

EFFECTS ON THE MINORITY

Within the framework of sharpening sectarian contradictions the position of the minority has strengthened. Despite the increased turnout at the polls the minority managed to slightly increase its share of the total vote. This shows that the Catholic working class, despite recent blows to its confidence, has not given up hope of change, and certainly has not resigned itself to a return of the old Stormont. In each constituency they turned out in greater numbers than ever, even though they had no chance of victory except in one area.

As yet the minority still supports the S.D.L.P. They don't realise that the S.D.L.P. only encourages Loyalist prejudices by cow-towing before the British Government and the Unionists. Yet the awakening of the minority to more revolutionary politics which was already visible in the Assembly and previous Westminster Election results continued in this Election as well. Those forces which fought the Election on the platform of opposing a Sunningdale-type compromise won 30% of the minority vote. Had the Provos participated that

percentage would certainly have been bigger.

Some qualifications are needed with regard to this vote. The major component of it was made up by Maguire's poll in Fermanagh - South Tyrone, who undoubtedly attracted a large number of S.D.L.P. votes who had no choice other than to vote for him. Yet two things must be said about this. Firstly, it shows that there is no traditional loyalty to the S.D.L.P. and the minority is willing to support opponents of the S.D.L.P. provided they are presented with a credible alternative. This makes it the duty of all revolutionary not to allow their genuine differences to prevent unity on the key issue upon which they are agreed. It is obvious that even now the large sections of the minority would support a revolutionary alternative to the S.D.L.P. provided they could be sure that those proposing it were politically mature and put the real needs and interests of the minority above sectional in-fighting. Secondly, the trend away from the S.D.L.P. is confirmed by the impressive showing of the Officials who increased their vote share of the poll from 13,064 votes in the Assembly Elections to 21,632 votes on this occasion. These figures represent an increase from 6% to 12% of the minority vote, notwithstanding the fact that they had less candidates.

THE FINAL PICTURE

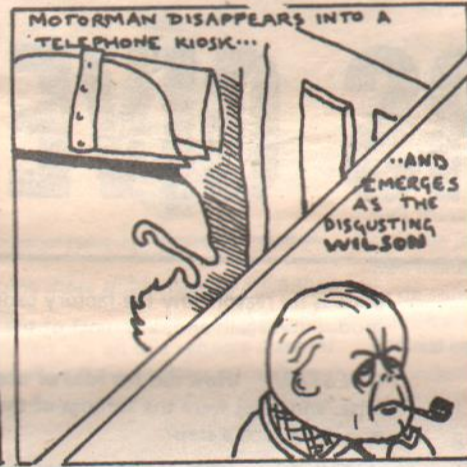
The results of the Election show that all the ingredients are present for a major confrontation. This confrontation cannot be postponed indefinitely. The Loyalists want to keep the minority under foot. The minority demands fundamental reforms. Britain can no longer carry forward its programme of limited change.

Lenin once wrote that, when the ruling class can no longer continue to rule as before, when the oppressed and exploited can no longer endure their suffering and when there is no room for short term solutions, then revolution or counter-revolution is on the agenda. That is the situation in the North today.

For such a situation only revolutionary policies and revolutionary methods will do. It would be short sighted to consider compromise now. Compromise is ruled out by the objective conditions and all the Concor Collaborators in Ireland won't change those conditions. That is the major lesson of the Elections.

DARA McEVOY.

BERTY THE BRIT.



THE PROVO ARD FHEIS

...turn to the working class!

Perhaps the most crucial situation in the whole five years of struggle now faces the nationalist population in the six counties. The spectre of a Loyalist take-over with a major confrontation between the minority and Orangeism becomes increasingly inevitable. It is in this context that we must judge the Ard Fheis of Provisional Sinn Fein, the largest anti-imperialist organisation in the Six counties.

Evaded issues

In the circumstances one would naturally expect that the crucial issues facing the struggle would be debated. Any delegates who wanted such a debate must have been sorely disappointed. What transpired was a gathering that gave little in the line of concrete direction or leadership to the struggle, north or south of the border. Two of the primary questions faced today - the organisation of mass resistance to a Loyalist takeover and the broadening of the fight against repression in the South, were barely even discussed. This is indeed a strange position for such an organisation, something which needs some explaining.

Passivity of delegates

For an organisation which has been to the forefront of the struggle to evade such issues is obviously an extreme weakness. The explanation lies both in the leadership and the structure of Provisional Sinn Fein. All through the Ard Fheis the rank and file delegates showed an unwillingness to confront either the problems that are posed at the moment or the leadership, who were treated with deference, as if they were beyond criticism.

The leadership

The leadership of Sinn Fein has always had a pragmatic approach to the situation in Ireland, treating each problem as it arose in a very haphazard fashion. Their attitude to the Boal Plan, the UWC strike and Loyalists in general



Ruairi O Bradaigh

and their inability to deal with problems in the south are examples of that. They have never had the ability to approach the struggle from a socialist standpoint because they are ingrained with the outlook of their origins i.e. the lower middle class. Although the Provisional Sinn Fein is a revolutionary tendency, although its leadership's integrity is proven and beyond doubt they have failed to break with middle-class concepts of politics and organisations. Unlike Connolly, Lawlor or Tone, they have never learned to place their trust in the "men of no property". This adherence of the leadership to middle-class concepts is amply reflected in the structure of the organisation.

Organisation structure

Because problems are tackled as they arise the rank and file has no real say in political decisions. The movement isn't guided by a revolutionary programme which is constantly being applied, tested and criticised by the rank and file. Thus the lack of political discussion at Cumainn meetings was reflected in the general passivity of the membership at the Ard Fheis. The party structure of Sinn Fein is akin to that of any other establishment party e.g. Labour Party, where all the real decisions are taken by the party hierarchy - the membership merely acting as a rubber stamp to enhance the prestige of the

leadership. Thus the crucial decision of whether or not to contest the forthcoming Convention elections in the North has been left in the hands of the Ard Comhairle of Sinn Fein. As long as there exists a leadership tied to such concepts of politics and organisation Sinn Fein can never hope to be able to intervene successfully in the crisis that is occurring both North and South.

Left confusion

Although no clear political polarisation was evident it was made obvious that many delegates were clearly dissatisfied with Sinn Fein's present course. Resolutions from Long Kesh and Roger Casement Cumainn calling for a purge of right-wing influences along with the many left-wing motions on the programme indicate the beginnings of a reevaluation by the membership of leadership policy. Much of this leftwing trend came from the North, especially evident in the debate on elections and the courts. Northern delegates felt that there was a right wing current in the south which was in favour of participating in Northern elections. To counter this threat of railroading the struggle into parliamentary debate two main arguments were used: (1) that participation in elections leads to reformism and a watering down of principles. (2) the traditional republican abstentionist

position on elections.

While the fear that the right wingers in Sinn Fein will attempt to divert the struggle into a more constitutional and middle class framework is well founded, the arguments used against these people did not provide a revolutionary alternative to them. To participate or not to participate in elections is a tactical question - not a question of principle. Revolutionaries must use all means necessary to push the struggle forward. Elections can be used by revolutionaries as a platform to popularise their views and to discredit their middle class opponents. Would the SDLP be in the powerful position, it is today if the Provos had not decided to leave the electoral field wide open to them?

