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The Magazine for Workers

# WORKERS LIFE

## VIOLENCE & THE G.A.A.



JOHN LENNON



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Vol 1 No 10 February 1981



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Cover photo: Sportsfile

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Published by Repsol Ltd., 30 Gardiner Place, Dublin 1  
Telephone 787321  
Printed by The People Ltd., Wexford.  
Distribution: Readers' Network

ELECTION fever is not in the air, although the media is full of nods and winks. Certainly all the parties are gearing up with constituency council meetings, appointing the necessary committees and generally clearing the decks to go to the country sometime between now and early June.

However on the ground that anonymous but frequently quoted spokesman, the man in the street, seems indifferent as yet. It may be that closer to E Day his views will come over loud and clear but in many constituencies that is doubtful.

The reason here is simple. The Republic is developing its own brand of consensus politics. This is part of the shift away from the pro and anti-Treaty images with which Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael were branded until the mid-seventies. Certainly a progressive step.

But dumping the Civil War and awakening to the fact that the people are very aware that this is the last quarter of the twentieth century did not mean a polarisation of the parties. Hence the point about what interest voters in many constituencies will muster in the run up to a general election.

For example, did Haughey or FitzGerald say the following: "These will be designed to reverse the decline in agricultural output, to end the stagnation in the industrial sector, and to halt and turn back the appalling rise in unemployment that has taken place during the past year.

"The task of the government of this country at this time is to provide the leadership that will ensure that the new generation of Irish people now growing up have the opportunity to find a livelihood and to establish a home in their own country, while at the same time tackling the problem of poverty which is still so prevalent in our society..."

Not easy. But it does make the point. The speaker was Dr FitzGerald at the Fine Gael convention in Tipperary, last month.

Equally the Labour Party apart from one or two notable exceptions can be slotted into the overall consensus framework. Michael O'Leary TD recently indicated that the Coalition is alive and well. Although many grass roots people in the party may dissent from this, the voter has yet to be convinced.

Furthermore EMP Dr John O'Connell's angry response to the Dublin South Central constituency council is a strong suggestion that Labour could enter the election in fair disarray.

All in all not a bright prospect for the thousands on the dole queue, those looking for a workers' government committed to full employment and those who simply want a government in power determined to end the catastrophic inflation and growing unemployment.

In some constituencies there will be an alternative, particularly in the hardest hit urban areas. Candidates of the stature of Tomas Mac Giolla, Joe Sherlock, Paddy Gallagher, John McManus, all of Sinn Féin The Workers' Party, will be in the field. It is reasonable to state that more than their own constituencies and party will be taking an interest in their performance.

THE FOLLOWING report from the *Sunday Press* (28 December 1980) would seem to indicate that the 'small man' is alive and well and living in Longford:

"Neil Blaney's Independent Fianna Fáil party will have a candidate in the Longford/Westmeath constituency in the general election. He is Councillor Tony Calbery, a 37-years-old full-time public representative, who topped the poll for election to Longford Urban District Council last year.

In a pre-election manifesto issued last week, Clr. Calbery says he stands for simple and sound economic policies with special appeal for the *small man* and woman. "My policies and those of my leader will appeal to those of you who have left school recently and have no job at all in these times of recession. I am tired of promises. I will stand independently for positive and practical politics."

Married with six children, Clr. Calbery says of Deputy Blaney: "He has a big heart for the *small man* and woman who have been the backbone of our *small country*."

Obviously the most fitting tribute the voters of Longford/Westmeath can pay Mr. Calbery is to give him a *small vote*.

(For more about the 'small man' see page 10.)

THE CHILVERS Report on the education and training of teachers in Northern Ireland has certainly brought sectarian attitudes out into the open. Basically what is proposed is the ending of the present system which has Roman Catholic students attending either St. Mary's (women) or St. Joseph's (men): the existing state controlled College of Education, Stranmillis, Belfast, would house all students on a single campus.

What is an apparently reasonable and logical proposal, in keeping with the other sections of third level education, universities and institutes of technology, is being bitterly and dogmatically opposed by the Roman Catholic authorities on the grounds that it is a threat to the "religious ethos of their schools".

Whatever about that view, and it is certainly one which people would be entitled to hold, there are disquieting rumours of a widespread campaign of covert intimidation to rally support for the Roman Catholic authorities' viewpoint.

Teachers in R.C. schools have been presented with a form

which they are requested to sign stating their opposition to the Chilvers report. As one teacher told *Workers Life*: "I agree with Chilvers but I want to keep my job. I signed."

Forms have also been distributed to children in the classroom and they are asked to bring them back, completed by their parents. Naturally parents who do not wish to see their children labelled and who themselves have experienced the power of teacher and priest have complied.

That is not to say that there are not many Roman Catholic parents who would oppose the Chilvers proposals. The real issue now is the coercive manner in which opposition is being created.

One wonders what would happen if either of these two documents or both were made a test case in court. Not being lawyers *Workers Life* cannot assess this possibility but we would certainly support the parents/teachers willing to make an issue of it.

IT'S always pleasant to hear of an Irishman being awarded a prestigious honour by another nation: more so when it is someone who has laboured long and hard in the interests of working people everywhere.

We are referring to John De Courcy Ireland who has been writing for *Workers Life* since our first issue, May 1980. Apart from his commitment to socialism, world peace and the development of harmonious international relations, John is recognised as one of the leading authorities on maritime affairs. That in no way exhausts his interests as readers of *Workers Life* will know.

The Yugoslavian Government will be presenting John with the Order of the Yugoslavian Flag with Gold Star in Dublin this month. We are sure that John's many friends will join with us in

congratulating him on this signal honour.

FURTHER cracks in the already seriously divided structure of the Social Democratic and Labour Party are rumoured following the shock resignation of general secretary Don Canning.

Mr Canning took over the appointment after the death of Dan McAravee only six months ago and although his resignation does not mean that he will be leaving the party, it has once again raised questions as to an open split on an urban-rural basis.

As we reported in December's *Workers Life*, former leader Gerry Fitt has been repeatedly sounded out about the possibilities of his making a comeback. Fitt however would have no chance of gaining the support of the middle-class backwoodsman in Mid-Ulster, Fermanagh and South Armagh. Equally John Hume, EMP, given his support for Fianna Fáil, will find it harder to convince the urban rank and file that Labour has any meaning in the party's title.

There could be tougher days ahead for the party which once claimed the almost total allegiance of the Roman Catholic population.

CATHOLIC priests in El Salvador reported that soldiers moving into peasant villages left by the men for fear of being murdered by the military had seized small children and, throwing them into the air, shot at them as if they were clay pigeons.

If this story of monstrous bestiality had been told by people less credible than these priests, it would have been disbelieved or regarded as the invention of a lunatic. Yet the story is true. The outrage happened in a country where, in the name of "freedom" and "humanity", people are being

murdered for striving to secure no more than decent living conditions.

The military engaged in the massacre enjoy the patronage of the USA and the FRG which supply the weapons killing the peasants' children. Some of these murderers in uniform even went to West Germany to become familiar with the "technical achievements" of its police force. That the West Germans are still considering giving El Salvador "development aid" to facilitate the mass murder there is now beyond doubt.

When ten years ago Allende's Chile managed to improve the lot of its children, it incurred the displeasure of the United States of America. In 1973 the CIA saw to it that Chile's popular unity government was removed with all its achievements. General Pinochet, however, who is known throughout the world as the murderer of tens of thousands of people, has nothing to fear from the Americans. Nor have the military in El Salvador. For they guard "freedom" in the interests of their masters. The murdered babies, with their small bodies riddled by bullets, testify to the unctuously propagated "humanity" of the rulers in Washington and other western capitals.

AFTER pocketing nearly £33 million this winter the country's sugar beet farmers are still complaining. The IFA's beet and vegetable secretary, Mr Tom Casey claims that bad weather and poor harvesting machines resulted in a "mixed year for growers".

If anyone has reason to complain it is the state-owned Irish Sugar Company which buys sugar beet at guaranteed prices from the farmers. The Sugar Company had expected the farmers to produce 90,000 acres of beet but they had a shortfall of 7,000 acres. As usual, the Western farmers had the worst record and produced 40% less sugar beet this winter compared to 1979-80. At the state's expense sugar beet had to be transferred from Carlow to the Tuam factory to protect sugar workers' jobs in Galway.

The Irish Sugar Company wants farmers to grow more sugar beet to meet its sales commitments and to maintain the agreed EEC sugar quotas. But the farmers continue to be a law unto themselves growing when and what they like despite prior agreements and contracts with the four sugar factories.

# THAT'S LIFE

THATCHER's axe knows no political boundaries; this was cruelly demonstrated with the announcement that upwards of 800 jobs were to be cut at the British Enkalon plant in Unionist Antrim. Dealings in the shares of the company, the largest remaining synthetic fibre operator in the Province were immediately suspended on the Stock Exchange.

The shock announcement, which took trade union leaders by complete surprise, came in the wake of a report from top business consultants Coopers and Lybrand Associates which forecast that unemployment in the North would climb to 125,000, or 21.5%, by the end of the year.

British Enkalon, which is part of the giant Dutch AKZO N.V. Company, blames the cuts on the recession, cheap imports from the US and the adverse effect that the strong pound sterling has on exports.

On the same day as the Cooper and Lybrand report was issued, leading London stockbrokers Phillips and Drew published their economic forecasts for Britain for the next five years.

These show that by 1985 unemployment will soar to over 3 million, inflation will be running in double figures, and, in spite of North Sea Oil, the balance of payments will be in massive deficit. Basically they are saying that Thatcher's hard-nosed monetarist policies are doomed to failure.

For all workers, particularly in the North where the Thatcher experiment hits harder and deeper, the message is clear: *Thatcher must go.*

Even her erstwhile allies are hinting at it!

MANY who paid the unofficial two pence and later the official one penny on the pint during the festive hollers, and who are looking forward not without trepidation to the inevitable and rapidly-approaching punt-pint, might like to know how some of the money has been redistributed.

*Guinness is good for you* runs the old adage; this, of course, is not entirely true, as the owners of many a morning-after sore head can adequately testify; but that Guinness is good for some is beyond dispute. The *some* in question being the board of Guinness and their numerous holdings.

Group turnover for the twelve months to last September was



*Next month we will be taking an indepth look at the IRFU decision to tour South Africa.*

£783.6M with pre-tax profits of a mere £43.3M. The poor summer weather, apparently, did little to encourage the levels of drinking that were expected but, in spite of this, 'volumes were close to the previous year' said the company's annual report.

Out of these vast profits the group made contributions for charitable purposes within Ireland of a magnanimous £84,416 (less than 2% of pre-tax profits) as well as a payment of £7,500 to British United Industrialists for 'political' purposes. Total directors emoluments, as such payments are quaintly called, amounted to £595,000, with the highest paid of these receiving £62,700 — the identity of this director was not revealed.

TAX DODGING, in spite of its popularity, is not an exclusively Irish sport. Indeed, our British neighbours take a far more professional approach to the whole business. London's Cafe Royal on February 4th will show clearly how much more advanced are Britain's dodgers than their Irish counterparts.

The UK's top fiddlers will be gathering for a high level seminar on tax avoidance. A host of lawyers and accountants will give a series of talks on the latest, most up-to-date methods of avoiding or cutting down on tax. Apparently there is a lot of renewed interest in the subject over the water; this follows the recent publicity about the Vestey case.

Tickets, which are available at £103.50 (incl. VAT — must keep it legal!) include refreshments. Aer Lingus are not reported to be considering a package.

FIVE years ago Bessbrook, Co. Armagh, was the scene of one of the most inhuman acts of this past decade. Ten Protestant workmen were taken from their mini-bus and brutally murdered. The eleventh badly wounded Protestant escaped by feigning death.

When the bus was halted by the gang of five gunmen, they asked the workers their religious affiliation. The sole Roman Catholic was dragged from his

group of fellow workers who sought to protect him. Mistakenly they had thought that he was the target for the sectarian killers.

Speaking at the unveiling of the Bessbrook memorial, January 5, the former president of the Methodist Church, Dr Hedley Plunkett said that "hordes of young people have now psychologically accepted killing, hatred and destruction as a way of life. They have had subtle indoctrination from skilled ringmasters and many people feel deeply that the media is not without blame."

In *Workers Life* (June 1980), in an article *Telling it All?* Des O'Hagan pointed to the same issue in relation to an article in the *Sunday World* (May 11, 1980) and questioned the use of language which "many readers must have considered — a frightening justification of the terrorism and murder which has occurred in Northern Ireland."

THE AMERICAN euphoria with the ultimate release of the diplomatic prisoners from Iran and the inaugural festivities surrounding Ronald Reagan's move to Washington has clouded the extent of the economic depression in the USA.

Reagan's background of anti-union activities and his right-wing connections are still a very real threat to American workers. Despite the extensive poverty, unemployment and racism, the new U.S. Administration was willing to spend about £6,000,000 on the inaugural festivities.

Two days before he entertained suspected Mafia leaders at the 'Inaugural Ball' a tragic incident illustrated Reagan's attitudes and lack of concern for ordinary workers. A 65 year old scaffolding worker fell to his death when a giant portrait of the President-elect collapsed on him during Reagan's monster fireworks display but the Fortieth President of the 'land of the free' didn't bat an eyelid. He continued his Hollywood razzmatazz without even an expression of sympathy.

THE MISERLY attitude of the new Fianna Fáil Minister for Labour, Tom Nolan, has placed an obstacle in settling minor shop-floor conflicts which can flare into widespread strikes. The Minister has refused to pay the wage agreement increases to the three Rights Commissioners who arbitrate in minor industrial disputes.

THE relationship between the Gaelic Athletic Association and violence is once again hitting the headlines. Undoubtedly the majority of the members of what is Ireland's largest amateur sporting body would be appalled by the covert and overt relationship which has existed between the Provisional terrorist organisation and the GAA in Northern Ireland.

Many of them do not know and are unlikely to learn the facts.

Facts which clearly underscore the correctness of the concern expressed by such leading GAA members as Tom Woulfe, Dublin and John Grady, Tipperary, former All-Ireland hurler. The clipping which we reproduce of the *Andersonstown News* Saturday, December 6, is a damning indictment of "the violence-GAA syndrome". The report claims that 3,000 members of the Association marched on the Falls Road to Casement Park in support of the H Block campaign. Whether or not the figures are inflated and whether or not the clubs and members who marched did so with the support of their organisation, there is one brutal fact which stands out.

Casement Park is regarded as the headquarters of the Gaelic Athletic Association in Northern Ireland.

*Andersonstown News* also claims that the meeting was addressed by Gerry Adams, Vice President of the Provisional political organisation. Adams captured headlines in 1972 when he was released from Long Kesh and flown to an unknown destination in England for discussions with the then British Tory Government.

Reports reaching *Workers Life* however indicate that there is a growing volume of opinion, particularly within the Belfast GAA clubs who are not prepared to provide further financial aid and the use of their premises, for the Provisionals.

Absolutely reliable sources have informed us that three of the city's leading clubs with social premises on or close to the Falls Road refused point blank to subscribe £1,000 each to the H Block propaganda fund.

Efforts by Provisionals to extort money in the past have been successful and they still have the capacity to muscle their way into Casement Park to hold such

# Violence and the GAA

Liam Cassidy



Tom Woulfe

Photo: Sportsfile

meetings as the H Block rally. On this occasion care was taken not to produce weapons as has happened previously.

Older members who were prepared to back the Provisionals behind closed doors were then

forced to review their position; the behind the scenes attitude now is the reverse. Public verbal support, but at committee and executive level absolute hostility.

In the Republic the stand by such longtime GAA members as Tom



'Andersonstown News' (Belfast) Saturday December 6, 1980

Woulfe and the recent RTE programme, *Today, Tonight* have pushed the question of the ambiguous nature of the attitudes of some of the Association's leadership and certain clubs to violence in Northern Ireland, to the forefront.

This year's Annual Congress at Easter promises to see this vital topic fully ventilated. Certainly whatever way the debate ends, the future of the Association is very much at stake. Tom Woulfe has been concerned about the Association all his life. A native of Ballyunion, Co. Kerry, he is a very fit looking 65 year old. When I spoke to him for *Workers Life* he told me that he had cycled from Dublin to Ballyunion and back last September, taking two days each way.

His personal history is tied into the Association both as a player and administrator. In 1932, '33 and '34 he won Munster Senior Colleges medals. Coming to Dublin at 19 he was first with the Dolphins before transferring to Civil Service when it was founded in 1935. His administrative experience runs from Club to County level, where he was treasurer from 1942 to 1944. Dublin team manager in '44, he saw them lose the Leinster final to Carlow. Incidentally the only year in which

Carlow took the Leinster Championship.

Nationally Tom Woulfe came to prominence in 1959 when he sought a commission of enquiry into the notorious "ban". This was the rule which forbade members of the Association playing or attending "foreign" games.

In 1960 he spent the winter writing the history of the ban and although a resolution appeared on the Annual Congress agenda in 1962 it was not until 1971 that the resolution was passed. I asked Tom what his reaction was to the recent comment of former GAA President Pat Fanning that the removal of the ban achieved nothing.

