

workers republic

No. 96

May 1983

Price 20p

Shop-stewards organise for General Strike

Speaking at the tax march, Matt Merrigan advocated rolling stoppages culminating in a general strike as the only means of forcing the government to withdraw the PAYE/PRSI increases.

The response from the 100,000 marchers was deafening.

Yet no prominent trade union leaders or political figure has supported Matt Merrigan's call. Instead the ICTU leadership has stated that they are encouraged by the anti-tax evasion measures in the Finance Bill. This Bill, now going through the Dail implements the PAYE increases. But the ICTU want stoppages to cease and lobbying of T.Ds. to take place instead.

The ITGWU leaders want more protest stoppages — but not leading to a general strike.

Workers know that these are a complete waste of time. Persistence in that form of action is a clever way of winding down the campaign.

WATERFORD SHOWS THE WAY

But the Waterford shop-stewards are continuing their campaign for effective national industrial action. They are striking two days every week and several Waterford jobs are stopping one day a week

The stewards have arranged to address shopstewards meetings in Clonmel, Limerick, Carrick-on-Suir, Dublin and other places seeking support.

But their campaign is not just being verbally opposed by the ICTU leaders. At a meeting of the Liaison Committee of Trades Councils, Donal Nevin, SCTU general secretary, refused to allow the delegates vote on any recommendations for action. And he ruled out of order a call to trades councils to convene meetings

of show-stewards.

OPPOSITION TO GENERAL STRIKE

But the sabotage of the campaign is not confined to trade union leaders. The Workers Party leader, Tomas MacGiolla has publicly attacking the withholding of tax by the Waterford stewards. And there is not a word about the Waterford campaign in the current edition of the "Irish People".

Workers' Party supporters in the trade unions are discouraging any industrial action by saying we should wait for the local elections and vote for them. They want us to forget that they supported huge increases in PAYE and PRSI to keep Haughey in power.

There are many supporters of the Communist Party of Ireland at shop steward and official level in the trade union movement in Dublin. Yet there was not a single Communist Party supporter at the preliminary meeting of shop-stewards in St. Anthony's Hall on April 27th, addressed by the Waterford stewards. And the only delegates actively supporting the Waterford/Merrigan initiative at the Dublin Trades Council are the ATGWU delegates and "Workers Republic" supporters.

It is clear that these two parties linked to the soviet government are opposing the general strike and protecting the 26-county government.

But the movement towards the general strike is going ahead in spite of the union leaders, in spite of the coalition Labour Party, in spite of the Stalinist Worker's Party and Communist Party. This movement takes in more than taxation injustice.

FREE NICKY KELLY

Nicky Kelly has been forced to go on hunger strike because of the intransigence of the Coalition Government. It refused to reconsider his conviction for the Sallins mail train robbery, despite the fact that the evidence, when used against his co-defendants, did not stand up in court.

The Government have refused to release Nicky, not because they have proved him guilty, but because doing so would "cast doubt on the judicial system".

Doubt should be cast on the judicial system! It is a system modelled on the British system and modified, through the Special Court, backed up by torture by a "Heavy Gang", in order to maintain the British-imposed system of Partition. The judicial system is a key part of the structure of collaboration with Britain in Ireland.

Nicky Kelly's life is in danger of being sacrificed to preserve this system! He must be saved!

The fight to defend Nicky Kelly has nothing to do with his jumping bail. It has nothing to do with his political views or the political party to which he belongs.

It has everything to do with the fact that successive Irish governments resort to torture, to frame-ups, to Special Courts and to the denial of the most basic democratic rights to those who oppose them in order to preserve the link with Britain and to prop up the subordination of the

whole country to international imperialism.

It has everything to do with the preservation of the institutions of the 26 county state, which is the main bulwark of British rule in Ireland, and of the imperialist exploitation of the Irish people.

But British rule in Ireland has been challenged by the heroic workers and youth of the occupied 6 counties for over ten years, supported by their brothers and sisters in the South.

And now the workers of Clondalkin Paper Mills, of Ranks, of Kingdom Tubes, of Carrigaline Potteries, of Waterford Glass, of Telectron and elsewhere are serving notice that they will no longer tolerate the plundering of the country and the exploitation of the Irish people by the international companies and banks.

Already this call has gone out from Matt Merrigan, from the shopstewards of Waterford and a meeting of shopstewards in Dublin for a general strike against the policies of this government.

This movement will strike at the heart of the pro-imperialist government of Garret Fitzgerald. A defeat of his government will be a major blow for Nicky Kelly.

Linking up with the movement of Irish workers for a general strike against all the policies of this government is the only way to save Nicky.

Shop-stewards ...