Need for a revolutionary alternative

It is not enough for leftists in the Provos to simply condemn right wing influences in an abstract way. It is up to them to pose revolutionary alternatives in all fields. There was evidence of some progress at the Ard Fheis in some of the discussions e.g. on the question of small farmers and the agricultural crisis also in the call for more trade union work made by the Robert Emmet Cuman. The fact that many of the right wingers Danagher etc. had to "sound off" as left as possible in their speeches shows that they are very wary indeed of treading on the toes of the more conscious and active northern membership. However if a really revolutionary political organisation is to be built there must be a change in the structure and leadership of Sinn Fein. A revolutionary programme must be developed through open discussion which would not be utopian, like Eire Nua is, but which would be firmly rooted in the needs of the people. It remains to be seen whether this can be done within the organisation of Provisional Sinn Fein.

RORY MC NEILL

OCCUPY AGAINST



During the past few years a new trend has developed in the T.U. Movement, which is very significant. It is one of occupying a factory mainly to fight redundancies. However, in El. Co. in Shannon in 1967 this tactic was used to demand T.U. recognition and more recently in Britain, it has been used by women workers in their fight for equal pay. In 1972 in the Crannac Furniture Factory in Navan, the workers occupied their factory in defence of their right to work and the outcome of that was that the workers bought the concern from the Receiver and continued production as a Co-Op. At the time of writing the outcome of the Danus workers occupation in Limerick is yet to be decided.

REVOLUTIONARY CONCEPT

The questions raised by workers when occupying a factory because of redundancies are that they defend their right to work. They assert that the wealth which they created enabled the employer to purchase the plant and machinery and that, therefore, they have a right to own and control it. They deny that it is the employers that create employment. It is the workers themselves by producing and consuming, create employment, and that ultimately only they can guarantee its existence. By raising these questions workers are posing a whole new concept of fighting the employers — a revolutionary concept. Up to this workers had won the right to strike for better wages and conditions, but now workers are adopting new tactics in the fight to defend their living standards, and above all their right to work.

By occupying a factory, workers should be fully aware that by their actions they are pointing out that the employer has no right to create unemployment. After all, it is the workers who have created the wealth. Why then should the employer make the decision to close the factory. From this follows the conclusion that the chief aim of the occupation must be to preserve jobs, and not simply to get "adequate" redundancy money and abandon the employment.

In the case of the Danus occupation the workers have been faced with this dilemma. They began their sit-in to protest against the redundancy money being offered to them. But since then they have begun to realise that the

question of maintaining employment is very important. O'Donovan, has alluded to, on numerous occasions, the continuing productivity with a reduced workforce. In must hold out and demand that all work be shared with the workers give in and accept rationalisation, they are O'Donovan to make some of them redundant, they are jobs, and so adding to unemployment.

NATIONALISE!

How, then, can employment be preserved. To occupy a threatened closure of a factory, whatever the confusion of the workers, is a step in the right direction. And once taken, the objective situation in the Irish economy pressures on the actual aims of the occupation. For the problem, in that, as it is explained in other articles, the employers are deliberately creating unemployment as a way to hold back wage increase in order to deal with the crisis. Given the fact that unemployment is part of their policy to resist any demands to make the factory economically viable the proposition of establish of a Co-Op. is not a realistic one. The workers would be subject to the same profit capitalist economy at the moment. Without direct aid from Government subsidies and backing the Co-Op. would fall.

Therefore, the only course open to the workers is to demand a direct subsidy from the Government, i.e. to nationalise the factory, workers retaining control; that the Government give a form of tariffs etc.

The demand for nationalisation springs from the need of the workers concerned to serve their jobs. It is the property of the workers who presently occupy them. It is for all workers and to future generations of workers. The demand to preserve particular jobs is in fact a fight on behalf of a

DANUS WORKERS GIVE A FIGHT

The following interview was taken by Limerick members of the R.M.G. with John Cronin who is vice-president of the Danus Factory Committee and also vice-president of his I.T.G.W.U. Branch. What has happened at Danus is typical of what is happening all over the country. The 320 Danus workers, by occupying their factory and taking possession of the company's stocks, have given a positive lead to all workers faced with redundancies. In speaking with us John Cronin draws out some of the lessons of the occupation and calls attention to some of the pitfalls that must be avoided.

QUESTION: Could you tell us what were the reasons that management gave for closing the Danus factory. What do you think were the real reasons?

ANSWER: We were told about ten workers were being put on short time, so, we approached the Managing Director, O'Donovan, and asked what the full position was. A few days later he issued us with a written statement which explained his point of view. It mentioned the world wide economic crisis and the crisis in Ireland, and it went on to say that "This has resulted in a build up in our stocks . . . The future looks particularly black with the present depressed state of the farming and building industries. In such circumstances we see no immediate or even long term improvements."

In other words, the immediate problem is alleged to be that farms and building labourers are not in a position to buy Danus suits. Now, we think that this is nonsense because farmers have never really been customers, and even before the crisis in the building industry there was talk of closing down. The real reasons for the closure can be summed up as follows:

- (i) The elimination of protective tariffs under E.E.C. regulations and the subsequent influx of cheap garments.
- (ii) The possibility of producing a new type of suit, the *Engineers Suit*, with more modern machinery and with a workforce of only security people.
- (iii) Bad management. In 1969 Danus was taken over by a British Company, Aquascutum, which introduced a new supervisory system

that did nothing to increase efficiency and, in fact, just squandered money. Before 1969 we never had a supervisor on the shop-floor; now in some cases we have one man supervising one man. In addition, O'Donovan tells us that £200,000 worth of bad debts have built up. Only morons could let something like that happen!

All these factors are the real causes of the closure and the present economic crisis has only brought matters to a head.

QUESTION: When the workers heard about the close-down what demands did they put forward? Did they demand to keep their jobs or did they simply seek better redundancy money?

ANSWER: Of course we all understood from the beginning that the plant and machinery in Danus needs to be up-dated and that changes are required to make the factory viable. We are not against progress. But we don't think that workers should suffer because of this; the opposite is the case, we should benefit from it.

At this early stage it is not easy to see where we are going. We were offered £40,000 redundancy payments. This was flatly rejected. Nothing less than £120,000 will be accepted. In addition, O'Donovan can get back 90% of the money he pays under the regulations for Statutory Minimum Redundancy Payments. We are demanding that amount of money as well. Also, we claim the value of the factory machinery worth about £60,000. Finally, there is a stock of 9,000 suits to the value of £300,000 that must be taken into consideration.

With all this money and with better management

there is no reason why the factory cannot go into production again and save most of the jobs.

QUESTION: How did the idea of occupation arise, and what were the feelings of the workers on taking such a step?

ANSWER: When we heard that the factory was closing most of us were shocked. For three or four days we couldn't talk or do anything. Then we pulled ourselves together and began to get our demands ready. When we looked at the situation we could see that there was no alternative but to move into the factory.

A picket, for example, would not have been any use. It would not have allowed us to act *en masse* and because we would have had to go home at night it wouldn't have allowed us to keep our fight going twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. We had to think of an effective way to defend our interest. I suppose you could say that our interest is in what we produce — the manufactured goods on the factory floor. Since everybody else let us down, the management, the Government and the Trade Union leaders, we decided the best thing to do was to sit-in and personally look after our own interests.