TW: Anybody who suggested that has forgotten the achievement of the "Dubs" in the seventies and also the fact that the "Dubs" success led to the achievements of the present Kerry team. Furthermore had the ban remained Croke Park might never have seen the likes of Dave Hickey, Kevin Moran or Brian Mullins. The removal of the ban has promoted harmony where there was discontent in the GAA and its removal has helped to demolish the pernicious myth of second class citizenship based on the game one happened to play. Its removal removed a vicious and divisive element within and outside the GAA

in Ireland.

LC: At this year's County Dublin Convention you proposed the resolution calling on the GAA to insert the words "Whereas the Association commits itself to support the national aim of political unity by peaceful means it emphatically rejects and unequivocally condemns violence to promote this aim" into its Constitution — what was your reaction when it was defeated?

TW: I was sadly disillusioned. I expect enlightened leadership from Dublin because it is a Capital City with a balance of the metropolitan and provincial and should mirror the national views.

LC: Were you surprised by the extent of the opposition?

TW: I was taken completely by surprise as I expected a large vote in favour. I was really ambushed. I also believe that the debate did not reflect the views of the ordinary GAA person. This issue of violence confronting the GAA today is far more important than the ban issue was.

LC: Why do you want this resolution passed?

TW: The President has condemned violence under pressure from the Gardai but in a democracy leadership and authority are different commodities. In the GAA

## POLITICAL LIFE

ultimate authority resides at Congress and at Congress the president is just one vote — the point being that the president condemning violence is no substitute for a formal decision from Congress. A denunciation of violence either at Congress or outside it by the president will now surely lack conviction after the largest unit in the GAA, Dublin, has rejected a motion condemning violence. The Civil Service motion which I proposed at the Dublin Convention was only stating what the president had already stated in public. A public statement by a leader is no substitute for a permanent rule. If we are really sincere about condemning violence why they are we reluctant to write it into our Constitution?

I am concerned about the quality of life in Ireland and I am shocked in common with most Irishmen about the mounting incidents of violence on our island. The GAA as one of the biggest sporting and social movement has not pulled its weight or been seen as it ought to be

in denouncing the recent violence. *I would like to see the GAA promoting my vision of a better quality of life in Ireland and regrettably the deafening silence of the GAA leadership up to recent times is a cause for concern.*

**LC: What do you see as the role of the GAA?**

**TW:** Our primary hole is to promote national games throughout the entire spectrum of the games playing population of Ireland but unfortunately we have failed to create a presence among the Protestant community. The infamous "ban" was responsible for that situation and although the ban is gone for ten years, the attitudes which it cultivated are still with us in many areas. I'm afraid that we are less acceptable to the Protestant population today than we were ten years ago and one hasn't to travel far to see the reasons why.

**LC: What are the motions that concern you and when did they start to appear on the Congress agenda?**

**TW:** In 1972 the President, Pat

Fanning, made an emotive speech with undisguised political undertones, greetings were sent to the delegates from the prisoners in Long Kesh and a hand-painted linen standard, painted by the prisoners, was presented and proudly displayed for the delegates. In 1973 a motion committing the GAA to declare its solidarity with and support for the fight for freedom in British Occupied Ireland was passed. This by the way was at a time when Rule 7 of the GAA stated that the GAA shall be non-political and political questions shall be neither raised nor discussed at its meetings. In 1977 a resolution from London and Wexford calling for the withdrawal of British forces altogether from Ireland was passed with applause. It was supported by among others one Dan Kennedy from U.S.A. who stated that he was a representative of the Irish National Caucus. In 1979 Congress passed a resolution supporting the struggle for national liberation.

**LC: Your name is being mentioned as a possible candidate for the Presidency. Are you interested in the job?**

**TW:** The Presidency was never a personal ambition of mine. I threw my hat in the ring in the '60s, the object being to eliminate the ban. After the decision of the Dublin County Board talk of my Presidential aspirations has become somewhat irrelevant. I am happy to learn that Sean O Siócháin has made himself available. This is the first time that a potential candidate for the office has shown his hand before the nomination, so that if by me declaring my availability has led to this development, then my gesture has not been in vain.

**LC: You are unhappy with the method of nominating candidates for the Presidency.**

**TW:** Yes. At the moment nominations are normally effected in secret by a Sub-Committee of a County Board. At the last two Congresses Dublin had a motion asking that Presidential candidates be nominated by the members at County Board Conventions but the motion was rejected by Congress.

**LC: Finally, Tom, any notions of retiring?**

**TW:** In GAA terms I'm a marathon runner and the tape is many leagues away.

## Role of the GAA

**IN 1965 Tom Wolfe had these comments to make on the ban and the modernisation of the Gaelic Athletic Association. They still make interesting reading today.**

"But in what is perhaps the most important field of all I believe that the GAA has a vital role to play: that is in promoting the unification of heart and mind which all our national leaders accept as the indispensable condition for the evolution of a united nation in which the name of Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter gives way to the common name of Irishmen.

"Let us not indulge in massive self-deception. The GAA includes practically nobody of the religious minority in this country — the minority which, by and large, coincides with the political majority in the North. It even excludes a significant section of the majority as well.

"Accordingly the co-religionists of Tone, Emmet, Davis, Mitchell and Parnell are outside the GAA. If anyone says to me — and some have said it — "Let them come in on our terms, and if they don't let them stay out", my reply is that my vision of Ireland is the Ireland of Tone and Davis, and I do not say let them stay out. I want them in. They are my countrymen. Let them who will differ from me — but if they do, let them at least have the grace to refrain from quoting Tone and Davis. Because I want them in, I want to see the barrier lowered: for let us not evade reality — the barrier, though not insurmountable is too high for too many.

"In fact with the growth of urbanisation the Ban becomes a progressive barrier to GAA progress. I was saying that our aim should be bigger and fewer clubs. These clubs should have their grounds and Club Rooms near towns as a general rule and the idea is that they would draw their players and members from the adjoining town and the surrounding rural districts. There would still be room of course for the practice pitch out in the country but it would obviously be unrealistic to suggest that modern equipped dressing rooms and Club premises should be provided at these practice pitches.

But these facilities should be provided as a matter of urgency at the grounds of the bigger Clubs which I envisage. The grounds of the bigger Clubs should have first class facilities for players and club premises equipped with amenities to cater for the normal social demands and enjoyments of members and their friends — indoor recreations, cultural activities etc."



# LETTERS

The November issue of *Workers Life* contained a commentary on the Labour Party Conference which ended with the following words:

"But until Northern Ireland is seen less as a populist or sensationalist issue and more, like the closures at Consett and the lengthening dole queues, as a class issue, the Labour Party will still continue to retain an enormous gap in their manifesto for socialism."

Indeed it will. And from a class point of view the way forward for the Labour Party is clear: it is to unite workers both within Northern Ireland and with workers in Great Britain in a common struggle against this Tory Government and seek to ensure that it is turned out of office at the next General Election. To do that it needs to extend its organisation to Northern Ireland so that all workers who have the misfortune to be ruled by this Tory Government have the opportunity of voting against it and for the Labour alternative. That is the objective of the CLR.

David Morrison  
Secretary (N.I.),  
Campaign for Labour  
Representation.

I do look forward to reading the views expressed particularly the strong non-sectarian working class attitude that is invariably adopted by your magazine.

More power to your pen.

David Wylie,  
Union of Shop, Distributive and  
Allied Workers,  
61-63 Royal Avenue,  
Belfast.

In Eamonn Smullen's homily on trade union unity and solidarity ("Workers Life January 1981) there is a reference to Fianna Fáil's counter-attack against trade union militancy, particularly the militant P.A.Y.E. Campaign, as if we as a Union arising from the dispute, are in some way manipulated by Fianna Fáil.

We supported unequivocally ALL Tax stoppages when others hid behind the I.C.T.U.'s condemnation of the first two stoppages. If Eamonn is looking for trade union

friends of Fianna Fáil in Marlborough Street he is off the mark and has his glossary of abbreviations screwed up.

Rhetorical references to unity and solidarity, sectarianism and nationalism sound fine, but when the Movement is being rationalised by the F.U.E. and the multi-nationals and Clause 47 (d) is being used to underpin this intervention it is time we shouted "Stop! Change tack or we get off". There are no sectarian or nationalist undertones or overtones in our dispute with the I.T.G.W.U.

The dispute between the Unions is simply the failure of the I.C.T.U. in the past to seriously tackle the problems of:

- (1) A fair code of practice in re-cruitment in new firms, offering an offset to the discrimination practised against certain unions.
- (2) A reasonable and democratic procedure to enable a substantial majority of members to transfer from one union to another in certain circumstances rather than to endure for all time the union *their employer chose for them* even if in the unlikely event it was this Union.

(1) and (2) above are an organisational pre-requisite for workers controlling their own work place. Even Polish trade unionists saw this elementary need in what is purported to be a Socialist society.

M.P. Merrigan,  
District Secretary,  
Amalgamated Transport and  
General Workers Union,  
112/113 Marlboro' Street,  
Dublin 1.

Your editorial in *Workers Life* (January) on the H Block hunger strike was a timely reminder of the depths to which Irish political life has sunk during ten years of paramilitary violence in the North.

That the leaders of the Provisionals were prepared to see

their comrades die in order to provide justification for a step-up of their campaign of sectarian violence is beyond doubt. Those of us who opposed the campaign did not do so because we were opposed to humane treatment for all prisoners (indeed, the opposite is the case); we did so because we are opposed to all sectarianism and to all those actions encourage or increase sectarianism.

If the thousands of people who did support the campaign, for whatever reasons, were serious in their demands for humanity and decency, then let them turn their collective social conscience to the Provisionals to call a halt to their sectarian campaign. Normal politics — class politics — could then be tried by those whose aspirations do not come out of the barrel of a gun.

Con O'Connell,  
2 Beech Avenue,  
Runcorn Road,  
Balsall Heath  
Birmingham.

Might I avail of the courtesy of your columns to appeal to all Irish workers to condemn the IRFU's proposed tour of South Africa.

Rugby in Ireland is certainly not a working-class sport. One only has to look at the composition of the national squad to see this. Nevertheless, many workers in Ireland enjoy rugby as a spectator sport and, furthermore, the team will be travelling as our representatives. As such they will be endorsing the South African system of Apartheid in the name of Ireland when they have absolutely no mandate from anywhere to do so.

John McManus  
Twinbrook  
Belfast.

Congratulations on your regular feature *Working to Rule*. As shop steward I have long been aware of the shortage of information readily available to the ordinary lay worker on this particularly important subject. Keep up the good work!

Seamus McDonagh  
Blanchardstown  
Dublin.

## ECONOMIC LIFE

"THE TAX inspectors are anxious to add further tentacles to the bureaucratic powers which are already threatening small business with strangulation."

So says Mr Austin Kennan, National Organiser of the Irish Federation of Self-Employed. He was replying to the claim by the Tax Inspectors' Trade Union that the so-called self-employed were dodging £80 million taxes annually. The union had quite rightly demanded that the government should take steps to stop this sponging by the 'self-employed' on PAYE taxpayers.

This is one of the demands of the Irish Congress of Trade Union's Tax Reform Campaign. Kennan's reaction was predictable.

For decades the class of employer that Mr Kennan is paid to represent had managed to turn the crime of tax-dodging, which deprives the old, the poor and the sick, into a virtue which gombeen men could boast about as a sure sign of their cleverness and cunning.

The PAYE tax reform campaign changed all that. Gone is the day when the "self-made" man could boast to wage and salary earners in the 'local' that he had bought his new Mercedes with money 'hidden' from the tax-man. Robbing old age pensioners is no longer a virtue and the local tax dodger no longer a folk hero.

The IFSE and Austin Kennan know this. Hence their hysterical attack on the tax inspectors' union as representing "a privileged class".

Kennan complained about recent events showing a "significant departure from the standard of impartiality hitherto displayed by public servants". By impartiality Mr Kennan means turning a blind eye to the tax dodging activities of the people who pay his salary.

Many of the younger revenue workers come from the families of PAYE workers with fewer and fewer coming from business families.

They don't share the hero worship of the self-made man which many of their elders in the Revenue Department held to be as sacred as their membership of the Knights of Columbanus. Men who "make themselves" at the expense of their fellow man can expect much the same type of impartiality from the

# 'Small man' attacks inspectors

Michael Dolan

new generation of tax workers as politicians who try to "fix" traffic offences for party members get from the younger members of the gardai.

The presence of the tax workers with their union banners on the

PAYE demonstration must have been a sad sight for the sore eyes of the Republic's tax dodgers. Mr Kennan and the IFSE have decided to go on the offensive with the hope of getting a sympathetic response from a government with as many

The Self Employed are being 'CRIPPLED' by:

- I A RIDICULOUSLY HIGH TAX BURDEN
- II AN EVER EXPANDING BUREAUCRACY
- III AN INVASION BY GOVERNMENT INTO PRIVACY
- IV NO PROPER NATIONAL REPRESENTATION

Help Us To Help You

JOIN THE FIGHT FOR THE SURVIVAL OF THE SELF EMPLOYED NOW!

The Irish Federation of Self Employed  
12 UPPER FITZWILLIAM STREET  
DUBLIN 2

self-made men as any provincial branch of the Chamber of Commerce.

Maggie Thatcher is doing her bit for the small man in Britain so the IFSE can expect nothing less from a Taoiseach who shot from Donny-carney to a mansion in Kinsely in less time than it takes to say Séan Lemass.

Recent statements from Frank Cluskey (*Workers Life*, December 1980) indicate clearly that the Irish Labour Party like the British Tory Party believes that workers should support small business with tax subsidies, if necessary.

The public servants who have been attacked by Austin Kennan for trying to serve the interests of the majority of taxpayers can expect little regard from the political parties in Dáil Éireann all of whom have supported a tax system so unjust that it produced the biggest demonstration in the history of the State. The tax workers and their union will have the support of PAYE workers in their courageous stand against being browbeaten and intimidated by tax dodgers and their political allies in Dáil Éireann.

PAYE workers know very well that Kennan and the IFSE are employed in a political con-job. Their very title, Irish Federation of Self-Employed is itself a misnomer. The IFSE is a federation of employers, the major difference between them and the Federated Union of Employers is that the IFSE class employ small numbers of workers, most of whom are not in a trade union.

The other distinguishing characteristic of IFSE employers is that the wages they pay their workers tend to be well below the national average. If the IFSE ever get around to producing a banner their slogan should be "Small numbers at small wages is good for small business".

The workers in those small businesses covered by the Statutory Minimum Rates of Pay laid down by the Department of Labour through the Joint Labour Committee enjoy some measure of protection against the excesses of their employers' greed. But these minimum rates of pay are much less than those secured by workers in larger, unionised employment as the following figures show:

Joint Labour Committee	Number of premises on the Register	Details of Inspection carried out during the year			Amount of arrears collected
		Number of Inspections	Number of Workers		
			Male	Female	
Aerated Waters ...	58	60	775	13	£ 331.24
Agriculture ...	3,010	3,189	1,370*	—	7,999.92
Boot & Shoe ...	145	104	79	2	—
Brush & Broom ...	9	4	44	55	—
Buttonmaking ...	4	3	13	24	—
Catering ...	1,069	202	413	609	2,035.94
General Waste					
Reclamation ...	19	16	165	37	—
Hairstressing (Cork)	107	138	38	250	329.20
Hairstressing (Dublin)	611	322	146	602	1,670.73
Handkerchief and					
H.P.G. ...	21	18	92	394	351.98
Hotels ...	810	261	1,020	1,895	2,827.99
Law Clerks ...	863	797	284	2,965	3,522.89
Messengers (Cork)	51	49	15	—	—
(Dublin)	329	202	299	—	432.26
(Limerick)	67	67	6	—	36.38
(Waterford)	15	15	7	—	—
Provender Milling	190	148	1,127	7	34.75
Shirtmaking ...	43	17	73	1,119	1,534.20
Tailoring ...	82	49	277	1,301	1,490.72
Women's Clothing & Millinery ...	282	199	565	2,868	3,478.79
Total ...	7,785	5,860	6,808	12,141	26,076.65

#### Average earnings of adult industrial workers in manufacturing industry March 1980: ★

Men £114.10  
Women £66.73

Joint Labour Committee's minimum weekly rates of pay 1980:	
Aerated Waters	£63.13
Agriculture	61.64
Brush & Broom	52.40
Catering	53.65
Hairstressing, Cork	44.77
Hairstressing, Dublin	52.48
Handkerchief & Household piece goods	53.73
Hotels	51.15
Law Clerks	54.30
Provender & Milling	65.58
Shirtmaking	50.82
Tailoring	55.90
Women's clothing	55.90

★ Trade Union Information, Summer 1980, P.7 (estimate)

Another of the "bureaucratic powers" of which Mr Kennan complains is "threatening small business with strangulation" is undoubtedly directed at the Inspectors from the Department of Labour whose job it is to ensure that many of the people for whom the IFSE speak are paying their workers the legal minimum wage. In 1979 these "bureaucrats" collected £26,076.65 of arrears (see Table 2) for workers which had been pocketed by their employers.

Other bureaucratic powers "threatening" Mr Kennan's small

businessmen include inspectors who make sure they stamp workers' cards, that children are not employed and that minimum standards of safety, hygiene and hours of work are being observed.

Is it any wonder that the IFSE yearn for the good old days when the only rights were the right of property and men with "a stake in the country" who didn't have to worry about "upstarts" of civil servants breathing down their necks.