First Ranks workers in Limerick decided to occupy the plant. This is a major victory for the workers in the Dublin mill. Their determination to resist jailings and fight on has been completely vindicated. Though the ITGWU leadership still refuses to officially black Ranks flour, they have now recommended that shop-stewards oppose the purchase of foreign flour in the establishments where they work.

TELECTRON

The American multi-national AT&T have announced the closure of their Tallaght plant throwing 500 workers on the dole. But the workers are fighting back with widespread community support.

Now another multi-national N.I.F.E. has announced the closure of their Navan plant "for a month" throwing 170 workers on the dole. Already the Ranks workers have acted to co-ordinate all the sit-ins to defend jobs.

And the government have gone on the offensive to keep down wages as well. Dukes has ordered the insurance companies to obey the government guide-lines which include a pay pause and to break any newly negotiated agreement which goes outside them.

The government have also ordered the E.S.B. not to open negotiations on a new pay claim. The workers have voted overwhelmingly for a strike.

DEFEAT GOVERNMENT ATTACKS

The Government is determined not to spend money to save jobs. They refuse to withdraw the tax increases. They are trying to hold down wages as price rises continue. They are deliberately eliminating jobs in the public services. They are cutting education and health services.

This is being done in order to continue subsidizing multi-nationals, to pay off debts to international banks and help shore up the international financial system.

If they are allowed to get away with this existing poverty will spread over the population to a degree not known since the 50s.

That is why it is so vital that Matt Merrigan's call for a general strike be supported. That is why the activities of the union leaders aided and abetted by the Workers Party and the Communist Party constitute treachery to the working class.

WORKERS' REPUBLIC FORUM

"The Fight for the General Strike" Speakers

Des Derwin, ITGWU Unidare
Carol Coulter, Editor "Workers' Republic"
Chair: Paddy Healy, TUI

~~Mon~~ **Thurs** 24th May, 8.p.m.
ATGWU Hall, Marlborough Street

POLITICAL INITIATIVE DISCUSSED

The presence of the Labour Party in Coalition and the opposition to the general strike call by the Worker's Party and the Communist Party underlines the need for a new political way forward for Irish workers.

These problems were discussed at a well-attended public "Workers Republic" Forum held in the Clarence Hotel on April 14th. The meeting was addressed by Des Bonas (ATGWU), Brian Higgins (FWUI), Alan Trimble (Ranks), Alex White (USI) and Paddy Healy for "Workers Republic".

Des Bonas showed that there was no way forward through the Labour Party. He said his union would soon be discussing a motion for disaffiliation.

Alan Trimble gave an account of their fight for nationalization of the mill.

Alex White stressed the need for student links with trade unionists in the fight against the cuts in education.

Brian Higgins stressed that any new political formation should be on a 32-county basis. The growing mass support for Sinn Fein in the 6-counties should be a major factor in discussions about a new political way forward, he said.

Paddy Healy said that the L.W.R. believed that there was no solution to the economic crisis north and south without defeating international big business on all fronts. This meant that Connolly was right when he said that Irish unity and independence was a prerequisite for working class freedom.

The L.W.R. did not see Irish unity and independence as a long term aspiration but as the only road to a solution of the present problems of the Irish people. It was disagreements on this question which lay at the heart of the failure of previous initiatives such as the S.L.P. Careful discussions designed to reach agreement on this fundamental question were needed.

Carol Coulter, editor of "Workers Republic", who chaired the meeting said that the discussions that were necessary should not be confined to existing grouplets. She proposed that the platform approach Matt Merrigan, John Carroll and six-county trade unionists committed to Irish unity with a view to organising a wider forum to discuss a political way forward. This was overwhelmingly supported by the meeting

AMENDMENT CAN BE DEFEATED

Garret Fitzgerald has been defeated on the anti-abortion amendment to the Constitution. The version now going to referendum is actually opposed by the Government parties. Garret himself has already said that if it is adopted "mothers will die".

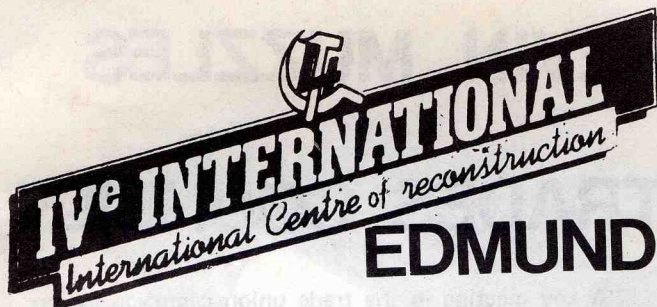
The Fianna Fail amendment, which is not supported by the Government parties, and is opposed by the Protestant churches and by the ICTU, can be defeated. If it is defeated it will mark a historic defeat for the Catholic Church, for the institutions of the Free State, established with its direct blessing, and for all the forces of reaction on this island.