Once the idea arose everybody was in favour of it. A few wanted to wait a little longer because negotiations were going on between the Union, Management and the Government. But we decided not to lose any more time so we went and took over the factory. We have our own critics who say that we lost too much time as it was.

QUESTION: Once you had decided to occupy the factory how did you go about organising the sit-in?

ANSWER: To begin with we had our own section committee in the factory which is elected by the workers and which was active in the past in defending our interests. So we didn't have to create any new group. But we did appoint four section representatives who are responsible for discipline; for seeing that the decisions we take are observed by one and all — and that goes for leaders as well as rank and file.

There are some vested interests who are just

waiting for us to make a mistake. This meant that we had to make some rules. For example only those working in the factory have a right to come in and everybody has to be searched on the way out. Security is very important. At the moment we are not worried about management trying to re-occupy the factory or remove the machinery. But we have had trouble with the management trying to interfere with our stock. Some of the stores are not in the factory and management tried to let in a Dublin carrying firm, *Tippet and Britain*. The workers in a nearby clothing factory are minding this store for us, and they passed us a warning. We went down and removed the garments from the van. But the men in charge didn't seem to pay any attention, so we made our feelings known in stronger terms — you know? They then left empty handed.

Another thing should be noted: rules and regulations, if they are made by the workers themselves, don't restrict them. On the contrary they help develop the workers' confidence. For example, Stevie Coughlan strutted into the factory one day to patronise us. So one of the workers told him that he wasn't a worker and get out!

QUESTION: What role have the Gardai played?

ANSWER: They are watching us, of course, but they are keeping well out of the way. We hope that there won't be any interference with us. Anyway, after facing a close-down we are ready for any emergency! We know how to handle intimidation and provocation — you know?

QUESTION: How has the press reacted?

ANSWER: For the most part, as you could expect from the capitalist press, it has played down the importance of our fight and it has distorted our views and activities. We have blacked the *Limerick Leader*, and we only speak with sympathetic journalists from the *Limerick Echo*. We'd get bad publicity no matter what we did, so we can't let the reaction of the press influence us one way or another.

REDUNDANCY!

the General Manager, possibility of case the workers loss of pay. If only allowing giving up so many

against the perspective that step has faces certain is an immediate Government and the of their attempt in the economy. the employers will be. To counteract the. Running a s facing the the form of soon go to the

of demanding factory, with the assistance in the

sity and determin- are not the private use jobs belong to re, the fight to orkers. In this

respect the demand on the Government to nationalise Industries is appropriate because it puts the onus on the Government, which claims the authority of workers votes, to preserve these workers means of livelihood, their jobs — even if it means having to dispense with individual employers. Naturally, any Government in a capitalist system will not want to interfere with, or step into the shoes of, the individual employer. But this should not discourage workers from putting the demand for nationalisation forward (i) because it is the only solution possible until there is a socialist transformation of society. The employers don't want to preserve the jobs because they have more lucrative outlets for that capital; a Co-Op. in a period of crisis is not even a short term solution. The Government to which the workers pay such large taxes has a direct responsibility, and rather than accept redundancy, workers should make the Government face up to that responsibility. (ii) because the demand for the national can become a national focus which could be used by the occupying workers to break out of their isolation and form solidarity with all workers who after all are subject to the same Government. The fight for redundancy money or for a Co-Op. doesn't produce the same automatic links with other workers as the fight for nationalisation could. (iii) because if the demand gets enough support and the Government resists, then the struggle can be changed from merely occupying a factory into a fight to change the Government.

CONCLUSION

The ideas outlined above are the main immediate concepts the occupation of a factory raises. If these are grasped, and the problems they pose understood, the workers will have put the threat of defeat one step further away from them. The ways to achieve complete victory become clearer and the battle takes a step forward.

Limerick Branch R.M.G.

the changes that came about after the take-over. They became very enthusiastic; women and men began to speak up; they became confident; they discussed things. For the first time, I suppose, many of the workers felt really strong about something. Of course you can always feel strong about something but you can't always act to change it. But in this case they could do something, and that made all the difference. You would just have to see what happened, to believe it!

Now our problem is that we have too many ideas and too many people wanting to do too many things. It is very important for us at this stage that we go on acting as a group. Leadership is decisive here. But we must not forget either that to have good leadership democracy is needed.

QUESTION: What role have the Trade Unions and other workers outside Danus played during the occupation?

ANSWER: Within the factory the workers are the Trade Union, and to that extent everything has been alright. But it is a different story when it comes to the paid-leaders and Trade Union Officials. They have given no leadership; they have followed behind us and no doubt they would have settled for less than we are asking if we let them.

The first person we had down here was John Carroll himself, the vice-president of the Union. He nearly had a fit when he heard that we were sitting-in. He warned us that we were breaking the law sitting-in. He warned us that under the *Forcible Entry and Occupation Act* our homes and all our personal property could be confiscated as well as us being jailed. But the right to work is the most basic human right. If we don't have the right to work then we have nothing. And when you have nothing you can't be frightened off by talk about confiscation and jail. So Carroll had no effect on us.

The Trade Union Officials are very friendly and courteous, but behind it all they are doing nothing. The problem, as I see it, is that all these people have a vested interest in the present National Coalition Government and they don't want to rock the boat. Anyway, I don't think that these people would ever change their attitude in any fundamental way. They are too well healed. When we ask one of these fellows to do something for us he keeps saying "Do you want me to lose my job". When a Trade Union Official can say that to workers who are facing redundancies, then we can see how far removed from serving the workers interests these people have become.

As for the response of other workers — that has been very encouraging. Even without asking, money and support has been coming in. I think workers realise that we are fighting not only for ourselves but for all workers faced with unemployment — and there will be tens of thousands of these in the next few months. If we in Danus win, it will be a blow to the employers and management. They want unemployment just now to keep down wages. But if we make this too costly for them, then they will have to think twice before attempting to close down.

QUESTION: What form has the solidarity between Danus workers and other workers taken?

ANSWER: The occupation is still in its early stages. We received a weeks back-pay and holiday money, so we haven't really felt the pinch yet. Because of this we haven't organised any solidarity. But I think we are losing time and we should set up committees with workers on a local, a regional and a national basis to publicise our cause and get help. For example, the ports should be closed to foreign garments and shop assistants should refuse to sell them.

QUESTION: Where does the occupation go from here? The Danus management doesn't want the factory to re-open. So how can you save the jobs?

ANSWER: There has been talk of setting up a Co-Op. But that doesn't seem possible. We are well aware of the problems that would arise if we were simply to go into production under the private enterprise system. For a start we would need, according to O'Donovan, a million pounds and sales of £18,000 a week. Under these circumstances things would be very unstable.

There is a way under nationalisation. If we got State assistance with the workers still in control then we could continue producing. But it would not be easy and the question of rationalisation and redundancies would still be posed. However, if we got the factory off the ground within a year we could re-employ everybody and even possibly double the work-force — provided the workers retain control.

The powers that be in Government are not willing to introduce nationalisation. The example of the mining industry proves this. We see Government ministers running to Australia, to Brussels, to New York, to London and God knows where else. They seem more interested in running the country to suit the big business interests of these places, than in the interests of Irish workers and small farmers.