When Austin Kennan was employed as Examiner of Restrictive Practices (a civil service job), he fought hard for taxpayers' money to be used by the Government to subsidise small (sic!) shopkeepers and for legislation to be used to prevent the supermarket chains from competing with traditional shops. A recent Prices Commission Survey showed that the more supermarket multiples there were in a town, the lower the prices for the consumer.

The poor mouth of the so-called "small man" makes little impression on the great majority of working people who live on a wage or salary. PAYE workers are now a substantial majority in the Republic and that is why the efforts of Kennan, his paymasters and their friends in high places to put the clock back will fail.



**BERNARD GUILFOYLE looks  
at one of Ireland's top  
companies**

# Irish Life

## Assurance Company

IRISH LIFE is one of Ireland's top companies based on assets and wealth. It has the largest investments in the country as well as being probably the largest single Irish investor abroad. In terms of the construction industry it is the most important company in Ireland. On top of this, Irish Life is the country's biggest insurance firm and with its income of over £150 million it is ranked as one of the largest Irish companies.

Irish Life therefore appears as if it would be the best company in which a capitalist seeking large profits could invest and benefit from the extra wealth generated by Irish workers. Try as he may, the speculator and investor cannot buy on share in this important, forty year old, company because it is owned by the people of Ireland. Regrettably, it is not controlled by them.

Irish Life's assets at the end of 1979 totalled £559,000,000. Ireland's largest company ranked by assets is Allied Irish Banks with £3,323,000,000. However it is not legitimate to compare an insurance company with a bank because the latter includes all deposits by its customers in its assets. (Incidentally, both of these companies share the same chairman, Niall Crowley.) Similarly, it would be incorrect to compare Irish Life with top industrial company Jefferson Smurfit, whose assets total £164M, because the former is a financial company while the Smurfits is a manufacturing company. Most important is where Irish Life's assets are invested.

Forty per cent is in Government securities, which means that it is on loan to the Government. One quarter of it £147M, is invested in properties.

Some are well known, such as the Irish Life Centre, the Moore Street development, Lansdowne House, Agricultural House and Airways Industrial Estate in Dublin. Ironically most are office blocks and are rented to the State. It owns foreign properties like the Rijswijk in the Hague and others in Britain, France, Belgium and it recently bought a couple of properties in Texas for \$10 million. All probably bring in valuable foreign exchange earnings. It also has investments in BMW cars (so Irish farmers are patriotic, after all!) Hitachi, Siemens, IBM, Chase Manhattan, Midland Bank and British Petroleum. Workers have no dogmatic objections to foreign investment by Irish companies but it is essential that the vast majority of their funds are invested at home to generate the maximum number of jobs and to contribute to the industrialisation of the country. The Chairman, Niall Crowley, used the annual report of the

company to attack the exchange controls imposed by the Central Bank to protect our newly independent currency because his bank, AIB, and Irish Life's bosses want to send money abroad unrestricted. It was limited to 10% of a company's assets but he persuaded the Government to raise it. Managing Director, R.P. Willis, wants to have the company off to private sector interests and then, freed of State ownership, to "move more money out of Ireland".

The company has £147 million invested in property and is currently investing £36M in sixteen sites in Ireland giving employment to one thousand workers. It is therefore the largest property investment company in the country. Michael Lucy, property investment manager, is an influential figure in the Irish construction industry. His decisions as to what to build and where to build have enormous effects on this industry.

Irish Life operates on capitalist lines as it must in a capitalist economy. Managing Director R.P. Willis boasts that "State involvement has not inhibited us from behaving like a private company".

He doesn't use the terms *State ownership or control* but stresses *involvement* which indicates a minor connection. There is certainly a difference between ownership and control. One can have control without total ownership. For example, if one owns say, 15% of the shares of a company and no other shareholder owns many shares and there are a great many shareholders, then one can control the company. The State owns Irish Life but it does not control it. As Managing Director, Willis states it only has an *involvement* with the company.

Needless to say there is not one token worker-director or trade union nominee on the board of Irish Life. Indeed the Chairman, Niall Crowley, in the annual

*R.P. Willis, Managing Director of Irish Life.*



report of the company attacks workers for demanding higher wages to compensate for inflation.

Willis has stated in *Business and Finance* that he wanted to achieve freedom from the hands of politicians and civil servants. Regrettably he has had some measure of success. He now only has to give a mere 2% of the profits to the State. It is 98% mutualised, i.e. supposedly controlled by the policyholders. But because of the large number and diffuseness of the policyholders, they do not control it. Willis and his friends do.

The cynic might say that Willis's choice of directors would differ only in name from those of the Minister for Finance, in this effective one-party state. Irish Life is too rich, too important an investor in every area of the economy and in other economies to let slip further (there's only 2% of the company left!) out of public control, even if this control is barely exercised. Under State ownership, the Government can still be pressurized into making the company act in the public interest.

In a capitalist economy it is not possible to organise a company on socialist lines. Workers' co-ops and other "socialistic" ventures are doomed to failure unless they are run on a capitalist basis, no matter how well motivated and idealistic the people involved are. Only when the whole economy is socialist can companies operate to supply socially needed goods at reasonable prices and also to be run, not with profit but the workers' interests foremost.

In *Workers Life* (October 1980), it was shown how the Irish National Oil Company, a State company, was set up to buy oil and supply it to Irish goombes, who would make the profit. A primary function of state companies, in this society, is to trade with and to enrich Irish capitalists.

However, certain State companies can be immensely successful, like Bord na Mona. Not alone are jobs created, but its success can be an ideological weapon in the hands of socialists. It shows that there is such a thing as public enterprise, which can be creative, imaginative and utilise talent to the full. And it can demonstrate that there are many people in Ireland whose aspirations are not reducible to mere money, to more money, to profit and to greed.

Realistic demands by socialists for State companies in a capitalist economy are limited.



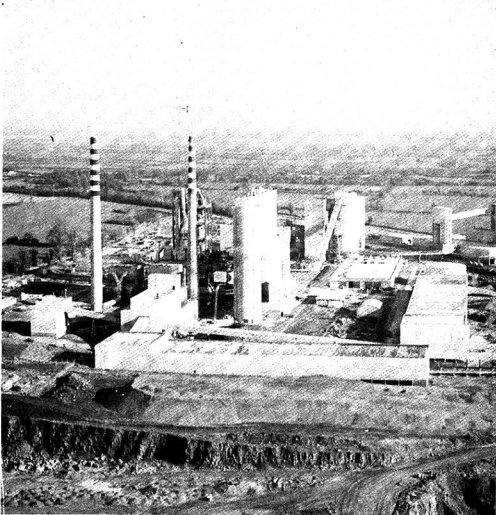
*Company Chairman Niall Crowley.*

If demands are not founded on a material basis, then the company would be wiped out by private competitors (assuming the demands were met) and workers in the State company would suffer most. Realistic demands for Irish Life are four. First, this rich and profitable company

must not be hived off to the directors and chief executives. Second, worker directors and a number of trade union nominees, especially from the construction industry, should be appointed. Third, the company should use some of its vast funds in a more socially responsible

way, such as low-cost housing and flats with reasonable rents. Finally, Irish Life could be a vehicle for a comprehensive state pension scheme, covering every person at work in the country and guaranteeing each and everyone a dignified and comfortable old age.

*Irish Life is a significant shareholder in Cement Roadstone.*



# The need for cheap energy

*Eamonn Smullen*

IT IS impossible to have serious industrial development without cheap energy. Cheap energy now means either coal or nuclear power, or both, to generate electricity — it means that and it means nothing else at the present time. In the early 1970s — until 1973 — the cheapest way to generate electricity was by burning residual fuel oil. Northern Ireland then had cheap electricity and in the year 1973 Northern Ireland's industrial development peaked. Since then there has been a decline in industry and a very serious growth in unemployment; the two are linked.

By 1977 the cost of electricity generating had increased to such a degree that the Electricity Service — Finance Northern Ireland Order 1977 — provided for revenue contributions not exceeding £100 million in respect of the years 1977/78 to 1981/82. A sum of £20 million was credited to the Northern Ireland electricity service Revenue Account in the year 1978/79. In December 1977 the British government wrote off Northern Ireland Electricity Service debts of £250 million to the government Loans Fund.

The government grant in 1977 to the NI Electricity Service showed clearly, by its very title, that what this money really is, is "Price Restraint Compensation". From the year 1974 onwards the NIES own revenue expenditure excluded interest repayments (and a major debt was written off) so we are not talking about the high cost of interest repayments. We are talking about the cost of fuel.

The cost-of-energy picture is terrifying to any substantial manufacturing enterprise contemplating coming to Northern Ireland or continuing in business there. Energy is one

of the costs of production they must look at most carefully. In the present atmosphere of Tory cuts who would dare to assume that the cost of energy will not zoom next year when the agreed life-span of the subsidy runs out at the end of the year.

The present subsidy serves to reduce the price of electricity to industrial users, to the highest price in the industrial world.

## Coal-fired stations

It is very obvious that although some people foolishly believe that Northern Ireland does not have a critical generating problem, because there is considerable excess generating capacity, the position is in fact, most serious. Excess, unused electricity generating capacity means that the high cost of using expensive fuel is further increased by expensive plant not being used to full economic capacity.

Environmentalists will perhaps regret, and even seek to prevent, the return of coal-fired electricity generating stations. However modern types of generating stations do not need to pollute.

The latest coal-fired station to come on stream in the United States works on a process called "Fluidized Bed Combustion". This process involves the combustion of coal in a bed of inert ash and limestone or dolomite. The bed is fluidized (held in suspension) by a uniform injection of air through the bottom of the bed at controlled rates, instead of being emitted to the atmosphere. Most sulphur oxides react with the bed materials and a dry calcium sulphate is formed. It is an efficient relatively low cost environmental control technology.

The very latest way to generate electricity from coal is called

Magnetohydrodynamics (MHD). It is a method of directly converting thermochemical energy to electric energy. An electrically conductive fluid (hot coal combustion gases) is passed through a high intensity magnetic field in the MHD generator thus setting up an electric field within the fluid and thus generating electricity. After leaving the MHD generator, the hot fluid can be further used to generate electricity in a conventional steam turbine unit.

In order to create badly needed industrial jobs in Northern Ireland the government must invest considerable sums of money to build modern coal-fired electricity generating stations.

The other side of the energy question in Northern Ireland — although it provides only 3% of the energy consumed — is the gas industry. Before discussing what should be done it is necessary to kill off most firmly a few of the alternative arrangements to the present supply now being canvassed or looked at.

## Natural gas

Any gas based on oil is expensive or it will soon become so. Domestic gas using Naptha as its fuel, or bottled gas — liquefied petroleum gas in other forms — means using high priced oil. The price of oil and its products are certain to continue to increase sharply.

The British and the US governments are endeavouring to conserve their supplies of natural gas. All recognise that the carefree low-priced energy days of the 1960's and early '70's are gone forever. The price of energy must now be kept 'competitive' and expensive oil and its substitute natural gas used instead as a raw material, a feed stock, for industry.

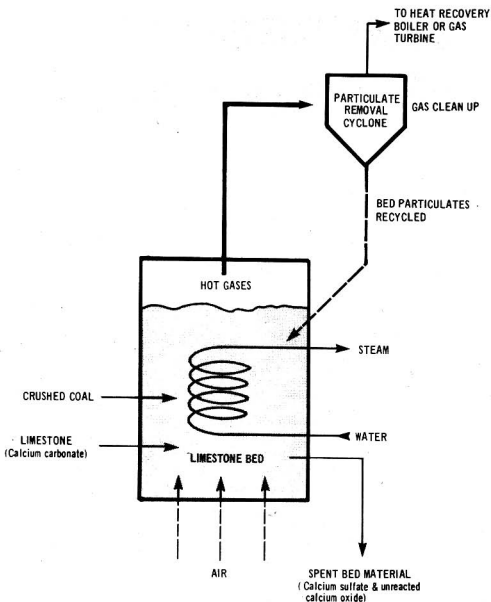
In the USA natural gas is used, instead of naphtha, to manufacture man-made fibres. It is also used to manufacture ammonia based fertilizers in Cork. Both these are the correct way to use natural gas in order to create jobs. Indeed there is now a law against burning natural gas in the US and in Britain this view is becoming more and more accepted. It is this campaign which has produced the slogan: 'Burning natural gas is like burning banknotes'.

In this climate of opinion Northern Ireland is unlikely to have natural gas piped from Britain to burn in domestic cookers. To burn Kinsale gas in either Dublin or Belfast is the height of folly and a crime against a working class which badly needs industrial jobs.

In an effort to prove the economics of burning Kinsale gas to be much higher than the price paid by NET for the gas, the price of Dublin gas is quoted as what the price should be. The price of naphtha to the Dublin Gas Company is now regulated according to the spot price of naphtha on the Rotterdam market — a speculators price — not a guide to the best use a government should make of a natural resource in the national interest.

## Campaign issue

The modern way to manufacture town gas is to use coal. This is the policy increasingly adopted in the United States, a country which is very near the top of the world league for industrial efficiency. The use of coal-gas for domestic supply would not require such an expensive change over as would the use of natural gas or liquefied petroleum gas. Coal gas puts a light lining on gas pipes and tends to seal leaks rather than cause them. Other



*Outline of fluidized bed combustion*

gases have a cleansing effect and tend to cause leaks. This property of coal gas would cut down the cost of what needs to be renewed. The cost of putting down a plant to use coal gas would not be anything like the cost of laying pipelines and changing burning appliances.

Costs have escalated considerably since 1966 when naphtha using gas works were constructed in Belfast. In 1966 Vickers-Zimmer Ltd of London were instructed to construct a plant consisting of six continuous catalytic reforming

furnaces each guaranteed to produce 3.7 million cubic feet a day (MCFD) of 450 butane gas at an outlet pressure of 25 pounds per square inch, capable of further extension by two furnaces to provide an ultimate total capacity of 30 MCFD, complete with naphtha and distillate storage tanks, naphtha distillation unit, Stredford Desulphurization plant, boiler feed water plant, power generating plant and offices for a sum of £1,672,650 plus an additional £62,000 for new stores and workshops as an addition to

the contract.

The site was cleared and the first pile driven in November 1966 - it was handed over completed in January 1968. Prices have escalated since 1968 but it is still cheaper to build a coal-gas plant than spend hundreds of millions on pipelines.

Neither is an all island electricity grid the answer to providing the necessary cheap supplies of electricity — the most optimistic estimate of the possible saving made by such a course is £9 million. That would

only make a reduction on the amount of the present subsidy.

The number out of work in Northern Ireland remains very high. It is useless to talk about reducing this number on a permanent basis unless the cost of generating electricity is substantially reduced. The most important single question therefore for the working class in Northern Ireland is the organising of a campaign for the building of coal-fired electricity generating stations.

## LIFE PAST

WINSTON Churchill M.P. told a meeting in Liverpool that Britain should bring its finances under tighter control and keep a firm hold on the Empire.

Attacking the Labour Government, Churchill said, "We should discharge unflinchingly our duty of giving just and impartial protection to the primitive millions of India and develop the economic unity of the Empire."

"No other country in the world would tamely submit to being pushed out of its rights and duties in the East. Would France be chattered out of Syria or Indo China? Would the United States be hustled out of the Philippines? All these countries asserted themselves and their rights with full vigour."

Objecting to autonomy for India he said "we alone seem to be afraid of our own shadow. The British lion, so fierce and violent in bygone days, so unconquerable through all the agony of Armageddon, can now be chased by rabbits from the fields and forests of his former glory," Churchill claimed.

AN ATTEMPT by Henry Ford to develop a rubber plantation covering six million acres of land at Bon Vista, Brazil, was resisted by Brazilian workers.

Ford began his project in 1928 and it cost him £18,000 a month for supplies and only £1,400 in wages each month. The 3,000 workers objected to efforts at compelling them to conform to Detroit work standards and the introduction of punch time clocks on the rubber plantation. Most of the American staff either resigned or transferred to another Ford rubber plantation in Australia.

TWO IRISH amateur boxers won their first public fights in America. In a tournament in Boston, Garda Chase beat his opponent on points while Matthew Flanagan also won his heavyweight fight.

THE CHAIRMAN of the Permanent Opium Board, Mr Lyall, condemned the sale of over six tons of morphine by western firms to Chinese addicts.

"The drugs imported into China," he said, "were sufficient to poison the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. It is essential that the names of manufacturers guilty of any connection with this illicit traffic should be publicly known and their activities suppressed."

TEN STOWAWAYS on board the s.s. Rio Dorado which arrived in Glasgow described the hardships that they had undergone in Australia.

Harry McDougall from Dundee told a reporter that he had to walk from Queensland to Western Australia, a distance of over 3,000 miles. "I went to Australia" he said, "about seven and a half years ago, as there were no prospects of employment at home. The first few years were quite successful but after that things became very depressed. At Black Boy Camp, in Perth, for instance, there were no fewer than 1,200 unemployed. We were starving, and I tried to stowaway but was discovered and sent back to Freemantle."

Another man said, "I was starving and decided I would have to make a dash for home. We could not make, when employed, enough money to keep us. We were given food and five shillings a week pocket money at the camps. The food was of the worst

# 50

## YEARS AGO

### FEBRUARY 1931

possible description. We were quite willing to suffer a term of imprisonment in this country for stowing away rather than continue to meet such hardships down under."