The responsibility for ensuring our jobs rests with the Government. But the Government is acting in the interests of the employers and doing nothing for the workers. This is particularly true of the Labour members. Take, for instance, Micheal O'Leary, who happens to be a minister for Labour. Our Branch Secretary wrote to him a letter enquiring about alternative employment prospects for us. He wrote us back the following letter:

"I refer to your letter of the 10th of September 1974 concerning the threatened closure of Danus in the city of Limerick. The Manpower Service has been in touch with the management of Danus and is assessing the employment prospects of the workers should they be laid off. You can be assured that the Manpower Service will do everything possible to help those workers."

Last week one of our workers went to the Manpower Service and asked for a job, and they told him not to be bothering them and that there were no jobs for any of us!

But I must say before I finish that we haven't really discussed the future of the struggle yet. Some of us are thinking about things like nationalisation and workers control, but these things haven't been discussed in detail by all the workers. Nonetheless, we are learning fast and experience is teaching us more every day. If we keep on learning then I am sure we will win.

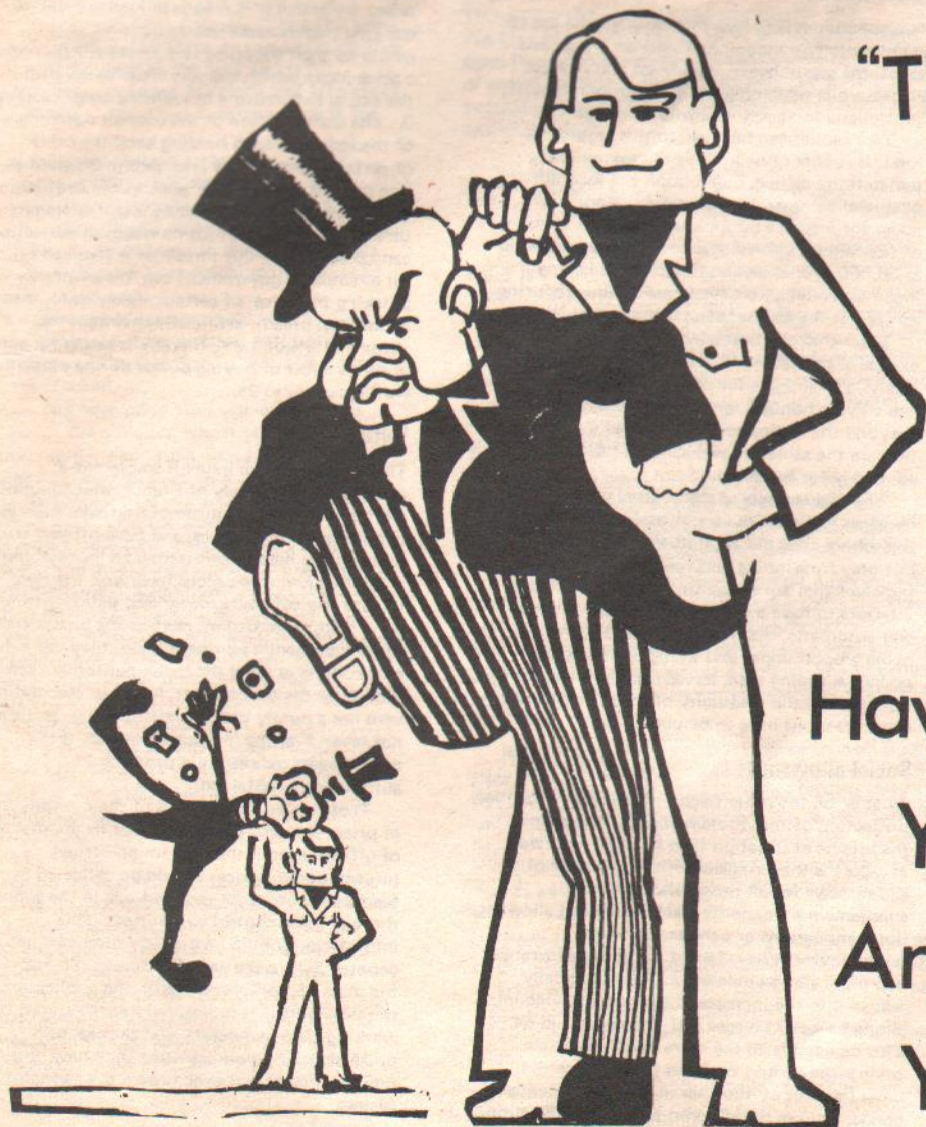
NG LEAD



QUESTION: How has the occupation affected the thinking of the workers? Has there been much of a change in their attitudes?

ANSWER: Ho! ho! You may bet that their thinking has been affected and their attitudes have changed radically. I can honestly say that they have become more militant and active than their committee.

When we started out on this venture some of us thought that maybe the workers weren't ready for it; that they might not be able to stand the pace or the pressure. But we were amazed to see



“The Right To Work Is The Most Basic Human Right. If You Don't Have That Right, You Have Nothing. And When You Have Nothing, You Can't Be Frightened ...”

The following article is part of an article by Ernest Mandel, a leader of the Fourth International. It deals with the way employers and government manipulate wages and prices and how socialists should fight to defend workers living standards.

FOR A SLIDING SCALE OF WAGES!

Seeing that inflation is inherent in capitalism today, capitalists, in spite of all their anti-inflationist airs, strive for one thing only:

that the advantages of inflation fall into their strong boxes, while the workers pay for the costs. The attitude of the working class and its organisations must be diametrically opposed to these persistent efforts (often successful) on the part of capital; they must aim at a complete refusal to pay for the costs of inflation, and try to protect their real wages against all its direct and indirect effects.

Since it was founded in 1938, the Fourth International has defended the idea that only the sliding scale of wages constitutes a real defence of workers' buying power against the rising cost of living. Resisted by both reformists and for a long time ultra-leftists, this idea has nevertheless been applied by the working class throughout the world. Examples of struggles for the sliding scale, either within single firms or branches of industry, or on a national trade levels, are numerous. Experience has shown workers that the defence and protection of their buying power through use of the sliding scale represents the first (and most dispensable) means of self-defence when faced with the more and more rapid rocketing of prices.

The argument according to which a sliding scale would 'defuse' the workers' struggles, through removing the stimulus for a fight for wage increases, is contradicted by practice. Countries like Italy or Belgium where a sliding scale is in operation, either in whole or in part, are certainly not places where the number of strikes and other struggles is lower than that of countries where the workers do not yet enjoy a sliding scale. In reality, a sliding scale does not act as a substitute for struggles over wage increases. On the contrary, it creates the necessary conditions for such struggles. What is today, in the age of permanent inflation, called 'a struggle for wage increases' is nine times out of ten, an attempt to catch up with the rising cost of living, that is to say, it is a struggle to re-establish and not to increase the buying power of wages. When this 're-establishment' becomes an automatic process, through contracts guaranteeing a sliding scale, then the struggle for real increases in buying power can begin.

Experience

The experience of many collective contracts, in many industries and several countries, shows that in the age of permanent and accelerating inflation, any delay in the adjustment of wages to the cost of living is synonymous with a fall

in the buying power of wage-earners. The Institute of Social and Economic Studies at the very conservative University of Louvain in Belgium has calculated that Belgian workers, even though they enjoy a sliding scale, have still lost 3% of their buying power in the last two years, due to the fact that wage adjustments have not kept pace with the price index.

To be sure, an automatic adjustment of wages to prices each time the latter rise above a certain 'threshold' level is a step in the direction of a sliding scale that mustn't be dismissed. But these measures do not yet represent an effective sliding scale properly speaking. In the first place because any price increase lower than the threshold does not lead to any wage increases, even though it of course means a loss of buying power for wage-earners. Secondly, because it constitutes a real invitation for Governments and the bourgeois state apparatus to manipulate the official price index, keeping it just below the threshold that would set off an automatic adjustment of wages.

A true sliding scale thus means the automatic adjustment (say each month) of money wages to all price increases, without the interference of any kind of threshold limitation. In this way, the integrity of workers' buying power can be preserved, as the Belgian gas and electricity workers have shown after their last wage negotiations.

Taxation and state benefits

However, for this integrity to be wholly safeguarded, the effects of taxation upon workers' buying power have also to be taken into account. At one time, the labour movement stood by the notion that indirect taxes hit poorer people more, whereas direct (income) taxes tended to hit the rich. The first part of this notion is still correct to-day but the second is less so. The growing burden of direct taxation in the last decades has above all operated through increased taxes upon wages and salaries. At present, in a lot of capitalist countries, workers not only pay

methods of struggle must be different than those of workers and must take account of their real social position.

Solidarity in action

The first action of solidarity by students this winter must be to make their own independent activities militant and powerful. This is the best way student militants can contribute to generating a fighting dynamic among the workers. The long-awaited grants campaign can be a useful starting point so that by winning our demand for a comprehensive grants scheme, we can push the struggle of all the oppressed forward considerably.

In a more direct way, on the campus itself, we should make real links with the college workers, so that in the event of future strikes we will be prepared and will know what action to take. In the case of the Belfield strike it is clear that one of the reasons why the college was closed, was in order to keep students immobilised and scattered. The SRC in the main, failed to understand this, and contended that no action could be undertaken without the students being on the campus. If a democratic student college worker body existed it would have been possible to mobilise at least the Dublin students, against the college closure and the fee increases and to link these to the reasonable demands of the college staff.

But above all the lessons of this and other strikes is the one that student worker relations must be based on real concrete needs such as the objective needs of both sectors for a just, democratic socialist society. There is enough that is abstract and academic about the student's life for him/her to forget the reality of our oppression.

BETTY PURCELL

INFLATIONATION AND WAGES



Ernest Mandel speaking on Marxism at UCD last year

for most indirect taxes, they also pay the majority of direct ones.

This is all the more true now that direct taxes on wages and salaries are usually paid in full by the bosses to the State, before workers themselves receive any wages, whereas taxes on capitalist profit and on the incomes of those in the so-called 'liberal', 'independent' profession are paid afterwards and without any real control. Thus the bourgeoisie gains twice over. First by paying taxes late they benefit from the loss of buying power of currency — a fixed amount of tax on a capitalist profit paid six months after its realisation is a tax lowered by 5% if the rate of inflation is 10%. Secondly, to pay taxes without any effective control on the real amount of profits opens the flood-gates to tax evasion and fraud.

The graduated scale of tax upon wages means that each time the sliding scale causes money wages to rise to an income level that is more heavily taxed than the one beneath it, the increased tax payable is greater than the wage increase itself.

What interests a worker is not 'gross wages', a purely fictional notion, but real net wages, that is to say the total amount of goods and services which he can effectively buy with the money he gets at the end of the week. A sliding-scale must safeguard the buying power of pay actually received and must in some way offset the effects created by increased taxation.

A solution demanded by the labour movement in several countries (especially Belgium) is the complete indexing of the scales of taxation upon salaries. Each time the nominal salary is increased to make an adjustment to the rising cost of living, the tax-scale is increased by the same percentage.

For example, if the ceiling on wages and salaries for which a tax of 15% is paid is 25,000 Francs, it would automatically rise to 27,000 Francs, if the cost of living increased by 10%.

Differentials

It is sometimes objected that through the use of such a common indexing of salaries, wages and taxes, the gap between the lowest and highest wages, while remaining the same proportionately continually increases in absolute figures.

Two replies can be given to this argument. First, it is only right to limit the tax indexing to a definite ceiling, based upon the incomes of skilled workers. In the above example it could for instance be supposed that the indexing of tax-ceilings upon wages or salaries would stop at 30,000 Francs a year. Beyond this ceiling incomes would be hit even harder, thus reducing somewhat the gap between low and high wages.

After this, the best way of fighting the excessive gap caused by differences in income levels, is to struggle for cost-of-living allowances (beyond the sliding-scale's sphere of application) that are the same for everyone on the basis of equal pay for equal work.

The real struggle against excessive differences in wages and salaries cannot be waged by limiting the sphere of application of the sliding scale, but only by winning allowances and wage increases that are equal for all. It is in workers' interests to have a simple sliding scale, simple and automatic, that will prevent them from being ground under and losing their buying power. A sliding scale serves this end, and not the fight against the inequality of incomes for which other weapons have to be used.

Social allowances

What is, on the other hand, indispensable for the protection of the whole working class against the effects of inflation (and not just workers at work) is the extension of the principle of the sliding scale for all those who receive supplementary benefits and other social allowances. Superannuations or pensions, sick and unemployment pay, family and child allowances etc. must also be indexed and automatically adjusted to the increase in the cost of living in the same way as wages and salaries should be. This demand is all the more necessary when small wage-earners on fixed incomes are the most hard-hit by the rises in prices of essential goods, and are thrown into poverty by inflation.

The index

As soon as workers have gained a sliding scale of wages, the centre of gravity of the struggle to prevent the working class from paying the costs of inflation shifts towards the calculation of real price rises. Everywhere, bosses and the bourgeois State try to get accepted an index of prices (or of the cost of living) established by the public administration system, as the base upon which wage adjustments can be calculated. Everywhere, experience has shown that these indexes are faked and only help bosses slow down wage adjustments, that is, to increase capitalist profits.

The means most widely used by the bourgeoisie to reach this end are:

1. The dishonest doctoring of the goods that are taken into account when calculating a cost of living index. In effect, this monthly index is an average arising out of the fluctuations in prices of a large number of goods and services. If one lets slip into the total mass of these goods a series of articles that are hardly ever consumed by workers and whose price increases are lower than the average, an index will be obtained that does not honestly reflect the real rise in the cost of living.

Thus, the Belgian trade union movement has for a long time denounced what it calls the 'top-hat index' because goods such as top-hats were taken into consideration when calculating the cost of living index.

The same type of dishonest manipulation can be seen in the exclusion from any cost of living index of services whose costs increase particularly fast — e.g. in some countries, rent and medical charges not subsidised by social security — or to include them but to give them less weight than they actually have in household budgets.

2. The dishonest selection of real prices. In capitalist society the same articles are often sold at widely divergent prices; this is especially so for foodstuffs. To continually select the prices of such goods in places where working class housewives do not on the whole do their shopping (e.g. in markets) produces a price-index which has very little to do with the actual expenditure of working class households.

3. The manipulation of the over-all outcome of the index through holding back the price of certain articles. This is known in Belgium as 'the politics of the index' and is only profitable for bosses and the bourgeois State if there are thresholds beneath which no wage adjustments can take place. If this threshold is fixed at 2%, for example, a government can, by arbitrarily blocking the price of certain widely consumed goods (e.g. bread), artificially maintain the index at 1.9% or 1.8%, thereby creating for some months a loss of buying power on the part of workers of up to 2%.