AT A committee meeting of the Ennis Dalcaisinn GAA Club sixteen members were expelled for recent attendance at 'foreign games'. Those expelled had attended an Ennis V.Nagh rugby match.

Mr P.J. McNamara said that the attendance of so-called Gaels at rugby matches was becoming very prevalent and it was essential that drastic steps be taken to put an end to the matter.

POPE PIUS XI made the first papal broadcast which was heard all round the world. Following the historic broadcast the Pope invested the radio engineer, Senatore Marconi, with the Grand Cross of the Order of Pius IX.

Dressed in an immaculate white silk robe, with a magnificent pectoral cross studded with jewels hanging from a gold chain round his neck, Pius XI commenced his broadcast.

He told all the faithful that they must obey their Governors, not as men but as God, knowing that by resisting authority they resist God, which leads to their own condemnation.

In his message to the world's poor he advised that they should seek spiritual benefits, which come so easily to them, while the seeking of material benefits must never stoop to inquiry.

UNDER the influence and patronage of the Italian fascist government a special language school for children of Italian immigrants flourished in Dublin.

Signor C. Del Piane of the Italian Consulate took a special interest in the school. He claimed that "in the school we have established the Dublin demonstration of the reach of Il Duce. The school is of special advantage to boys, who some day must respond to a call to the Colours. They would find themselves at a disadvantage as soldiers if they were ignorant of Italian. The school

assures their fitness for service."

About fifty children, some of whose families had been resident in Ireland for over one hundred years, attended the school. No fees were charged and each year a number of pupils were taken to a holiday resort in Italy.

CAPTAIN Malcolm Campbell regained his world land speed title when he exceeded 245 mph in his 'Blue Bird' car at Daytona Beach, U.S.A.

Campbell set his first record in 1923 when he drove at 146 mph. He regained his much challenged record three times in the intervening years.

A few days later he set a different record by driving a "Baby" Austin car at 94 mph.

BLAMING jazz music and the cinema for making people 'abnormal', Justice Coll refused an application at Dundalk District Court to grant a dance licence. The application was strenuously opposed by Dundalk Urban Council, the State Solicitor and the Roman Catholic Administrator, Rev. Tohall.

Justice Coll said that he had visited the new dancehall and found the cloakroom and supper room to be very nice, well decorated and with a fine floor.

However, rejecting the dance application he said "Unfortunately, in connection with some of these dancehalls there have been some very serious abuses. We are now dealing with a kind of dance which has been described by one of the gramophone manufacturers as dancing to savage rhythm. Savage rhythm is, I am afraid, associated with the arousing of certain base passions in the minds of a large number of people who are not normal."

District Justice Coll continued, "We are dealing with post-war times and I am afraid that the influence of 'Jazz' dancing and the cinema has been very bad. It has made a terrible number of people abnormal and these 'Jazz' addicts have lost control of themselves. In fact you will see them on the streets, in the railway carriages and on the tramcars, and they are being moved about and swaying to some imaginary 'Jazz' music."

THERE was uproar and continued interruptions at a meeting held in Tipperary town to protest at the closure of several creameries and its effects on local milk suppliers.

Mr M.R. Heffernan, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs, claimed that the present situation had its origins in the "Red Flag regime of 1922" when workers occupied some of the creameries. He said that during the period he had "gone among the farmers organising them against the Communistic developments and got very little help from some people at this meeting."

Uproar followed Mr Heffernan's attacks on unnamed local personalities. Following requests by the Chairman "not to mind the red flag", Mr Heffernan raised his voice and shouted, "This is not the first time I stood before troublesome crowds in Tipperary and elsewhere. I was not afraid to stand before the 'red flaggers' as champion of the farmers who were supplying milk to the creameries and I will stand as their champion now."



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jobs**

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home produced

it generates  
£400,000,000 annually  
in our economy. And it  
sends its 400 products  
to markets across the  
world

Irish Sugar *IS* your own  
industry

**CÓMHLUCHT  
SIÚICRE  
ÉIREANN**

*(early among the nations builders)*

# HEATING & VENTILATION

**BEING** warm and comfortable is probably the most immediate need of all people at work. Whether it is in the office, factory or warehouse everybody needs a constant supply of heat and ventilation to stay healthy and happy.

One of the basic requirements in all work places should be adequate heating and air conditioning. Where precision work is done such as in operating theatres and assembly areas for precision instruments, air conditioning is considered necessary. For general comfort the patrons of cinemas and restaurants are provided with an air conditioned, well ventilated environment as are most modern buildings with large glass panels. Similar facilities should exist in all factories and offices.

An air conditioning system is made up of filters for cleaning the air, fans to move the air, refrigeration units to cool and heaters to warm the air. All these are packaged into a control unit to provide a constant temperature at about 21° centigrade.

It is important that trade union representatives should ensure that their workplace is well heated and ventilated. Many works and safety committees have negotiated a range of indoor temperatures related to the weather conditions. Temperature gauges are installed to ensure continued pleasant working conditions.

THE air we breathe contains a balance of positive and negative particles which are called ions. If one air molecule loses an electron it then becomes positively charged. The process of gaining or losing electrons is called ionisation.

Asthma, migraine and hay fever sufferers are finding relief from their condition by plugging little boxes into the electricity mains. Similar boxes have been installed in air traffic control rooms, communications centres and banks where they are said to cut down mistakes.

These boxes are called ionisers and they work by charging the air with electricity. The electrical charges in the air are continually being exchanged and the charged molecules of air are called ions.

Ions are mostly inhaled, although some are also absorbed through the skin, and the total number of ions and the balance between positive and negative has startling effects on our well-being.

#### **NEGATIVE IONS**

Near waterfalls, at mountain tops, out in unpolluted countryside or outside after a thunderstorm, the air is thoroughly ionised and negative ions are present in their ideal proportion. There are usually 1,000 - 2,000 ions per cubic centimetre in fresh country air. But in cities the amount of ions, the electricity charged molecules, can drop to as little as 80 per cubic centimetre with the

positive ions outnumbering the negative ones by two to one.

This is because ions, and negative ions in particular, are destroyed by smoke and dust, by masses of people breathing and, of course, by smoking in confined spaces. Ions are also trapped in air conditioning and heating units.

Ions are being created all the time; by ultra-violet rays of the sun, by natural radioactivity from substances in the soil and in the air and also by the movement of water. Generally speaking, the higher you go the better the air although the action of waves makes the sea shore a very healthy place for breathing as well.

According to the *New Scientist*, "People travelling to work in polluted air, spending eight hours a day in offices or factories, and living their leisure hours in urban dwellings, inescapably breathe ion-depleted air for substantial periods of their lives. There is increasing evidence that this ion depletion leads to discomfort, lassitude and the loss of mental and physical efficiency."

#### **AIR POLLUTION**

Unfortunately, most modern activities such as driving, smoking, central heating and using a high density of synthetic material in houses and offices leads to an increase in the percentage of positive ions in the air. Air pollution, overcrowding, stuffy rooms and forced air heating systems greatly increase

the positive ions in the air. The effects of this increase is often insomnia, irritability, depression, sweating and migraine.

Seeing that we in Ireland are now bringing our insulation and heating up to European standards, this is a good time to incorporate ionisers into the general heating system. The cost of doing so is relatively small, particularly in the case of offices and factories but the benefits can be significant. Many banks and factories in Britain now install and use ionisation of the air to improve the working environment and thereby lower the tension and fatigue levels of most workers.

We all pollute our living and working environments in many ways — some of which have only come to light recently. These changes in living and working conditions and behaviour militate against the earth's natural ion generating processes. One way of remedying this is to consider installing an ioniser to deal with dust and dryness and provide fresher and more pure air to breathe.

KEEPING a busy work area clean, free of oily mist and heavy dust particles can be a real problem. In most body repair shops and grinding areas the traditional method of cleaning air was to extract polluted air and discharge it into the atmosphere. This involved extensive wastage as warm, heated air was exchanged for cold, fresh air.

In recent years this problem has been solved by installing centrifugal fans which draw polluted air through an air cleaner and remove welding fumes, oil mist and cigarette smoke. Then, cleaned and ionised, the warm air is returned to the work shop where it is needed instead of being blown outside.

These heavy duty air conditioning machines or electrostatic air cleaners provide a minimum of fifteen air changes per hour of which only two are needed for adequate ventilation. The remaining thirteen changes per hour remove airborne particles which are a danger to workers' health and comfort.

Two types of air cleaning machines on sale in Ireland for

industrial work are the Tepcon range and the Actair electrostatic cleaners. Details about both are available from Thompsons Heating and Ventilation in Mallow, Co. Cork.

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## WORKING TO RULE

IN THE last issue of *Workers Life* we announced the commencement of a major series of articles on Women in Employment. Since then, the Employment Equality Agency published its Second Annual Report. An examination of this Report shows in detail the effects of discrimination against women. It shows that the skills acquired by women are given lower status, women are directed into shorter and less professional training courses, they have a narrow range of job opportunities and fewer prospects of promotion. Women have to opt out of paid employment because of child care and other responsibilities which leaves them with little opportunity to opt into the labour force again.

The Employment Equality Agency is a statutory body and consists of a chairperson, Ms Sylvia Meehan and representatives of ICTU, FUE, women's organisations and independent members appointed by the Minister for Labour. The general functions of the Agency are to work towards the elimination of discrimination in employment on grounds of sex or marital status, to promote equality of opportunity in employment between men and women and to keep under review the operation of the Anti-Discrimination (Pay) Act 1974 and the Employment Equality Act 1977. It has the important power to hold formal investigations and if satisfied that practices or conduct contravene the anti-discrimination legislation, can issue a legal non-discrimination notice requiring that they cease. The Agency also had the power to seek a High Court injunction to stop persistent discrimination.

The Annual Report of the Agency gives details of a formal investigation it carried out into CIE which lead directly to the employment of female bus conductors. It makes interesting reading and should help any worker who wants the Agency to investigate his or her company. The Agency decided to carry out this investigation because CIE, in spite of protracted correspondence and discussions with the Agency, would give no indication that the hitherto traditionally male job of Bus Conductor was open to women. The Agency found during the course of its investigation that

## Aidan Carroll continues his series on **Women in Employment** with a look at the second report of the Employment Equality Agency

there had been unlawful sex discrimination by CIE as regards access by women to employment as bus conductors and also that CIE had placed discriminatory advertisements in the national newspapers. CIE revised its advertising and subsequently recruited women as bus conductors.

It is interesting to note that the Agency proposes to monitor the pattern of male/female recruitment to CIE and has advised the company that it should undertake a review of its recruitment policies to the bus, train and road transport services.

The Report states that the Agency has decided to undertake a second investigation, concerning a private company, Medeering Ltd. In this case an Equality Officer, under the Anti-Discrimination (Pay) Act, recommended equal pay for twenty female assemblers and one canteen worker. The Company appealed to the Labour Court but the appeal was later withdrawn and struck out by the Labour Court when an in-company agreement on a revised structure for the assemblers was reached. The final outcome was that the females involved were awarded a wage increase but did not attain equal pay. As a result, the Agency decided to formally investigate the Company and this is still proceeding.

Other parts of the Report make depressing reading. They show the slow progress in eradicating discrimination against women in employment. Within the industrial sector about 70% of women are

employed in the textiles, clothing, footwear and food processing industries. "These are areas where pay is traditionally low, skills appear to be undervalued, job mobility and promotion almost non-existent and training opportunities severely limited. The Report shows that almost 90% of nursing staff, 60% of all teachers in 1st and 2nd level education, 76% of waiting staff in hotels and restaurants and 91% of cleaners and domestic workers are women. "Women are totally under-represented in qualified craft trades and in the technical professions." Also "less than 9% of all managerial and administrative workers are women".

With regard to equal pay, the Report shows that since the equal pay legislation came into force in 1975, the gap between men's and women's hourly earnings has only marginally narrowed: from 61% to 66.6%. "Even where there has been a small reduction in the gap in average earnings, actual earnings differentials as between men and women remain due to segregation, wage drift and persistent inequality of opportunity as between men and women." The overall problem in relation to women's pay is that they are virtually absent from those parts of the workforce where earnings are highest.

In launching its Report, the Agency pointed out that "few organisations appear to have reached even the elementary stage of

producing a policy statement or a jointly agreed equal opportunity clause in industry or company collective agreements." Even where a woman's training and qualifications are of a high standard employers are reluctant to offer her a job in traditionally male areas of work. The Agency believes that some initiatives to provide special training and work experience should be offered to women who have previously been discriminated against in employment. The Agency also urges both unions and management to devise ways of desegregating their male and female employees, particularly in new industries.

The Employment Equality Agency is striving to create a consciousness within the community of the need to establish a working environment which would permit the full realisation of the skills, talents and abilities of women. Leaflets and information on equal pay, equal opportunities, and on the work of this important Agency may be obtained from:

*Employment Equality Agency,  
Davitt House,  
Mespil Road,  
Dublin 4, Tel. (01)765861.*

## News in Brief

### TRADE UNIONS OPPOSE RUGBY TOUR OF SOUTH AFRICA

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions, ITGWU and other unions have issued statements condemning the decision of the Irish Rugby Football Union to tour South Africa. Petition Forms opposing the tour have been circulated — make sure your union's members sign it. Ask your union to write to the Taoiseach demanding that the Government take firm steps to end all collaboration with apartheid.

### COMMISSION ON SAFETY AT WORK

We notice that the Commission on Safety and Health at Work has put an advertisement in the daily newspapers inviting submissions.

Make sure that your union makes a submission to the Commission.

### SAFETY AND HEALTH AT WORK

We have been informed that the Irish Congress of Trade Unions is organising a series of one-day seminars for shop stewards on the Safety in Industry Act 1980. These seminars, over fifty in all, will be held right around the country.

For details contact your union official or I.C.T.U., 1 Grand Parade, Dublin 6.

### REDUNDANCY PAYMENT

We have now over 150,000 unemployed and nearly 30,000 redundancies. Other

workers are threatened daily with redundancy. If you are made redundant you are entitled to compensation.

A booklet on redundancy payments is available, free of charge, from the Department of Labour, Mespil Road, Dublin 4, or from the National Manpower Officers throughout the country.

### MAY DAY A PUBLIC HOLIDAY?

In the last issue of *Workers Life* we demanded that May Day (International Workers Day — 1st May) be declared a public holiday. Recently the new Minister for Labour, Mr. Tom Nolan, said that he was prepared to create new public holidays in 1981.

So keep up the campaign within your union and within Congress to make May Day a public holiday in 1981.

### PLANNING STRATEGY FOR INDUSTRY

The 1979 National Understanding stated that there was a need for "an effective planning strategy for industry". The Government, trade unions and employers, agreed that sectoral industrial committees would be established "which would assess the implications of technological, marketing and related developments for future employment and for the efficiency

and growth of the sector. These committees will be created before the end of 1979.

What happened to these important industrial committees — they were never set up.

Get on to your union and Congress and demand that this commitment in the 1979 National Understanding is fulfilled.

### NATIONAL ENTERPRISE AGENCY

For years the trade union movement has demanded the expansion of the public sector into manufacturing and commercial activities and the establishment of a National Enterprise Agency. The 1979 National Understanding, in a major breakthrough for Congress, said that "the Government will provide for the establishment of a National Enterprise Agency... with responsibility for the commercial exploitation of new development opportunities by the State... and to engage directly in manufacturing, service and trading activities."

This National Enterprise Agency, despite numerous promises, was never set up. Again you should get on to your union and Congress and demand that this vitally important commitment in the 1979 National Understanding is fulfilled.

## Limitations of TLVs

*Michael Duncan writes:* In the December 1980 issue of *Workers Life* it was announced that the National Industrial Safety Organisation (NISO) has published a new list of threshold limit values (TLVs). These are standards to which concentrations of chemicals in the workplace air can be compared. It is important that all trade unionists understand the limitations of TLVs and how they should be used.

TLVs are set in the USA by the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists which despite its official sounding name is not a government body. It is a group of academics and company industrial hygienists. Indeed the official standards in the USA are set by the Occupational Safety and Health administration and the ACGIH standards are no longer used. They are not set on a purely scientific basis as economic factors are brought in. So they are a socio-economic compromise which will not protect all workers exposed to a particular substance. The ACGIH preface to their list makes it clear that "a small percentage of workers may experience discomfort at concentrations at or below the threshold limit; a smaller percentage may be affected more seriously by aggravation of a pre-existing condition or by development of an occupational illness". So they are not even intended to protect everyone.

The very basis on which the TLVs are set is questionable. It is based on the assumption that there is a 'threshold' dose of a substance below which the body can cope with. Not everyone would agree that such a threshold exists and the USSR standards, for example, are based on a no-effect level.

Other problems connected with TLVs are:

1. The TLV list covers only a proportion of chemicals in industrial use.
2. TLVs have been formulated for application to normal healthy working people and not for the spread of ages and healths

found in industry. In many cases no human toxicological information is available; and the standards have been set using animal experiments only.

3. Many TLVs are based on inadequate, out of date information.

4. The workplace air often contains a variety of chemicals and sampling for all of them and predicting the combined effect is often impossible.

5. TLVs are based on an 8-hour day, 5 day week. Overtime will increase the exposure.

6. There are not enough inspectors to see that the standards are enforced.

7. Many managements will insist on using the TLV as a fine line between a 'safe' and 'dangerous' concentration.

8. TLVs are in most cases an average value. That is to say that the level can be exceeded providing a subsequent period balances the excess. But who is to say that the body's defences can handle the excess?

The above should remove the idea that TLVs are scientific standards on which workers can depend to safeguard their health. If any more evidence is required then the fact that many TLVs have changed over time i.e. tend to be reduced, should clinch the argument. The Vinyl Chloride TLV was not sufficient to stop workers getting cancer of the liver and had to be reduced. So has the TLV for the leukaemia-causing benzene and asbestos.

While TLVs are not perfect they are useful in that they provide some standard to work to. But the TLV should be treated as a ceiling value that should not be exceeded. Every effort should be made to negotiate the TLV for your workplace downwards. It is often quite possible to enclose systems or use efficient exhaust ventilation or best of all, substitute a safer material. Very often workers are in the best position to know how exposure to a

## YOUNG LIFE

DESPITE Ted Bonner's unthinking early morning reference to brains and beauty the latest Young Scientist of the Year is perpetuating a well established trend of young female scientists producing many of the best projects.

Catherine Conlon's detailed study of 'arachnoids', or what you and I would call hairy spiders, was described as 'pioneering work' by the judges. The seventeen year old Dublin Leaving Certificate student was just born when Aer Lingus announced its first Young Scientist of the Year Competition in 1965. That first contest attracted 230 entries whereas last year the growth to 1,200 projects began to pose problems with exhibiting space. The Aer Lingus organisers decided to introduce a screening selection to reduce the entries for the 1981 contest as well as reducing the group entrants to a maximum of three school students per group. Last month's 800 participants at the RDS continued to maintain the high standards which has made the Young Scientist of the Year one of Europe's most prestigious youth competitions. In all, 350 exhibits were selected from nearly 800 entries.

The winning 'spider project' took more than two years to complete. Catherine Conlon conducted the earliest part of her research in conjunction with her brother, Peter, for which they won the first group prize last year. Catherine continued her detailed and original analysis of spiders' lifestyles by filming many of them at her parents' home and by using a scanner electron microscope to measure the spiders and their intricate webs.

### European winner

As 1981 Young Scientist of the Year, Catherine Conlon will represent Ireland in the Philips European Young Scientist and Inventors competition. She will have a tough task to live up to Karen Ruddock from Wexford who, as 1980 Aer Lingus Young Scientist went on to win the last Phillips' European award. Since the Phillips' Young Scientist and Inventors award was launched in 1976 each of Ireland's five representatives have fared very well giving school-level science throughout the country a respected European reputation.

## Gerry Flynn reports on Ireland's young scientists

As if to emphasise the dominant position of girls in this scientific contest the top group award was won by three Dublin schoolgirls; Anne Cullen, Mary Kennedy and Honoria Moore from St. Paul's school in Greenhills. Together they devoted eighteen months work on aspects of the saw-fly and its effects on willow leaves.

Some of the most interesting scientific exhibits at the RDS were presented by schoolgirls from all over the country. Only two counties, Sligo and Leitrim, were unrepresented by young scientists. Michelle Kennelly and Valerie Gannon from Listowel, Co. Kerry, presented a topical study on the possibilities of surviving a nuclear war. They argued that many people could survive if scientists provided adequate information and preparations in time to provide increased civilian defence facilities.

Thirteen year old Orla Hegarty from Rathfarnham, Dublin, conducted an interesting project on contributory factors to heart disease and the dangers of heart attacks to people in their forties.

Of interest to a younger age group were two girls from Killester, Dublin, Suzanne Day and Deirdre Barry, who studied the effects of attending a discotheque on 120 peoples hearing. They concluded that most disco dancers had increased hearing difficulty following a loud disco.

Individual participants who attracted a lot of attention were Geraldine Daly of Ballyphehane, Co. Cork with her study of earthquakes and efforts to prevent them, and Sara Cullen, from Wicklow, whose entry detailed the decrease in wild flowers in Ireland.

While 419 girls compared to 381 boys participated in the 1981 Young Scientist exhibition there was a noticeable shortage of entrants, especially girls, in the Physical and Applied Science section. At the adjudication Professor James A. Kavanagh of UCD said that while there were 20,000 biology students at school this year there was a decrease in female study of physics and chemistry.

In its efforts to build up the Physical and Applied Sciences section, Aer Lingus negotiated additional prize money from the Institute of Physics. Despite the increased prizes, Marion Grady from Falcarragh Community School in Co. Donegal, was the only girl to win an individual prize and Institute of Physics Award in the Physical, Mathematical and Applied Sciences section. In contrast all three individual prizes in the biology were won by girls. The winners were Anna de Courcy, from Dublin, Erina Galvin from Kerry and Clare Quinn from Monaghan who took the senior Biological Sciences Awards.

Over the past seventeen years thousands of young girls have proved their ability to conduct detailed scientific research and yet many girls still lack laboratories and teachers to develop their skills in important scientific subjects like physics and mathematics. As the country industrialises there is an increasing need for qualified scientists but as usual the girls are placed at a disadvantage because of limited investment in Education. Aer Lingus provides the exhibition and display stands but the Department of Education must supply many more classrooms and test tubes.

# Turning point for USI

Brian McDermott

THE 23rd Annual Congress of the Union of Students in Ireland, held in Wexford last month, may yet be seen as a significant milestone in the Union's history.

Delegates, representing over 70,000 third level students, adopted a radical and realistic programme of action in an atmosphere free - to a large extent - from constitutional and procedural wrangling of previous years; but the Union is not without its problems.

The challenge, between those who placed their faith in the involvement of USI's membership to solve their problems and tackle the inadequacies in Irish society with the help and co-operation of others engaged in the slow but sure process of political agitation, and those who dismiss democratic struggle as a bit of a bore opting instead for instant solutions to complex problems and an elitist approach to situations which affect thousands of young people, occurred on nearly every motion of major concern.

Opposition to a variety of the motions ranging from USI re-applying for membership of the National Youth Council to a reaffirmation of the Union's policy of 'Peace, Jobs & Progress' in Northern Ireland was successfully met by the reasoned arguments and logical approach of delegates, mainly from the Regional Tech's and smaller colleges. It might be argued that the votes of the Universities were used more divisively than any other sector present at Congress and herein lies another problem.

The voting strengths of colleges are determined by the number of students registered there. Between them the Universities control almost 70 votes; a bloc which was seldom broken in the three and a half day Congress. An attempt to enhance the position of the Universities even further did not succeed, but it was strong enough at the 23rd Congress to be a determining factor in the election of two new full time officers: Liam Whitlaw the outgoing Deputy President retaining his position for the incoming year, Brendan Doris, a 28 year old architectural student, who

allocated more space in his election manifesto to the merits of the Albanian system of government than he did to the present Union policy on Northern Ireland, was elected President in a three-cornered fight against out-going President Gerry Grainger and Willie Wilson from the Ulster Polytechnic. Joe Duffy from Trinity College, who read the lesson at the Ballybrit youth mass during the Pope's visit to Ireland, topped the poll in the contest for the position of Education Officer.

Given the defence of progressive policies shown on almost all occasions during Congress the election results appeared to indicate an about turn by some delegates. President-Elect Brendan Doris, for example, spoke against motion E16 mandating the Union to make a further submission to the Chilver Committee on the structure of teacher education in Northern Ireland. Refusing to accept that Chilver's original proposal to amalgamate the three teacher training colleges in Belfast would contribute to a reduction in sectarianism in education in Northern Ireland, he argued that the Report was an attempt to impose British standards on Irish trainee teachers. In his opposition to Chilver, Doris - a self proclaimed supporter of the Communist Party of Ireland (ML) - formed an unholy alliance with clerical students from Maynooth and joined forces with his new Education Officer who describes himself as a 'radical catholic'. Despite openly declaring his opposition to USI making the voice of students known to a government committee investigating the politically sensitive area of Northern Ireland teacher training and rejecting the opportunity to publically record students long held opposition to sectarianism in education, he received a majority of first preferences at the polls. Undoubtedly many colleges had made their minds up before coming to Congress and delegates bound by their mandate, felt obliged to fulfill it even in the anonymity of a secret ballot.

It was neither a pre-arranged mandate nor a secret ballot, however, which were responsible for the rejection of the Officers Report, the dismissal of the Deputy President's 'Minority Report' and the withdrawal of USI from the International Union of Students (IUS). Taken on the first full day of Congress the Officers Report, which outlined a course of action to be taken by colleges to ensure their members were aware of, familiar with and involved in the workings of their Union and which sought to increase the democratic structures operating in colleges, became a suitable target for those who were later to oppose resolutions on Peace, Jobs & Progress, Education Financing, the National Youth Council and terrorism in Northern Ireland, to flex their muscles and vocal chords.

The old hands, at their third or fourth Congress, thought it more constructive to play to the gallery with platform thumping emotionalism, than to seriously debate the content of the comprehensive sixty-five page document. The would-be platform thumpers of future years made their maiden speeches and the content of the Officers Report took a back seat while Congress voted more in appreciation of the theatrics than in earnest opposition to the recommendations of the Report. If democracy is a bore then sixty-five page reports are the ultimate in yawns.

Deputy President Whitlaw presented a 'Minority Report' for the second time in three months; his first one he admits now as being no longer relevant. Congress agreed that his second was even less deserving of attention. Had it not been for the accusations levelled at members of USI staff - who were unable to speak in their own defence at Congress - discussion would hardly have lasted so long.

The arguments concerning USI's associate membership of the IUS have been brewing for some time. Ostensibly based on the belief that the IUS is a 'pro-Soviet' front organisation which condemns acts of aggression by the United States exclusively, it was University delegates who once more lead the assault on

USI's international relations. The motion, proposed by Gerry Grainger, calling on Congress to urge the IUS to produce comparative analysis on methods of educational financing and planning in different European countries, to analyse the effects of EEC central planning and its effects on member states with regard to education and youth, along with many other proposals aimed at increasing IUS involvement in western European Students Unions affairs, was never really debated in the strict sense of the word. A counter motion calling for disaffiliation provided opportunity for further emotional outbursts which more often than not seemed to bear little relevance to the question on the floor. Trinity College and University College Galway spent more than fleeting moments in warm embrace as disaffiliation was announced with a majority of twenty seven votes.

The coming year will be a testing time for USI. There are a considerable number of colleges and students who are anxious to build the Union and get on with the job of defending and representing the interests of their members, while at the same time playing a responsible role in public affairs in general. The contradiction of a newly elected leadership which seems less committed to the policies adopted by Congress than does the membership, will be a crucial and perhaps deciding factor in union development and its ability to represent its members and implement its decisions. The majority of members are clear as to the direction in which they wish to go and the successful handling of the constitutional problems, which have plagued USI for many years, by last years officers and the Constitutional Review Body, has cleared the way for those who aim to build the Union.

The overall unity of purpose has yet to be achieved and the University sector would seem to present most problems here. The fact that University intake, generally, comes from a different social background than intake in RTC's and smaller colleges is a fact which cannot be dismissed; but increased involvement at college level and a greater awareness amongst the students of the role of their own union can ensure that USI makes its mark on the future of education and many other matters. If it does so it will owe a lot to the national policy it adopted at its 23rd Congress.

'ONE DOWN, one million to go', John Kingsley Read, the then leader of the National Front, told a rally at Newham four years ago; he was referring to the racist murder of a young Asian in neighbouring Southall. Last August, Newham added yet another victim to a growing list of racist killings in Britain when 29 year old accountant Akhtar Ali Baig was stabbed to death by a gang of white youths in a main street of the suburb during broad daylight.

While Britain has yet to experience organised fascist violence on the same scale as that witnessed on the Continent, there is ample evidence, supported by the growing number of attacks, that British fascists are arming, training and developing links with their European counterparts with a view to exacerbating racial tensions and ultimately seizing state power in an economically and politically unstable Britain of the future.

The last four years have seen a number of significant changes in the extreme right in Britain; the most significant of these being the recent splitting up of the National Front, at one time Britain's foremost neo-nazi group, into rival factions. Britain now suffers over 30 political groupings which adhere to some variation of fascist ideology. These range in size from small, insignificant collections of cranks and eccentrics still clinging to a notion of the Great British Empire, to large and dangerous outfits like the British Movement with 3,000 members and the National Front with between three and four thousand members.

The National Front's two main splinter groups — the New National Front and the National Front Constitutional Movement — each claim about 1,000 members.

There are numerous links and cross links between the various groups and there is a high level of interchangeability of membership with a number of people holding dual or multi-membership of two or more organisations. At the same time there exists intense rivalry between the various factions both in terms of recruiting and tactics. Usually the tactical differences centre around the question of respectability and public acceptability and consequently



Left to right: Andrew Brons, Richard Verrall and Martin Webster of the 'old' National Front.

# Fascism in Britain

Adrian Gallagher

'public' membership of one gang and secret membership of another is not uncommon, and helps to preserve satisfactory images.

Britain's contemporary national socialist movement has its roots in two main sources. One developed out of the Union Movement founded by the late Sir Oswald Mosley in 1948 as a successor to his pre-war British Union of Fascists; the other stemmed from the National Socialist Movement formed in 1962 by avowed Hitlerite Colin Jordan, following his break with the British National Party.

Mosley's Union Movement still exists but is of little significance today. Under the leadership of Jeffrey Hamm, whose association with Mosley stretches back to the Thirties, Union Movement's main claim to fame is that it spawned what is today one of the most pernicious of Britain's fascist bands, The League of St. George. Throughout the late 60s and early 70s Mosley and Hamm had gone to great lengths to distance themselves from nazism and the events of the Second World War to establish a veneer of respectability. This new policy displeased a number of activists who, led by Keith

Thompson, broke away to form the League and pursue a policy of justification and glorification of nazism.

Nowadays the League acts as an umbrella organisation and international contact group for a whole array of nazis; it organises meetings where speakers attend from European fascist groups or from the US Ku Klux Klan, usually accompanied by films, songs and music expounding the virtues of nazi Germany. But the most important function of the League is its role as co-ordinator between British and International fascists. League link man Arndt Heinz Marx has been named by West German police as the man who trained Gundolf Kohler — the Wehrsportgruppe Hoffman Truppe terrorist who killed himself and thirteen others when the bomb he was planting at a Munich beer festival last September exploded prematurely.

*Searchlight*, the British anti-fascist journal, has disclosed that a loose network exists which links far-right groups across the world and which provides assistance to terrorists who are forced to flee their own countries. The League of St. George functions as the British



connection in this underground fascist international and their journal *League Review* regularly reveals their links with and support for these hard line fascist terror groups.

#### National Front splits

Of Colin Jordan's National Socialist Movement grew Britain's two other main fascist mobs — the National Front and the British Movement. The Front was formed in 1966 by A.K. Chesterton with a membership of less than 200. By 1972 the leadership of the Front was firmly in the hands of John Tyndall and Martin Webster who had left Jordan's Movement with the intention of capturing control of the Front. The National Front split in 1976 when John Kingsley Read disagreed with Tyndall and Webster over the way to build the organisation and broke away to form the National Party. The National Party proved no serious danger to the Front and fizzled out of existence after about a year.

The Front split again last year when Tyndall formed the New National Front, and Andrew Fountaine, who had risen through the ranks to join the leadership, resigned while under suspension to form the National Front Constitutional Movement. Martin Webster, the personality at the centre of both splits, had effectively been left in absolute control of the National Front. Both Tyndall's and Fountaine's departures came about as a direct result of the growing criticism within the ranks about Webster's homosexuality. United as they were, though, in opposition to such a decidedly un-Nazi trait, they could not agree on what to do about it and so went their separate ways.

In 1968, Colin Jordan was released from jail for offences under the race relations laws and he promptly disbanded the National Socialist Movement to launch the British Movement. The British Movement was intended as a direct rival to the National Front which sought, with some initial success, to gain support by denying its fascism and recruiting on populist issues. In contrast, the British Movement never pretended to be anything other than a national socialist party, contemptuously describing the Front as 'Kosher Fascists' because

of their attempts to deny their anti-Semitism.

By 1975, when Jordan resigned as leader after a shop lifting charge, his membership stood at around 250. Jordan's replacement, Michael McLaughlin was intended to be just a figurehead with the Fuhrer himself directing operations from behind the scenes, but events didn't quite work out as planned. The membership of British Movement grew to over 1,000 in three years under McLaughlin and this, together with a successful business venture, British Patriot Publications, which specialised in Nazi literature, records and tapes on international mail order, convinced McLaughlin that he no longer needed Jordan.

Today the membership of the British Movement stands at 3,000 and it is rapidly replacing the National Front as Britain's major fascist party. Nevertheless, there are rumblings within the ranks about McLaughlin's leadership and an increasingly bitter feud is developing between himself and Jordan. Yet another split or some form of regrouping would surprise few anti-fascist commentators.

If the star of the British Movement has risen, then the fortunes of the National Front have taken a definite turn for the worse. From a membership of 20,000 in 1977 that figure has dropped to less than a fifth of that today. In the General Election of May 1979 the Front stood 303 candidates and polled a total of 191,706 votes (an average of 633 per candidate) and lost all their deposits. Since then the extreme right has continued to be embarrassingly defeated at council by-elections.