Veto

This fiddling of the index is so blatant in countries such as Italy or France, that functionaries from the various Institutes of Statistics have even denounced it themselves, and have offered trade unions their help in calculating an 'honest' index.

In Belgium, the unions have won the right to veto any officially recognised index. Sitting on a 'price commission' next to the bosses and the government's representatives, they can refuse to recognise as valid the index published each month by the government. But this 'suspending' veto has a purely propagandistic value, as it does not mean that the increase in salaries that a more honest index would produce are automatically obtained.

Trade union calculations of the monthly level of prices shouldn't be carried out in the shadows of offices, even if they are union offices. Information on prices should be collected by teams of housewives and workers, in the shops, through price control committees. This information should be publicly discussed and debated before the working masses. To associate the mass of workers now with the application of the sliding scale is to ensure later the widest based working class democracy and the real self-organisation of workers when they have won political power and overthrown the capitalist system.

LESSON OF THE U.C.D. STRIKE

Every student and worker in U.C.D. has felt the effect of the recent strike in Belfield where laboratory attendants, porters and cleaners sought to maintain their customary parity with college technicians. This is no isolated example, because the present economic crisis is having its effect among all exploited sectors of Irish society.

Government policy

The government's deflationary policy (i.e. the attempt to cut public spending) is having important effects. Apart from attacks on worker's living standards through wage restraints, sharper hours (as a form of unemployment) and redundancies, cutbacks in the government's social expenditure on health, education etc. are taking place. The latter means for instance that the building of student accommodation, sports centre and a promised stadium at Belfield have been abandoned, fairly indefinitely. This leaves just the economic essentials of the complex i.e. library lecture theatres and a restaurant.

It is evident then, that if the way in which workers and students are affected, is different, it is nevertheless part of the same developing crisis. Students and workers are allies in struggle because the capitalist system is trying to make both of them pay for its ineptitude.

Given this synonymy of struggle, it is obvious that this is particularly true on the college campuses themselves where confrontations with the authorities are quite commonplace. What then should student worker solidarity be about? Does it mean that students should go out and join workers picket lines? Not necessarily, because such an action is just a helpless gesture. The strike is outside of the experience of students because withdrawal of their labour has no immediate effect whatsoever. So their

BRITAIN:

AFTER THE ELECTIONS

what next?



Last February the British working class not only refused to accept the burden of Britain's economic crisis, but it had the organisational strength and power to back up that refusal.

This led both to the electoral defeat of the Tory Government and to the fragmentation of the ruling class political bloc.

As the 10 October election results show, those same tensions still operate and none of the problems for the ruling class have been solved.

The Tory Party got its lowest percentage vote this century. The Liberal vote also went down, despite running more candidates. However the increase in the Scottish Nationalist vote helped to make up for the votes lost by the other capitalist parties.

The disintegration of the capitalist political bloc should have created the most favourable possible conditions for the Labour Party. Victory appeared to have been handed to them on a plate.

But if the ruling class is in crisis the Labour Party is at an impasse. Labour's crisis is so severe that it drastically affects its electoral strategy. After being put out of government in 1970 the Labour Party began a 'left turn' which although it was opportunist was designed to win it a stronger electoral base in the working class. On coming into office in February 1974, this turn was halted, even though temporarily. This has meant that Labour finds it more and more difficult to win the enthusiasm of the working class for its policies. Workers are less keen to vote for policies which offer them so little as Labour's thinly disguised wage restraint.

Uninspired

Even allowing for the fact that the electoral register is out of date, the 6 per cent downturn in people voting was concentrated most heavily in working class areas. In strong working class districts there were frequent falls of eight to nine per cent. In other areas there was an alarming drop of 12 to 15 per cent. In the peak hours for Labour's vote — between 8 o'clock and 10 o'clock in the evening — there was a massive drop in the vote.

There was no decisive victory for Labour because the working class were not inspired to go out and vote in great numbers for them. The three per cent national swing to Labour was easily kept down to one per cent in the marginal seats where the well-oiled Tory machine trundled out the middle class vote.

The close result has been produced by the disarray inside the main political party of the ruling class and the fact that Labour's 'left turn' has been blocked.

What will take place after the election will flow out of the situation which produced the election results. The ruling class groupings will be locked in internal squabbles and disputes until it can find a new political formula which enables it to take on the working class.

The only candidate offering such a solution is Enoch Powell with his emphasis on racism and the building of a strong state. But right now Powell's policies are fraught with economic and political dangers for large sections of the ruling class. The ruling class as a whole will not turn rapidly to Powell, but there is little doubt groups of the ruling class will become more and more sympathetic to his ideas.

Until a Powellite option is adopted however — and that is still some years off — we can expect even more rapid shifts, turnovers in personnel and disputes inside the ruling class political parties than have gone on before October.

The Labour Party will not be immune from this crisis. In fact the tensions inside the Labour Party will stretch to near breaking point. The scale of the present economic crisis demands not only a fierce attack on the working class but also the direct handout of absolutely colossal subsidies to the capitalists. This Wilson government will undoubtedly be the most reactionary Labour government since that of 1929-1931.

But the big difference to 1929 is that the working class is not merely undefeated but is

increasing in militancy and is better organised than ever. There is not the slightest chance of the working class passively accepting the attacks Wilson will make.

The Labour and trade union bureaucrats are caught in a vice between the dictates of the capitalist economic crisis and the upsurge of the working class. There are a whole series of issues — for example, the EEC and the coming attempt to introduce incomes policy — around which this strain could prove intolerable. While considerable of self-survival will undoubtedly keep the bureaucrats huddling together for protection in the short term, even they will not be able to keep together on a long term basis



TWENTY-FIVE YEARS ago this month, Mao Tse-tung proclaimed the People's Republic of China from Peking's Tien-an-men Square. After two decades of armed struggle in the countryside, the leaders of a peasant insurrection now controlled the most populous nation on earth.

For the socialists everywhere this was an historic event, second only to the October Revolution in 1917. Twenty-five years on, how has the new State developed?

The first and most striking feature about China today is that the economic imbalances and extremes of wealth and poverty that characterise similar countries like India have been eliminated. This is because China enjoys the advantages of a planned economy in which production for profit has been abolished. Revolutionaries therefore defend the Chinese social and economic order as historically superior to that of capitalism.

SELF-SUFFICIENCY

But this should not blind us to the considerable weaknesses that still remain, which are basically rooted in the leadership's economic conceptions and its bureaucratic and authoritarian methods of work.

The basic tenet of Maoist economic analysis, which it holds in common with Stalinist Russia, is the idea of self-sufficiency and 'socialism in one country'. A nationalist approach of this kind has a strong emotional appeal in China as a result of a century of imperialist humiliation and, more recently, economic sabotage by the Soviet Union.

But China's attempt to lift itself by its own bootstraps out of the circle of underdevelopment will undoubtedly fail in the long run. As an economic system, socialism is historically superior to capitalism mainly because of its ability to transcend the narrow boundaries and interests of the bourgeois nation-State. The Maoist policy of economic isolationism runs counter to this basic premise of Marxism.

Furthermore, it has led to considerable problems in both food and industrial production. The rate of growth of grain output, for instance, lags well behind the rate of population growth, and grain targets set in the late 1950s remain unfulfilled by a staggering 100 million tons.