#### No complacency

This trend, however, represents no signal for complacency for socialists and democrats. While membership and electoral support for the fascists has declined sharply, Thatcherism and prevailing economic conditions in Britain gives a semblance of appeal to simplistic, racist slogans like 'British jobs for British workers'. At the same time the fascists are cultivating their international links and are amassing arms and explosives. Already a number of incendiary devices have been sent to left wing bookshops, immigrant families and multi-racial

community centres.

Back in 1970 a small group of dedicated fascists formed Column 88. Their aim was to exercise an influence over all extreme right wing groups with a view to keeping alive the ideals of nazism. At that time the popular Sunday newspapers ran a series of exposés about Column 88 including numerous pictures of men in camouflage battle dress at training camps. Few people paid any serious attention to them and they were generally dismissed as fanatical Colonel Blimp types who would do no harm to anyone other than themselves. The stark reality of the destruction that fascist violence can wreak has been amply demonstrated in France, Germany and Italy in recent months. That the same can happen in Britain, and that there are men and women dedicated to seeing that it does happen there is vividly spelt out in a trial that is taking place in Birmingham as we go to press.

Seven men, including two known members of the British Movement and one known member of the National Front, are currently on trial in Birmingham charged with a series of firearms offences, arson and inciting racial hatred. The charges follow the seizure by the bomb squad of a number of armaments, including revolvers, shot-guns, anti-tank guns, rubber bullets, thousands of rounds of ammunition, CS gas and a sten gun. Two of those charged, Roderick Roberts and Harvey Stock, left the National Front two years ago to join the British Movement. Another, Harold Simcox, was a member of the National Front at the time of his arrest.

The outcome of the Birmingham trial will be awaited with interest by all anti-fascists. Black and immigrant community leaders in Britain are becoming increasingly critical of the police response to the growing number of racist attacks in the country. In addition, there have been claims that the courts have been over-lenient with those brought before them accused of such attacks. British Fascists, like their European counterparts, represent a threat to democracy and the guardian of democracy, the British labour movement, must respond to their challenge and act to stop them.

# Secondhand Souls

*Dominic Behan*

'AN IRISHMAN'S HOME,' said Joyce, 'is his coffin'. And there's not a lot that's either strange or startling about that. Paddy Dignum of *Ulysses* never lived a minute till he was buried in Glasnevin for all the world to see. Synge's women are nothing until they are, like O'Casey's Mrs Grogan, 'in their element', and the Colleen Bawn was done to death for our entertainment more times than seconds on a clock.

Dying is one of the simple pleasures of the poor — provided it's not your own funeral that you're attending; Father Murphy burns away on the rack and not a dry eye in the house while Roddy McCorley goes off to dangle on the Toom gallows in six-eight time. Death fascinates the Irish people where it might horrify a more material society. We count our famine losses in millions and are not surprised that our literature and drama feeds on death to give us a living art.

The nearer death comes, the more we reject its importance. Like the chap who came to my father's removal from Clogher Road Chapel and couldn't wait because the heat of 'them candles' was killing him. Or Long Paddy Kelly returning from his uncle's funeral with a black diamond on his sleeve and a grin on his face. "What was it like?" "Man alive they could have sold tickets for it."

However it would appear that the Irish are the only race in the world who go in for second-time round funerals — maybe the Soviets, but then they only re-bury when they're giving a chap the short knock while the Irish replay is always a promotion.

Father Dominic, my namesake, was re-buried along with his Easter Rising friend, Father Albert, and I wasn't able to get to the ceremony. However I doubt it was all that different to the re-interment of Sir Roger Casement and I was at that one.

It was winter and Kelly, myself and Charlie Joe had greeted the morning from the markets before falling in behind the cortege at the corner of Berkeley Road. Boasting an understanding of economics bred from a time-served apprenticeship to poverty, we could see the rich and poor residents of Dublin from the Mater to Finglas Road. It was in their chimneys, where poverty reigned, the stack was still covered in snow, but, where the good life was being enjoyed, the little birds stood on a dry flashed roof with not a chiblain to upset their tiny feet.

Serious members of the Republic spoke about Banna Strand, Casement in the Congo, and the terrible slanders made out in Roger's name by the British. They weren't too sure as to what it was he was supposed to

have done, but begod d'ye think if he was that way disposed, that *they* would be walking behind a black-loving Irish homosexual who had been knighted by the Crown? Neither Kelly nor Charlie Joe were very interested in the man's sexual persuasions. They had been to prison and had seen the world. Casement had been hanged for what he believed in, and it didn't have anything to do with sex. The British since Gladstone live out their fantasies.

Kelly thought there wouldn't be enough of him there to make a decent bowl of soup. A very annoyed Charlie Joe retorted that whatever was left of him was all ours anyway. But Kelly cynically remarked that Charlie could never have real proof of that.

Well they were next to beating each other from Binn's Bridge to the cemetery until I intervened to point out that I was nearer to the man in question since my eldest brother was christened Roger Casement. What had that got to do with it, Kelly wanted to know. Wasn't he himself called after St. Patrick, and I wasn't surely going to tell him that he, Kelly, was likely to sit on a mountain attending sheep while converting poltroon kings in his spare time?

The procession came to a halt outside the lane through which one may gain access to Murphy's of Botanic Avenue and that is what we did. The teeth of the real rebels, who were ever ready to fight the enemy with fixed Pioneer pledgepins, clucked, but it didn't deter us in the slightest. Kelly said he was only going to the pub because it made him angry to stand in a halted parade and be in the company of so many people who couldn't stand properly at ease. Charlie and I agreed but were unanimously of the opinion that a glass of malt or two might help to assuage our wrath at the unsoldierly conduct of the multitude.

When we eventually got to the gates of Glasnevin, Kelly discovered that the reason for the delay was that one of the Irish-Irelander stewards with his green, white and gold band on his patriotic arm had wanted to exclude an elderly man who flaunted a crowned badge of H.M. Forces in his lapel.

Murphy's had given Kelly an excess of patriotism so he aimed a blow at another drunk who said that we'd all feel odd if we found out that we were probably providing a firing party for Dr. Crippen, and then turned his attention to the case of the man with the regimental badge. "God Almighty" cried Kelly, "they've thrown out of the graveyard one of the Connaught Rangers who mutinied with Lance-Corporal Daly."

# WORK & CULTURE

'I read the news today, oh boy...'

'Death of a Hero' it said in big black letters across the front of the *Daily Mirror*, and if I hadn't known already I'd have expected a story about a policeman or soldier in Northern Ireland. The media response to John Lennon's death was overwhelming as what began as a series of private griefs was orchestrated by disc jockeys and sub-editors into a national event, but it was difficult to decide what all this mourning meant. The media themselves seemed less slick than usual, more ragged in their attempts to respond to a genuinely popular shock. What came through was not just Beatle-nostalgia but a specific sadness at the loss of John Lennon's Beatle qualities — qualities that never did fit easily into Fleet Street ideology. 'The idea', as Lennon once said, 'is not to comfort people, not to make them feel better but to make them feel worse.'

The *Mirror*, its populist instincts currently sharpened by Thatcherism, got the mood most right. John Lennon was certainly the nearest thing to a hero I've ever had, but though I knew what this meant in fan terms (buying Beatles records at the moment of release, dreaming about my own Lennon friendship — 'I'll never meet him now', said one friend when she heard the news) I'd never really stopped to think what the pleasure I got from Lennon's music has to do with heroism. 'What does it mean?' called another long-ago friend who knew I'd share his sense of loss. He rang off without an answer and I watched the television tributes and tried to make sense of a sadness that was real enough but according to the politics of culture I usually pursue seemed somehow shameful and self-indulgent. Why should I feel this way about a pop star?

The answer began to push through the obituaries. John Lennon was a hero because he fought the usual meanings of pop stardom, because he resisted the usual easy manipulations, and in the newspaper editorials, the radio interviews, the specially illustrated supplements with full colour souvenir portrait, the struggle continued — everyone was still claiming John Lennon as his friend, their culture symbol. As Bryan McAllister put

## A WORKING CLASS

**HERO** Simon Frith, author of the *Sociology of Rock* and contributor to *Melody Maker*, considers John Lennon's achievements

in his *Guardian* cartoon, 'One has only to look at the people who claim to have known John Lennon to understand perfectly why he went to live in America.' As John Lennon put it himself in 1971, 'One had to completely humiliate oneself to be what the Beatles were, and that's what I resented. I didn't know, I didn't foresee. It happened bit by bit, gradually, until this complete craziness is surrounding you, and you're doing exactly what you don't want to do with people you can't stand — the people you hated when you were ten.'

The most repulsive of the Lennon friends ('I knew him quite well') was Harold Wilson, who explained on *The World At One* that he gave John an MBE 'because he got the kids off the streets.' 'But wasn't he a bad example,' snapped Robin Day. 'Didn't he encourage youngsters to take drugs?' 'Ah yes,' agreed Wilson, 'he did go wrong, later.'

Lennon went wrong and it seemed then, and it still seems to me now, that a Beatle going wrong was an important political event — John Lennon knew just what sort of hero Harold Wilson wanted him to be:

*Keep you doped with religion and sex and TV*

*And you think you're so clever and classless and free*

*But you're still fucking peasants as far as I can see*

*A working class hero is something to be.*

*There's room at the top they are telling you still*

*But first you must learn how to smile as you kill*

*If you want to be like the folks on the hill*

*A working class hero is something to be.*

*Yes, a working class hero is something to be*

*If you want to be a hero just follow me*

*If you want to be hero well just follow me.*

*('Working class hero': © Northern Songs Ltd)*

'You know it ain't easy...'

John Lennon was a 1950s not a 1960s teenager. He started playing rock'n'roll in 1956, the year of Suez, but the music fed his sense of adult rottenness in a more personal way — rock'n'roll was a sound made to accompany struggles at home and school, struggles against the insinuating pull to a career, to good marks and respectability. John Lennon became a teddy boy and a musician as part of his erratic opposition to the expected grateful conformities of a working class grammar school boy.

So did hundreds of other 1950s school boys — Lennon was 5 days older than Cliff Richard — but they mostly lost their edge, softened by showbiz's own notions of steadiness and respectability. 'Teddy boys,' as Ray Gosling puts it, were 'tidied up into teenagers. The youngsters sang one good rock song and the next moment they were in pantomime and all-round entertainment on the pier.' Cliff Richard called his 1960 autobiography *It's Great To Be Young* and by then his way of being young seemed the 'natural' teenage way to be.

John Lennon didn't have such a great youth. For a start he lived in Liverpool, a cosmopolitan port with musical advantages (American R&B records could be heard in Liverpool whatever the metropolitan pop industry's successes in cleaning up white

rock'n'roll) and unique material opportunities — Liverpool had clubs where groups were employed to play grown-up *gutsy* music. There was a public night life, an aggressive way of leisure that had survived television and the rise of family consumption. The Beatles' first manager, Allan Williams, explains the Liverpool Sound in terms of gangs and fights and territorial claims — the Beatles always had to *stand* for something, and they learnt to 'entertain' in circumstances far removed from the London Palladium. Whether in Liverpool or Hamburg, the music had to be loud and hard — there was no space for subtlety or self-pity. Equipment was poor, songs were built round the combined beat of drums, bass and rhythm guitar (Lennon's own pivotal role), round the combined voices of Lennon and McCartney. The Liverpool noise was hoarse and harsh, an effect of night after night of long, unrelieved sets.

While Tommy Steele and Cliff Richard were becoming family entertainers, the Beatles were learning street survival tactics, and when they hit their arrogance (and their defences) were intact. As Liverpool's now veteran musicians remembered after Lennon's death, what was inspiring about the Beatles in their Cavern days was the *certainty* with which they claimed American music for themselves, and the most striking sign of this confidence was John Lennon's voice. The Beatles sang American music in a Liverpool accent — nasal rather than throaty, detached, passion expressed with a conversational cynicism.

### Lennon's genius

Lennon's genius is usually described by reference to his song writing ability, but it was his voice that always cut through. He conveyed a controlled, forthright intimacy that enabled him to rock out in early days with a barely suppressed fury and in later, post-Beatle days to express remorse and optimism equally grippingly. Beatle fans 'knew' Lennon above all through this singing voice, and perhaps all his obscuritists needed to say was that he was the only rock singer who ever sang 'we' convincingly. Certainly, when the Beatles finally had their extraordinary

## WORK AND CULTURE

success story, they were different from other pop stars. Their qualities were not those of showbiz — they came across as cynical, arrogant, restless. Beatle trappings came to represent an attitude as well as the usual fan fervour, and the Beatles appealed to a mass audience that had previously been uneasy in its relationship to pop — sixth form, student youth. The Beatles were the first English pop group that didn't insult the intelligence. They made an 'underdog' sound (to use Hobsbawm's description), pilfered from black American sources, and retained a grittiness, an awkwardness that could quite be swallowed up in commercialism.

John Lennon was, in this context, the most obviously gritty, intelligent Beatle — the one with edge. He was street sharp as much by choice as necessity. He was a grammar school boy who for all his rebelliousness drew on a grammar school boy's intellectual arrogance; he was an art school student who retained an art school student's radical cultural ambitions; he was a bohemian who had learned to scoff at 'nowhere' people in Hamburg's Reeperbahn. It was Lennon who leapt more quickly (more desperately?) than the other Beatles at the unfolding possibilities of 1960s rock and youth culture, and the importance of the Beatles in 1966-68 was not that they led any movement, but that they *joined in*. They became (John Lennon in particular) for all their established star status, comrades in the mid-sixties 'liberation' of leisure and, what's more, Lennon confirmed what I believed then and believe still — that it is not possible to separate the hippy aspects of 1960s youth culture, the drugs and mind games and reconsiderations of sexuality, from the political process which fed the student movement, the anti-war movement, May 68, the women's movement, gay liberation. It was thanks to his hippy commitments, to his open response to Yoko Ono's anti-pop ideas, that John Lennon survived the Beatles experience to make his most political music as the sixties came to an end.

### 'All I want is the truth...'

The week John Lennon was shot the Clash released a three record album called *Sandinista!* Infuriating, indulgent, exciting, touching, packed with slogans and simplicities, guns and liberation, images of struggle and doubt, it is a wonderful tribute to Lennon's influence —



a record that would have been impossible to imagine without him.

Lennon believed more intensely than any other rock performer that rock and roll was a form of expression in which anything could be said, but more importantly (in this sense he was a 'proto-punk') he believed too that rock and roll was the only form of expression in which many things — to do with growing up working class — could be said. His music (like the Clash's) involves an urgent eagerness to be heard (an eagerness which often obscured what was actually being said.) As a sixteen year old, John Lennon heard in rock'n'roll an anti-authoritarian voice that everywhere else was silenced. This voice — essentially youthful — is still heard publicly only in rock music. Where else, for example, is the young's own experience of youth unemployment expressed or dealt with except in the music of local bands, on the occasional independent record on John Peel's show?

Much of Lennon's musical life was about keeping this voice heard, keeping its edge cutting through the ideological trappings of pop, the commercial packaging of the Beatles, the ceaseless labels of the exploiters. In coping with the trivialising tricks of the pop medium, John Lennon faced many of the issues addressed later by the punks. Yoko Ono's position was particularly important in making

the problems of Lennon's star position explicit. She confronted him with the taken-for-granted masculinity of the rock'n'roll voice, she asked questions about musical meaning itself (particularly about the rock conventions of spontaneity and realism, about the 'truth' of the singing voice), she focused the problem of the rock relationship between the public and the private.

The energy of Lennon's music had always come from this tension — between the private use of song (as a way of handling emotion, a celebration of personal powers) and a sense of public duty. Lennon was committed to public music, accepted his 'responsibility' to his audience (in a way that Bob Dylan, for example, did not). This was apparent not just in collective songs like "all You Need Is Love" and "Give Peace A Chance" but also in Lennon's continuing attempts in the early 1970s to use his song writing skills to illuminate *everything* that was happening around him.

Public music depends on a material community as well as an abstract commitment and by the mid-seventies, Lennon, like most of the original rock stars (especially those isolated in international stardom), had lost this sense of audience (it took the punks to revive it). *Double Fantasy*, his comeback LP, reflected his withdrawal — comfortable and happy in its commitment to his wife and child and friends, it lacked the

political tension that had always come from Lennon's nervous need to account for his feelings publicly too. This was just a record to be sold. There was nothing, apparently, to be said about marriage and fatherhood that mattered enough to make Lennon challenge his audience again.

'You say you want a revolution...' John Lennon understood the contradiction of capitalist music making, but he didn't solve them, and he rarely pretended that he wasn't involved in a money-making process. 'Imagine no possessions,' he sang, but I never thought he could. There was a sloppiness to John and Yoko's concept of peace and love and changing things by thinking them so, that concealed what mattered more — the Lennons had an astute sense of the mass market and how it worked. Their happenings at the end of the 1960s drew not only on Yoko Ono's experience as a performance artist but also on John Lennon's own cynical appreciation of the peculiarities of the British popular press (Malcolm McLaren applied a similar combination of cynicism and artiness to his manipulation of the media with the Sex Pistols in 1977). 'Thank you very much for talking to us,' murmured Andy Peebles humbly at the end of Radio 1's final Lennon interview. 'Well,' said John, 'We've got a new record out and I needed to talk to people in Britain.'