In another key economic indicator, steel, the output of 20 million tons forecast by Mao for 1967 was only reached in 1971. The effects of this important bottle-

neck are inevitably felt throughout the whole economy, including in agriculture.

One thing we can be absolutely sure of is that this Labour government is going to usher in a period of most tremendous crisis within the Labour party.

Economic crisis, ruling class political decay, the emergence of ultra-rightist forces, working class upsurge and huge tensions within the Labour Party. These are going to be the main objective characteristics of the period before us.

MAO'S CHINA

by Greg Benton

25 YEARS ON

CULTURAL REVOLUTION

The Cultural Revolution of 1966-68 was an admission of failure by a section of the Chinese leadership. But because no honest assessment was made of why this had happened, the general economic strategy mapped out then was simply a rehash of the previous abortive policies. In particular, it represented the continued unwillingness of the bureaucracy to draw the workers and peasants into supervision and control of production and of the decision-making processes at all levels.

China's most valuable, most available, and least exploited raw material is the critical consciousness of her workers and peasants — a truth which Maoism recognises in theory, but not in practice. It is the absence of any organs of mass supervision and control over the State machine which explains the present 'commandism, arrogance and bureaucratic ways' which have briefly come under attack in the 'criticise Confucius' campaign.

The Cultural Revolution was originally designed to wipe out such abuses through popular mobilisations at the base. Powerful mass organisations independent of the establishment soon emerged under this stimulus, leading to a substantial rank-and-file presence in local, regional and national leadership organs, and in the factory committees.

But Maoism's aims for these mass organisations were extremely limited. Once they began inevitably to challenge the bureaucratic apparatus they were rapidly disbanded or reduced to performing token functions. After this experience it is no wonder that the 'criticise Confucius' campaign has failed to capture the imagination of the masses in the same way.

FOREIGN POLICY

The same features recur when one looks at China's foreign policy.

During the early 1960's the Chinese leadership fiercely criticised Khrushchev's policy of 'peaceful co-existence' and gave practical support to several revolutionary movements abroad. This stimulated an important debate in the world Communist movement.

But the growing right turn at home has been paralleled by a growing conservatism in foreign policy. In Sudan, Ethiopia and elsewhere China has connived at bloody counter-revolution. In Ceylon she joined an unholy alliance of US, British and Soviet forces to suppress the youth movement in 1971. She also advocates a strengthening of NATO and the EEC as a counter-weight to the USSR, and has thus voted by panda for Heath in the coming British elections.

Workers' states have every right to maintain links with reactionary governments. But once such links hinder the advance of the revolution, they must be severed.

This is in fact the only policy truly in the interests of the Chinese revolution itself. The only sure defence of the Chinese workers' State is not diplomatic deals but the destruction of imperialism in its nerve centres. The only way out of China's economic impasse is her integration into a world system of workers' states.

CRISIS AT TOP

In 1949 China's new revolutionary Government presented a confident and united face to the world. Twenty-five years later, this unity has crumbled.

Instead, as a tiny handful of ageing leaders conduct their medieval court intrigues inside the Forbidden City, the next generation of cliques and factions jockey for power in the shadows, their fingers locked to Mao's failing pulse.

Maoism as a collective force has run out of solutions in the face of the present multiple crisis. What is needed in China is a system of workers' and peasants' councils of the soviet type, thrown up in the course of a revolution to overthrow the rule of this fumbling bureaucracy.

The Cultural Revolution failed in its aim to renew Chinese society. But to the dismay of the Maoists it did throw up groups who went beyond the role prescribed for them and began to develop a 'ruthless criticism of everything that exists, ruthless in the sense that this criticism will not shrink either from its own conclusions or from conflict with the powers that be' (Marx).

It is from the ranks of this explosive residue of workers, students and peasants that the cadres of the coming Chinese political revolution will be drawn.



REVOLUTIONARY MARXIST GROUP

(Irish supporters of the Fourth International)

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In the last issue of the Plough, we pointed to the need for a 'Working Women's Charter' for Irish women, and suggested that the Report on the status of women provided a good basis from which to draw the demands for this. Since then the Annual General Meeting of Branch 2 of the I.T.G.W.U., accepted a resolution calling for the unions to draw up such a Charter.

The following article is a discussion of possible demands that could be raised in this context, drawn up with reference to the Report.

EQUAL PAY AND OPPORTUNITY

High on the list of demands for a Working Women's Charter must be the demand for equal pay, and, indeed this is well covered by the Status Report. However, the ideas it puts forward on this question are very much involved with the blind alley of "work of equal value". This whole approach leaves too much lee-way to the employer, who is then free to, for example, hire a work-study expert, who will down-grade the women's jobs. Even if, as the report suggests, the Trade Union movement educates its members in job evaluation they will still have to contend with a system of evaluation designed in the employers' interests, especially where the Labour Court has the last word.

One way to cut through this would be, where possible, to put in claims for the male rate, where this is difficult to determine the Unions should demand a rate for the job regardless of sex.

It is also very important to combat some of the concepts involved in O'Leary's Equal Pay Legislation. There is no point in women making equal pay claims if they are likely to lose their jobs in the attempt (job security in this case is at the whim of the employers). Even if a group of women in one job actually succeed, their success will not help the rest of that trade. According to the Act, equal pay must be fought for, unit by unit, even within the same firm if, for instance, it owns factories in different towns. The onus is on the women to fight for equal pay, not on the employer to implement.

A demand around equal pay should change this balance and safeguard the woman worker. Equal pay, even if perfectly implemented, is not, however, enough. There is far from equal opportunity for women in employment.

EDUCATION AND APPRENTICESHIPS

Women represent one-third of the work force, and yet in 1970 only 1 in 40 women were in positions earning over £20.00 a week, as opposed to 2 out of 3 men.

They are chiefly employed in service positions, such as typists, clerks doing routine work, shop assistants and in light assembly work. Few women reach the dizzy heights of management or the "prestige" professions; out of 954 Architects and Surveyors only 32 were women, in the 1966 census. Part of this is, obviously, a product of direct discrimination against women. Promotion or employment of men in preference to women when women have equal or even greater qualifications. However, this only represents part of the problem, the questions of education and training are equally important. Although, admittedly, now more girls get the opportunity to take the subjects at secondary level, they need to get into University or to train for professional jobs. However, the majority are still educated in single sex schools, run by religious orders, imbued with the "woman as mother and housewife" philosophy, which actively discourages them from trying to get the necessary qualifications. Any demand, therefore, for equality of opportunity in education must be combined with one for secularisation of education.

Women suffer equally badly when it comes to in-work training, which, of course, is a large factor in promotion and career possibilities. This is true both of apprenticeship

level, and in craft training. In 1966 out of 24,193 apprentices only 3,542 were women (85% of these were shop assistants or hairdressers), and they represented only 15% of the people involved in IDA, IMI and ANCO courses. Employers are, in general, unwilling to spend time and money in training girls and women, there are also some craft unions which will not allow women to become apprenticed. We should demand that women be allowed to enter all trades as apprentices, and that retraining programmes be extended to women. These

would be financed by state subsidies under the control of the Trade Union Movement

THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF WORKING WOMEN

Working women also have special needs and, at the moment, there is very little recognition of this, even by the Unions. In fact, claims for equal pay often meet with the response that women will have to give up any concessions they may have won, such as flexible hours

and maternity leave. It is clear that a Charter must contend with this, women have no choice in the matter; of the two sexes they are the child-bearers.