The central contradiction of John Lennon's artistic life (of any attempt to make mass music in a capitalist society) lay in the uneasy enthusiasm with which he packaged and sold his dreams. The problem for the working class, he said in 1971 is that 'they're dreaming someone else's dream, it's not even their own.' The problem for a working class hero is that he too is defined in other people's dreams. John Lennon was murdered by a fan, by someone who pushed the fantasies that pop stardom is designed to evoke into the appalling stupidity of a madness. The problem is that the grief that the rest of us Beatle fans then felt drew on similar fantasies, and the bitter irony is that John Lennon, whose heroism lay in his struggle against being a commodity, whose achievement was to express the human origins of pop ideas, should be trapped, finally, by a desperate, inhuman, nightmarish version of the pop fan's need to be a star.

© Marxism Today, January 1981.

BOOKS are expensive these days, but our country still runs a reasonably adequate library service. If you cannot afford the two books listed, urge your public library, or the library of any organisation you belong to, to order both. Every socialist should read and absorb the lessons each has to teach in narrative more thrilling than the most dramatic adventure story.

Denouncing the horrors of the imperialist war of 1914-1918, when millions of lives were sacrificed in the great powers' brutal struggle for colonies and commercial advantages, Lenin admitted that the exception to the imperialist nature of the struggle was the case of the small Kingdom of Serbia. This nation, often called "the Ireland of the Balkans", had freed itself after more than a century of bitter struggle from the Turkish Empire, whose attitude towards its subject peoples makes even the behaviour of the 16th century English adventurers here or that of Cornwallis's yeomanry in 1798, seem faintly gentlemanly.

But there were still Serbians and closely-related Croats and Slovenes under the oppressive rule of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which, correctly, saw in Serbia the nucleus of a South Slav state that would unite all Yugoslavs under one flag. Austria-Hungary, moreover, was determined to keep Serbia separated by a strip of occupied territory, through which socialist Yugoslavia's incredible Belgrade-Bar railway runs since 1977, from the other independent South Slav state, Montenegro, and from access to the sea. It was pro-Serbian conspirators in Austrian-occupied, Serb-speaking Bosnia who on June 28 1914, assassinated the Austrian governor of Bosnia.

Austria-Hungary's military chiefs, convinced that Serbia was too exhausted by its recent war with the Turks to put up a proper defence, attacked Serbia, precipitating world war. To the world's astonishment, small Serbia kept the great Hapsburg empire's armies at bay for more than a year, was overrun only when, late in 1915, Bulgaria was bribed by Austria-Hungary to attack her from behind, and even then was able to re-deploy her forces for reconquest of their fatherland from a base at Saloniki in friendly Greece.

The heroic behaviour of Serbia at the time won the sympathy and support of many Irish people. A brilliant Co. Antrim doctor, J. Johnston Abraham, went to Serbia under Red Cross auspices soon after the war

## BOOKS

# People at War

*John de Courcy Ireland*

**THE QUALITY OF MERCY: WOMEN AT WAR, SERBIA 1915-1918** by Monica Krippner (David and Charles, £10.32). **DE MERS EL-KÉBIR À LONDRES** by Jean Boutron (Plon, £8.97).

began, in the footsteps of other Irish doctors and the famous Donegal writer Joyce Carey who had helped the Montenegrins in the recent struggle to end Turkish power in the area.

He is long dead, and his exciting book, *My Balkan Log*, long out of print, but his wonderful service to the Serbs is still remembered in modern socialist Yugoslavia, especially the fact that it was he who first diagnosed deadly typhus when thousands of Austro-Hungarian prisoners and Serbian soldiers went down with a mysterious epidemic. He attributed his success to the fact that he had practised in Co. Clare, where, it is worth recalling, the disease was still endemic early in this century. Johnston Abraham performed still-recalled wonders combating typhus.

The book here under review tells the virtually unknown sequel to the same story — the extraordinary Red Cross work with the Serbian army of a number of Irish and Scottish women doctors and nurses who volunteered (at a time when it was still pretty ungentle for females to be involved in such affairs, and still more in the allegedly barbarous Balkans), out of admiration for the courage of a small democratic people engaged in a life and death struggle.

Monica Krippner vividly resurrects the inhuman horrors of the "Great" war, and says more than enough to dissipate any beliefs that may linger in young minds about war's so-called romance. Scenes in Skopje after the Serbs had had to evacuate it are particularly harrowing, not least the overbearing behaviour of German officers (called in to help the Austrians and Bulgarians against the stubborn Serbs), behaviour

repeated in the 1941-45 war, and typical, not of any nation, but of the officer-class of every conquering imperial army down the centuries. (Bulgarian officers behaved much better).

Of the Serbs, one of these women doctors wrote: "They are a phenomenal people — hardy, tough and enduring, and, when ill, trusting and uncomplaining... they are a brave people. They know how to live and they know how to die." She was surprised at the matter-of-fact way in which Serbian men accepted women doctors and surgical operations by women.

Johnston Abraham had written of the Serbs: "There is no landed gentry, no hereditary titled class. The General may have a brother fighting in the ranks... Serbia is a democratic country in every sense of the term."

Events that occurred in Ireland from 1916 on of course obliterated the memory of what these devoted Irish women did in a far-off land for the sake of another small people in distress. So it is very appropriate that two whole generations later a talented woman writer, who knows modern Yugoslavia, should bring back to life the unpretentious bravery of such admirable women as Dr. Katherine McPhail, Dr. Louise McLroy, unit-secretary Anne McGlade, fund-raiser Kathleen Burke, and nurses Elsie Corbett and Kathleen Dillon who met in Thomas Lipton's motor yacht *Erin*, which he put at the unit's disposal.

The book is not only well written but well provided with illustrations and maps, and will serve as a constant reminder that Ireland is not the only small nation with a past of martyrdom: all small nations are in danger from great power ambitions, and

today more than ever have reason to work together to thwart them.

Jean Boutron's book is one of the most moving I have ever read in a life of reading. Steps are being taken to get it translated into English but anyone with French should read it as soon as possible — it is superbly written and it too has dramatic and pathetic illustrations of the lunatic horrors of war. Its burning lesson is that expressed by a famous Englishman in the first world war — "Patriotism is Not Enough".

Boutron was an officer in the French merchant navy in the 1930s, and a member of the naval reserve. He watched with growing horror the rise of fascism in Europe and the complacency, growing into actual collaboration, with which the phenomenon was greeted by the ruling class of France (and not only France, he could have added). He admired the remarkable efficiency of the great navy built up for France between the wars by the radical minister Georges Leygues, but was as suspicious of the attitudes of senior naval officers to current events as he was of the inhuman treatment by shipowners running crack luxury liners, of the seamen whose labours made their profits.

Convinced that Hitler's behaviour was making war inevitable, Boutron applied for extended service in the war fleet, and became a gunnery officer in the battleship *Jean Bart*. His description of the early months of the war at sea is exciting, but the excitement becomes almost unbearable in his chapter on the Petain armistice with Hitler, which he saw as a betrayal of democracy natural in leaders whose conception of patriotism was totally intertwined with a conviction that patriotism and authoritarianism towards the ordinary people were one and the same thing.

The *Jean Bart* was in the squadron at Mers el-Kébir in Algeria when the armistice was signed. He and a minority of others felt that the squadron should sail out to join the British and keep up the fight against Hitler. The admiral and most of his officers believed that obedience to authority must be absolute — "theirs not to reason why". When a powerful British squadron requested the Mers el-Kébir ships to join them under threat of annihilation if they did not, Pétain's orders to stay put were followed. There was Boutron, convinced the British were right and his admiral wrong, counting the minutes till

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the shells of the *Hood*, Britain's most powerful warship, started to strike. He was, against his own will, appalled that his admiral took no steps to defend his squadron, and just had time to applaud the fine manoeuvres of the battle-cruiser *Strasbourg*, which broke out of the trap and escaped, when his own ship's back was broken and he was in the water smothering in fuel-oil.

Miraculously saved, Boutroun found himself alone the only surviving officer from a ship more than 1,200 of whose crew had perished. Naturally a wave of anti-British feeling swept through all who had come out of the holocaust. (Mers el-Kébir was one of Churchill's many great miscalculations. However reactionary they were, French naval officers were not prepared, as Churchill supposed, to hand

their ships over to the Nazis — they proved it when the Nazis entered Toulon two and a half years later. All warships there save a few that fought their way out were sabotaged.)

But Boutroun still believed the Nazis should be resisted, which meant helping the people who had killed hundreds of his comrades and nearly killed him. Nobody reading his book can ever again believe that war is just a matter of black and white. The rest of it shows what fearful dilemmas of conscience modern war creates.

Repariated to fascistising Vichy France, Boutroun a hero who had been a victim of the perfidious British, used his position to build up, with infinite care, an anti-Nazi resistance network, laying down in the meanwhile, while in the very

service of Pétain, the groundwork of legislation that was to transform conditions in the French merchant navy after the war. He even became assistant to the French naval attaché in Franco's Madrid, and set up a clandestine radio in the very embassy building with which to keep contact with the Free French in London.

He repeatedly crossed the Franco-Spanish frontier with material and information for the Resistance in France, was eventually arrested and imprisoned, met and worked with left wing resisters in gaol, was got out of prison, and escaped dramatically to Algiers in time to take part in the allied landing there, witness Admiral Darlan's intrigues, and see the eclipse of the Vichy régime he hated.

Declared a traitor by that régime in the name of a France which he did not recognize as his own, he eventually reached London, met de Gaulle, and became commander of a corvette in the Free French Navy, and, later, admiring but never wholly agreeing with de Gaulle, a high officer in the reconstituted post-1945 navy of France.

A sturdy democrat to the end, Boutroun wrote these fascinating reminiscences, essential for a clear understanding of one facet of the second world war, in a race against failing eyesight. His outspokenness caused several publishers to turn him down, but Plon has served him finely. Alas, though, as his widow informed me a few weeks ago, he did not live to see his magnificent book go on sale.

## All in the game

**100 YEARS OF IRISH FOOTBALL** by Malcolm Brodie. 187 pages. 26.95 in U.K. BELFAST CELTIC by Mark Tuohy. 82 pages. £3.95 in U.K. Both published by Blackstaff Press.

FOOTBALL is a form of life. It has its myths, its sagas, its heroes, its villains, its tragedies, its clowns and its princes.

Readers who snort impatiently at such drivel have never roared delightfully at the sight of the jersey emerging on a Saturday afternoon. Never chanted a tribal victory song or felt the black depression of defeat. I write for others.

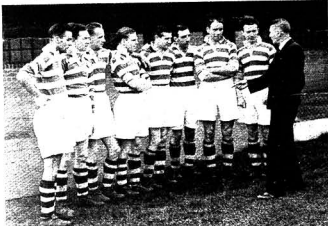
Both of these books are full of memories and if Malcolm Brodie has a broader canvas and a more skilful pen, Mark Tuohy has by far a story which should entertain the young and old.

If like me Belfast Celtic's exploits were the high point of your childhood then it's a book to buy for yourself. And don't hand it out on loan!

That's not to say that this is the definitive history of "the greatest league side ever"; there are gaps and Gentleman Jackie Vernon appears on the cover in a West Brom jersey. Real sacrifice.

That history has still to be written but Mark Tuohy makes a brave attempt for one who was not privileged to see such greats as Bud Aherne, Jimmy McAlinden, Bunny Kernoghan, Charlie Tully, Harry Walker, Robin Lawlor, Hughie Kelly, and so many others in action.

That I saw, mark you. And



*Workers Life will give a £5 prize to the first reader who correctly names the Belfast Celtic group pictured here.*

heard of the wonders of "Great Scott" and the fleetness of Mickey Hamill and the trickery of the Mahoods.

There is one in particular however whom Mark Tuohy fails to mention; the tall, languid genius Liam O'Neill. He came to "Paradise" if I remember right, round about the time of the arrival of Aherne and Lawlor, as an inside-left. He was a ball player with a body swerve which I swear sent tough defenders scurrying like startled rabbits in all directions. Memory may be playing tricks but I can still see the swaying O'Neill amble his way out of a cocoon of four Linfield defenders like a modern Moses splitting the Nile.

His penalty kicks were a nightmare: the ball trundled ever so slowly into the corner of the net. Eleven heart stopping goals before he failed to Ted Hinton of Distillery I think.

Malcolm Brodie is a

professional sportswriter and has done a professional's job. It would be churlish to carp and I suppose the latter days of Northern Ireland's football experience were bound to take up the bulk of his story. But surely the "wee blue devil" Davy Cochrane might have earned a chapter to himself? Certainly John Crossan and George Best made international headlines but as wingers go there were none more skilful, more dangerous as he hugged the wing than Linfield's Cochrane.

Blackstaff Press are once again to be congratulated for adding to our store of popular history. Even if you can't become ecstatic about the big gall game both these books add depth and colour to the sport of working people. They should be on everyone's bookshelf who wants to feel the pulse of the people of Northern Ireland.

**Des O'Hagan**

**VOYOVIC AND OTHER STORIES** by Niall Quinn. Wolfhound Press IR£5.94

'OUR MAIMED are those who fell crippled from the scaffolding, lost limbs and suffered their wounds in every industry of Europe in the blind, unconscious urge to be quicker and better than the native workers; the blind unconscious urge to kill the aura of inferiority and begging vagrancy which is relentlessly shrouded upon us'.

Thus Dubliner Niall Quinn describes the casualties of western Europe's legion of emigrant workers in 'Voyovic', the key-note in this first collection of his disturbing short stories.

'Every army has its maimed and its wounded; every army honours its dead', says Voyovic's Irish friend, who is left to go through the calloused formalities after the Yugoslav migrant hangs himself. 'Our army is no different'.

This is a sad book - a record of despairing lives pitted against an indifferent or hostile, and above all uncomprehending world. Quinn's characters are transient, shifting and not so much rootless as uprooted.

They don't fit in - either in the societies where they find temporary work and accommodation, or when they return home. And their dumb, suppressed rage and grief at being in a way robbed of themselves can explode in sudden violence against some minor official, seek escape in drink or drugs, or the final act of despair - in suicide.

Refuge is what Quinn's people are looking for - the drug addict

in Germany, the senile old man dying in a bed-sitter, the stranded seaman caught up by the war, Brigitte the Irish country-girl who sells herself on the streets of London, and archetypically Voyovick himself - human flotsam lost on a sea of indifference, flaming with passions they can never focus.

Their ultimate refuge is death - and it runs like a theme through these pitifully wasted lives. Even when Emmet finds love with a Paris bar-woman, he knows it only a one night stand.

But perhaps the real escaper is Hempler, the demented adolescent hugging his insanity through the Dublin streets as he manipulates his homosexual patron, his uncomprehending family, even the police who stop him for questioning.

Niall Quinn is a new and original talent. Born in Dublin, he's obviously gone through the murder machine - and the scars show. He's worked at many jobs in many countries, seen the inside of prison, served his time in the merchant navies of various nations - by definition the drifter's occupation.

He knows his stuff. Read this book and don't be put off by the woeful jacket design.

*Seumas Phelan*

## THEATRE

### Dockers

AFTER cutting his teeth on community theatre Turf Lodge playwright Martin Lynch has made a triumphant transition to 'straight' drama in *Dockers*, his first professional work as a writer in residence at the Lyric. In it he returns to his own childhood environment of Salfordtown, Belfast's dockland, in the early sixties.

A loose and imaginative stage setting makes for a presentation of the time and place which clearly struck several chords with the many dockers in the audience on the first night. The characters, the events, the pub and the 'crack' were obviously familiar to men who had lived and worked amongst them. One dock labourer clasped the writer's hand with visible emotion and choked out, 'Great Martin, just great'.

Although the action was firmly anchored in the particular, the themes and problems which unfold against the local canvas will be familiar

## THE CLASSICS: an occasional look at great books of the past

'IN WRITING this book my intention was to present, in the form of an interesting story, a faithful picture of working class life - more especially of those engaged in the building trades - in a small town in the south of England'.

Thus wrote Robert Tressell (born Robert Noonan) in the preface to his book *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropist*. Set in Mugsborough (Hastings) around 1906, the book describes the workman's life of that time, the subjection, deception and destitution of the people whose labour created the luxury and glitter of the Edwardian age. Tressell's book shows that the 'Good Old Days' were, for working people, a grim experience.

Of Irish origin, Tressell was himself one of the workmen he described - wrote his book in his spare time and knew exactly what he was talking about. He died of tuberculosis in 1911 at the age of forty and his book was not published until 1914. The first full edition was published in 1955 by the London firm, Lawrence and Wishart.

'The action of the story', Tressell wrote, 'covers a period of only a little over twelve months, but in order that the picture might be complete it was necessary to describe how the workers were circumstanced at all stages of their lives, from the cradle to the grave. Therefore the characters include women and children, a young boy - the apprentice - some improvers, journeymen in the prime of life and worn out old men'.

The characters are accurately drawn and it is hard to forget such people as Misery the foreman, Crass the chargehand, Rushton the firm's director, Sweater the mayor and the Reverend Boshier, the gluttonous cleric. Then there is Owen the socialist, who with patience and tenacity tries to enlighten his workmates. They won't listen so he calls them philanthropists, benefactors in ragged trousers who willingly exchange the

wealth they produce for a pittance. Their response is to laugh at Owen and to re-assure each other that politics 'isn't for the likes of us'. They are content to leave such matters to their 'betters'.

Tressell gives a detailed account of how their 'betters' operate. The employers cheat not only the workmen but also their customers. They are contemptuous of good quality work because it yields less profit; they instruct the men to skimp and abuse and intimidate them if they don't.

Tressell describes how they use the Municipal Council for their own ends and how because of the absence of organised opposition their positions on the Council remain secure. 'In the opinion of the inhabitants of Mugsborough, the fact that a man had succeeded in accumulating money in business was a clear demonstration of his fitness to be entrusted with the business of the town'.

The book also describes how religion is used by 'psalm-singing hypocrites' to keep working people in their place and how 'charitable' societies under the employers control merely give to one section of the poor what they take from another.

A book of almost 600 pages, *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropist* is never boring. Although it deals with the lives of men in a stagnant society dominated by greed, self-satisfaction and callous indifference, it is neither turgid nor pessimistic. Accurately described as a 'journey through hell' it is at the same time humorous and instructive. While it is deeply bitter it is ultimately a testament to the dignity of man and a powerful argument for socialism.

In writing the first great English novel about the class war, Robert Tressell created a truly original work of art. Its passion and conviction will live on for as long as books are read.

*Paddy Gillan*

to working class audiences everywhere. Under the microscope is the individual's behaviour under pressure, the sometimes thankless nature of the task of the labour activist, the

corruption inherent in the free market and the power of apathy. The hero, John Graham (Oliver Maguire), is a young radical up against the established forces backing the casual system of

dock labour, a system which he describes as a microcosm of the capitalist order.

Throughout the play Graham is aware, and tries to make his workmates aware, that his real enemy is the class and system which benefits directly from the dog-eat-dog labour practices of the day. However, between himself and these forces stand obstacles in the form of foreman Jimmy Sweeney (Mark Shelly) and, more immediately, the corrupt union official Jack Henry (George Shane) and his pugnacious minder McKibben (Mel Austin). These men act alternately as a curtain to obscure and a rod to chastise.

After being elected onto the Branch Committee Graham challenges the accepted wisdom that present procedures are natural and eternal and finds himself in direct conflict with the trio who, with various degrees of clarity, see themselves as having a stake in the status quo. He analyses their basic failure as an absence of politics.

A major centre of dramatic interest is Graham's dilemma of whether to avoid or pursue this secondary conflict and the reactions of others to his decisions. Severe pressures are placed on his wife Theresa (Stella McCusker) as the danger of violence grows and the prospect of getting no work looms closer. Other dockers support him privately or over a pint but their effective reactions veer between the sympathy of Leg McNamara (JJ Murphy) and the eagerness of Hughie McNamara (Ian McIlhenny) to fight McKibben.

Other characters not only throw distinctive sidelights on the action but are well rounded dramatic personages in their own rights. None are sketched in, each conveys reality. Louis Rolston gives a consummate performance as the Tolstoyan drunk Bucketts McGuinness, Leila Webster takes the role of moneylender Sarah Montague like a duck to water and Micheal Gormley portrays the philosophical barman Barney Valley with easy confidence. However the laurels for the best performance of the night must go to Mel Austin.

Overall the play meshed together with rare ease. Comedy, drama and message didn't jostle once but moved together harmoniously towards a convincing and unexpected denouement.

Regular theatregoers in Belfast will certainly have had their most memorable night in recent years

*Liam Clarke*

## WORK AND CULTURE

IT IS officially estimated that 50% of the Irish population is under the age of 25 and if this trend continues into the next century unhampered by birth control or the intervention of the prophesied Antichrist, then according to my mathematical reckoning, by the year 2097 more than 93% of the Irish population will be under the age of two.

This fact is known to our most eminent social scientists and statisticians but the news has been suppressed for fear of causing widespread panic, as happened with our recent petrol crisis. For crisis' sake they're staying quiet. This was brought home to me when I checked my figures with Professor Stork of T.C.G. whose written clarification ended with the P.S. — "Mum's the word".

You may be asking yourselves "What has all this to do with folk music?" The answer to that is, *nothing and everything.*

The reasons I bother mentioning this are threefold, namely: because I wanted to catch your attention; because I aim to make this column educational as well as interesting and thirdly because the following interview with Niall Toner of *The Sackville String Band* came dangerously close to the deadline for submission to *Workers Life* and after all, you have to start somewhere.

The delay in reaching Niall, I should add, was my fault though it was aided by a severe bout of viral influenza with complications. The complications arose as a result of multiple intakes of hot whiskey — one of the best cures for recurring sobriety, but not 'flu.

Speaking to Niall Toner of *The Sackville String Band* is not only a pleasurable experience but also an education in deep root American country music. The man's personal charisma is matched by his knowledge and obvious love of the brand of music in which he and the band excel.

Toner has been around for quite some time and can speak with as much authority on this particular aspect of Folk as anyone in Ireland. When he mentions names as obscure as Gid Tanner and Riley Puckett, Dan Crary (a flat-picking guitar player from California) and the blind mandoline player, Kenny Hall from Frisco, Cal., Niall does so, not in the fashion of those who get all the names right and all the priorities wrong.

Born of a Donegal father who had a love for American country music — then considered a somewhat eccentric preference — the Toner family received a good

# FOLK LIFE: Brendan Phelan lends an ear to the Sackville String Band

grounding in music at their Kenilworth Park home in Dublin's Harold's Cross. Among their neighbours at that time were Al O'Donnell, one of the great Folk stalwarts of recent years and Padraig Purcell, the late sports correspondent.

In 1975 Niall found his niche with the S.S.B. when they commenced at Harricans of Leeson Street, after which the band built up a strong following which followed them to the Stag's Head in Dame Court in 1977, then on to their new venue in Tailor's Hall via various festivals and concerts which included the prestigious Cork Folk Festivals, Ballisodare Folk Festival, Folk Fainne circuit, and this year's Lisdoonvarna festival is on the cards.

Since its inception in 1975, the Band has seen a few changes in personnel with nostalgia particularly when mentioning the late Imor Byrne who died in 1977. Imor was a fine fiddle player and one of the early members of the Band.

Niall originally played with *Paddy's Goatskin and String Band* twelve years ago in Cork and keeps in regular contact with the members of *The Lee Valley String Band*, another fine Cork outfit.

In those 12 years he has met with and played alongside some of the finest musicians on both sides of the Atlantic ocean including Peter Rowan from Colorado and the great George Kaye. I asked him how he managed to engage Rambling Jack Elliot for the Thomas House gig (their present Monday venue) last September, Niall cheerily replied, "I phoned him up and asked him". Such is the measure of the man.

### Early influences

Among the artists responsible for whetting Niall's appetite for music in the early days were Hank Williams, the Carter Family, Jerry Lee Lewis and

strangely enough, Holly and Presley. Indeed, it was Elvis' recording of the Bill Munro song — Blue Moon of Kentucky — which was instrumental in shaping Niall's desire to pursue country music.

In those early days Niall played in a group with Mick Daly and Chris Toomey, now of Stoke's Lodge, and freely admits to playing Rock 'n Roll long before he ever played country. Many of today's young traditional musicians were Beatles fans originally, before discovering the beauty of Irish music, as was yours truly.

The other members of the S.S.B. consist of:

Colin Beggan, on guitar, banjo and vocals. Colin's voice has a very distinctive, easy-going quality to it and both his musicianship and stage personality are a real pleasure to behold. His singing of *Baby Love* is uniquely acclaimed at the sessions.

Jimmy Kelly, on 5 string banjo and most recent member of the band. When Jimmy first learned to play the banjo (not the easiest instrument to learn) a couple of years ago he attended the S.S.B. sessions in Tailor's Hall and eventually approached the band who, on hearing Jimmy's excellence, invited him to join. His finger-picking solos are a highlight of the sessions and Jimmy obviously treats his music very seriously, which is evident by the pained contortions he emits when he makes the odd uncharacteristic mistake.

Bill Whelan, on Big Bass (and occasionally Guinness) is the quiet man of the group. Niall noticed Bill as one of the regular attendants at the Stag's Head sessions and struck up a conversation with Bill one night, whereupon he discovered that this quiet man was a very talented and knowledgeable musician who then played banjo.

Niall procured a double bass and invited Bill to learn to play it

with the intention of joining the band.

The rest is history and Bill's contribution to this multinational band is self evident.

I must confess that before my first encounter with the S.S.B. I had not fully appreciated the relationship between American Country and Folk music in general. Listening to them playing and talking about their music has certainly broadened my own personal appreciation and knowledge of what Folk is all about and above all, it is most enjoyable to experience.

### Hairy experience

Before I close I must relate a little story about Niall Toner's visit to the U.S.A. last year.

After playing some bluegrass music in the Birchmere at Arlington, West Virginia, the audience asked Niall to sing some Irish songs. However, Niall's repertoire in Irish music is severely limited but he eventually recalled the words of Pecker Dunne's *Sullivan's John* and duly obliged.

When finished, Niall enquired why so many of the audience were laughing during the song. A friend informed him that the reason was because the word *John* has a different meaning or connotation in the U.S. The audience assumed the song was about a walking toilet that roamed to Co. Clare for the hairy ass fair. It was further complicated by the fact that an *ass* also has a different meaning in the U.S. of A.

If you haven't already had the pleasure of hearing the boys perform then I strongly suggest you might do worse than call in on Monday next to Thomas House, as the lads will be taking a three month break very soon. Further than that I can only say I hope their music will live on into the next century and if Oul' Nick doesn't get us we might yet be part of the lucky seven per cent.



## LIAM CASSIDY previews next month's All-Ireland Cross Country Championships

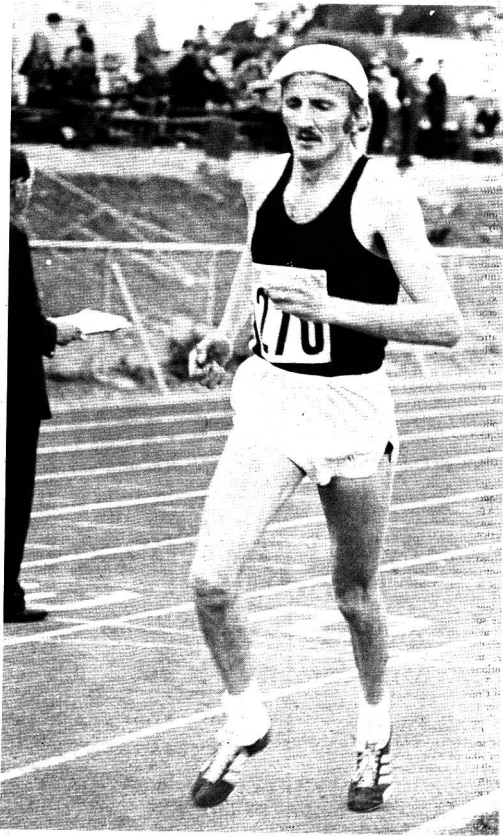
THE BLE All-Ireland Cross Country Championships will be held this year on Sunday March 1, in Carlow. At stake will be places on the Irish team for the World Cross Country Championships in Madrid three weeks later. Since the formation of BLE 13 years ago, only seven athletes have won this title and one athlete, Donie Walsh from Leevale Athletic Club in Cork has a record in this event which will probably stand for a long time. He ran in the race nine times and his record is four wins, one second, one third, one fourth, one fifth and one sixth place.

The present holder of the title is Gerry Deegan from Waterford who was a very easy winner of the event in the Phoenix Park last year. Eamon Coughlan at present running in the United States and John Treacy who has been suffering from an injury for the past three months, will probably both be absent. Deegan won the All-Ireland Inter-counties cross country race before Christmas and the man who was second then, Dave Taylor from Dundrum, will also be absent as he is at present studying in the United States.

Deegan's main opponents on this occasion are likely to be Danny McDaid from Donegal, Gerry Kiernan, Clonliffe Harriers, Dessie O'Connor from Kilkenny, John Harnett, Cork and the Limerick pair Robert Costello and Nial Cusack.

Taylor's excellent run in the Inter-Counties race will probably guarantee him a place on the team and it is very likely therefore that the first eight in Carlow will be selected for Madrid. Clonliffe Harriers should win the team race from Limerick and Donore Harriers.

The Ladies Senior and Men's Junior races also take place on the same day. The ladies race should see a great battle between Carol Meagan, Fionnula Morrish and Deirdre Nagle for first place and in the men's junior Paul O'Donovan from Galway should repeat his success in the Inter-Counties race. It should be a very exciting day's sport and well worth a visit if passing that way.



Danny McDaid Photo: Sportfile

## GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS

### JANUARY 6th

In bright and early as My Bonnie is receiving a submission from the Employment Equality Agency. Or some such rubbish.

I now attend all these meetings as My Bonnie's Special Assistant because he likes to keep an eye on me and help me develop further political skills before he hands over. Not that he has said anything.

The meeting was very boring as the leader of the delegation just simpered throughout at My Bonnie's jokes. Charming as ever he opened the meeting by reminding her that it was Women's Christmas. Then he assured her that the problems of women's inequality at work would soon disappear as they would shortly be all back at home. On the way out My Bonnie told her that she was very pretty...

When he had closed the door on the delegation's grateful gurglings he turned to me and said solemnly "Remember that Michael O'Leary is a very very great man". I stared at him in shock. He nodded. "Yes indeed. Major O'Leary is our deep penetration mole in the Coalition and his handiwork still lives on, as you saw this morning."

### PENTHOUSE GPO JANUARY 7th

A wonderful new electronic game is being manufactured by My Bonnie's private company An Bord Telecom run by Albert Reynolds out of P&T. It's called "Walkies" after Michael O'Kennedy and will sweep the market for next Christmas.

Thanks to a post hypnotic suggestion planted by the accommodating Ivor Browne, the little gadget emits a high frequency bleep that causes O'Kennedy to assume the submission posture with his jaw hanging and freeze in that position until the bleep is switched off. Unfortunately the Snipe has got hold of one and plays with it day and night and Walkies is now semi-moronic...

### BRUSSELS JANUARY 10th

My Bonnie would kill me if he knew I was here. But I felt it was vital to sniff out what Michael "Walkies" O'Kennedy was really up to. Having been pushed out of the centre of the stage by my Fermoy and Donegal speeches, Walkies has never ceased



## Sile's Diary

to backbite me, even descending to slander and calumny as when he calls me "The Poison Dwarf" and claims that I shot J.R.

### STRASBOURG JANUARY 15th

On a special mission from My Bonnie to keep an eye on Noel Davern and Gerry Cronin, who are clattering up the roads here with Paddy Lalor and Sean Flanagan. They stand in the centre of the cobbled streets, bleating like frightened sheep about the impending General Election and being prodded on by police. The sweets of Strasbourg melt in their mouth and they will not give up the flashpits of Europe and fight at home to hold their seats as I shall do. My Bonnie calls them the Gang of Fear. Tee hee.

The Snipe O'Malley is spreading the inside story about Walkies O'Kennedy and the jobs debacle all around Brussels. Despite the fact that the Snipe is a congenial fool, he can be totally believed on the

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question of Walkies.

It seems that My Bonnie, knowing how thick Walkies really is, told him to secure a position in Gaston Thorn's entourage that would give him (Walkies) control of personnel. The Snipe points out that Walkies will now be able to find jobs in Brussels for the fitsum and jetscm that My Bonnie can't get in anywhere else. Walkies will also be in charge of relocating elderly and frightened TDs who live alone in dangerous and remote marginal constituencies.

The Snipe told all this to Sharpie Seamus Brennan who told it in confession to Archbishop O'Fee who felt it necessary to break the seal as it was for Ireland.

"Tugendhat will be raging," said Sharpie Seamus, "Imagine having Walkies as a thorn in your side."

"Not so," sniggered the Snipe, "From Tugendhat's point of view it's more like a Snide in his Thorn".

### SPIDDAL JANUARY 25th

Down for the week-end to brush up the cupla focail. (As a matter of fact I only have two and one is Fianna and the other is Fáil. Hee hee.)

Talking about Fáil I met a lovely character called Paul Foyle who prefers to be known as Pole something or other in Irish. Pole runs a chain of Irish colleges and specialist magazines for Gaeltacht areas. He told me that he wanted me to pose for a Centrefold (actually he said it would take four pages) for the Spring issue under the caption "Anois teacht an earraigh, beidh an lá dul chun Sile". This is a very clever and guarded reference to the leadership question.

Bishop O'Fee is anxious that I should have my photograph taken with a wolfhound. The problem is which of Pole's magazines would be most suitable. The list includes *Pups in Airde*, *Slat Agus Slabhra* and *Súgradh na Bhfear* which circulates in the Connemara Gaeltacht. Then there's what Pole calls an SM special for Rathcairn called *Cos Ar Bolg* and *Buddies na mBod*; and *Follies Luimní* which circulates in Snipe's territory.

The next important question is who the photographer will be and here, as Bishop O'Fee says, we need a "cross between Tony Snowdon and Coleman Doyle."

# SIX OF THE BEST!



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