First, women should be given a real choice about their future, this means that each woman should have the right to control the fertility of her own body. It is very important that the Irish Charter contains the demand for legal, readily available contraception. This, in the Irish context, would mean large grants from the Government to the Family Planning Association and the 'Family Planning Service' to extend their services into the rest of the country. Ideally, this function should be taken over by the State, so that the provision of services is not governed by profit margins, but at this point it would be better to use the existing organisation as they have the specialised knowledge and experienced gynaecologists. Secondly, there should be provision of abortion facilities for all women who want to use them. The number going over on the mailboat every week fully justifies including this demand, even though, of course, it will be viewed as controversial. But, if women do decide to have children, there should be full provision of facilities for them. Maternity leave should be extended to at least 12 weeks, and no woman should lose any job rights, such as inclusion in a pension scheme, promotion or job security because of her pregnancy. Employers and local welfare Authorities should also be pressed to extend the present day nursery and child care services to cater for working mothers. At the moment this need is almost unmet. For example, there are only 6 day nurseries in Dublin. These should be financed to a large extent, so that the charge to the mother is as small as possible. The home-help allowance given to widowers should be extended to cover all single parent families.

NEED FOR EQUAL UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT

This point raises the whole question of social welfare benefits. Any Irish Charter should claim equal unemployment benefit for women, especially in the present situation, when unemployment is increasing rapidly.

This is especially evident in relation to married women at present they have no legal right to unemployment benefit, as it is assumed that they will be "provided for" by their husbands. But separated and widowed women are also treated unequally and single women are, for instance, unable to claim unemployment benefit unless they have a dependant, or a certain number of stamps, qualifications that single men don't have to meet. The system of taxation should also be changed to end the discrimination against women. Each person should be treated as an individual for purposes of taxation, extra social needs should be met by higher social welfare payments and grants.

WOMEN IN A MALE-DOMINATED SOCIETY - THE NEED FOR AN ANTI-DISCRIMINATION BILL

All of the above questions are reflected and emphasized by the position of women legally, especially in relation to married women. It is a cliché to say that women in the South are legally chattels, that is possessions of their husbands, nevertheless such is their position. Any demands raised in Ireland must include some which combat this situation and establish equality before the law, so that women have an equal right to enter into contracts, such as mortgages and H.P. agreements; an equal right to all marital property and equal guardianship of any children. But the domination of Irish society by men is more widespread than the marital situation, single women also suffer from discrimination. There are still many jobs that advertise for men only, and they too are usually unable to enter into contracts like Bank Loans or Mortgages without a male guarantor. It is difficult to raise demands to cover this, short of a total overhaul of society, but an Anti-Discrimination Act, with real teeth, would be an important tactical victory for Irish women, and help underpin the other demands outlined above.

FOR AN IRISH WORKING WOMENS CHARTER



ECONOMIC CRISIS CONTD. FROM PAGE TWO

not create enough new jobs to balance this loss. Unemployment creeps up slowly. The following table shows the development of this tendency after the initial expansion of the early sixties.

Percentage rate of unemployment:						
1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	'72 '73
4.7	5.0	5.3	5.0	5.8	5.8	6.3 6.2

The contradiction we have shown above between the falling rate of profit and rising wages, which produces inflation is called in economic jargon, *excess demand*. Excess demand can be tolerated by the employers for a limited period of time because it keeps the economy ticking over. But it doesn't eliminate the fall in the rate of profit. Indeed by leading workers to expect bigger and greater wage increases each year it threatens the rate of profit with further decline. Sooner or later something has to be done to reduce this excess demand. At the moment that is exactly the problem confronting the National Coalition Government.

To reduce the buying power of the working class the government has three objectives:

(i) restrain wages; (ii) increase taxation; (iii) increase unemployment. These three objectives combined imply a deflationary policy. The first two objectives limit the amount of goods that workers can buy and those workers producing these goods are made redundant. As an 'Irish Times' economic correspondent noted:

"In addition, those thrown out of work as a result of the deflation have less to spend on anything. The existence of a large number of

unemployed makes it difficult to successfully pursue wage claims. This situation is seen as being conducive to a reduction in the rate of inflation and an improvement in the Balance of Payments" (October 1st).

In the light of this it is easy to see that the government is not trying to save us from "national ruin" or help workers. What it is doing is to eliminate the contradiction between the sloping profit return and rising wages — and it is attempting to do this at the workers expense.

A crisis of "Zooming Profits"!

It is important for workers to understand that the present crisis stems from a falling rate of profit. What the falling rate of profit shows above all is that capitalism is bankrupt. It can't, as a viable system continue even on its own terms.

The capitalist political parties, the reformist trade union and labour party leaders and even some tendencies on the "extreme left" wish to obscure this fact. After all, if the capitalist system is irreparable, then what would workers have to gain by moderating their demands or making sacrifices? Accordingly, last month for instance, during all the gloomy talk about restricting wages and growing unemployment Mr. Cosgrave could cheerfully declare that the:

"Economy is stronger and more resilient than ever before" (October 4th)

The trade union and Labour Party leaders, including "lefties" like Mattie Merrigan, also like to give the impression that the capitalist system is basically sound. They talk about the

great profits that are being made and they tell workers that all they have to do is put gentle pressure (if it is Mullens, Carroll or Larkin speaking) or strong pressure (if it is Merrigan speaking) on the employers to share out the wealth. In this way they avoid all talk of the need for a socialist alternative to capitalism.

Even among those who profess to be Marxists there are some, still clinging to the coat tails of the Labour Party and the trade union bureaucrats who use the same argument. They attempt to show that they are being very radical by denouncing the employers for making so much profit whereas they are only revealing how mesmerised and impressed they are by capitalism. The result of this approach for these people is on the one hand opportunism — a failure to raise these demands which challenge the basis of capitalism e.g. the failure to raise and fight for a rising scale of wages. On the other hand it results in ultra-leftism — a tendency to substitute their own utopian ideas for the real struggle that is already in progress. For example because they don't understand that industry as a whole is in crisis they dismiss the demand that the state should take over those industries that threaten to close down, as only propping up a few declining firms when in fact as the crisis deepens it will become a demand for the elimination of private capitalist ownership in vast areas of the economy.

A transitional programme

A clear understanding of the self-produced

and unsolvable (except at the expense of the working class) nature of the present crisis of capitalism must be the basis of any policy of fighting against the crisis. This rules out putting faith in solutions offered by the employers and government — they can't even make sufficient profits for themselves so what can they offer to workers? The central lesson to be drawn from the bankruptcy of capitalism is in fact that socialists and revolutionary trade unionists must put forward demands which are relevant to workers' immediate needs but which also make the employers themselves pay for their own mess.

Under present conditions the best and most relevant demands will be those related to inflation and unemployment. On inflation for example, the most useful demand will be to link wages to prices. This demand puts the responsibility for halting prices firmly on the shoulders of the employers. On unemployment, it is of central importance to demand that the state take over (without compensation) and keep in operation all those industries which are threatened with closure. Also it should be demanded that all available work be shared out without loss of pay. Here again the employers and the government will be forced to pay the cost of unemployment.

The capitalist system is in its death agony and the working class has nothing to gain by giving this senile patient a blood transfusion!

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