What is now needed is an all-out, united campaign to defeat the Amendment. This will involve canvassing every household in the state. All those, whatever their political or religious views, whatever their views on abortion, must be united in this campaign.

Above all, this is not the time to introduce a campaign for a woman's right to choose abortion as an option if she wishes. Of course this right is at stake in this referendum, and the LWR unconditionally defends that right. But the best thing that can be done at the moment for those women who have already made that choice, for those who may want to do so in the future, is to defeat the amendment. All else takes second place.

A delegate conference of the Anti-Amendment Campaign will discuss a number of motions on May 7th. These include a number of motions from People's Democracy on an international tribunal on women's rights in Ireland.

The referendum is almost upon us. Any motion which diverts attention and resources from defeating it is, at best, a waste of time, and at worst a diversion which can only play into the hands of those fighting for this amendment.



EDMUND BALUKA SPEAKS FROM THE DOCK

Edmund Baluka, President of the strike committee in Szczecin in 1970 and founder of the Polish Socialist Workers' Party (PSPP) in 1981 went on trial in Bydgoszcz at the end of March, charged with "conspiring to overthrow the Polish People's Republic by force". He conducted his own defence. We publish below excerpts from his speech from the dock.

Mr. President, Mr. Judges,

I reject the charge of committing a crime against the People's Republic of Poland as outlined in the book of evidence of 24 March 1983, ref. 50W 43-83.

I declare myself a socialist, and I never took any action which might injure the socialist system either in Poland or anywhere else, nor will I take any action which might do so in the future. I never had, in my programme for political action, and I never will have, any actions which would lead towards the use of violence to overthrow socialist systems.

My action is intended to destroy the system whereby power is exercised in the structure of the apparatus of the state which, in my opinion, are anti-socialist structures.

Szermietiew, the leader of the KPN (Confederation for an independent Poland) said during his trial: "... the machinery which is set up in our country is one which dates from another epoch, and if we are to move it it must be soaked in blood."

Personally I define this "machinery" of which the KPN leader speaks as machinery based on Stalinist doctrine, which is not so very old, and which has already been soaked in the blood of the workers of Poznan in 1956, of the Baltic cities in December 1970 and again in December 1981. The official propaganda of the United Polish Workers Party cries everywhere that these were just "deviations" and "errors" in the manner in which power was exercised. My conception is quite the opposite: *These were part of the continuity of the Stalinist system, and not deviations or mistakes in the functioning of the state or political apparatus.*

Is it necessary to have another letting of Polish blood to make this machinery "move"? This is not the time to talk about it. However, I state with deepest conviction that the blood which has already been spilled and which may still be spilled has soiled the hands of those holding state power, and not those of the people. The scenario of any national tragedy which may take place can only be written by those who hold power today in Poland, the people who have been the authors of similar events in the past.

In my opinion it is the greater part of the State apparatus which cannot be reformed. In fact it is the character of this apparatus which is the very foundation of the bureaucratic system.

That is why the declaration of the state of war on December 13 1983 was not in any way directed against so-called "extremists" — because gaining the upper hand on such small groups in society would not have needed such radical measures. The state of war was declared in order to deal a body-blow to the whole of the Polish people who wanted changes in the way in which power is exercised.

... The Polish Socialist Workers' Party (the PSPP) is fighting so that the word "socialism" regains the credibility and the respect which has been taken from it, even though this task has been made very difficult after all that Stalinism has done in the USSR, after all that the PSWP has done in Poland and after all that similar parties have done in power in Czechoslovakia, in Rumania, in Bulgaria, in the GDR and in Hungary.

For the PSPP the most difficult thing will be to convince Polish society that the word "socialism" can be a practical reality, though at the moment it is a hollow slogan serving as a smoke-screen for the bureaucratic regime which holds power in the state today.

The basis for any political party is to have political power, because that is the very basis of setting up a political party. It would be ridiculous to pretend that at this stage in its construction the PSPP is capable of taking power in Poland, even if this could not be excluded in the longer term. But given the programmatic basis of the PSPP, which is to fight for the fullest political pluralism and thus for a multi-party system, it has a full part to play as part of the opposition movement, which is not to belittle its own role or the objectives it sets itself.

I have no illusions about the difficulties there will be in building the PSPP. I know that the word socialism is held in low esteem. And I have already said who is responsible for that.

... My views on the economic front are the creation of workers councils in the workplaces which would have a decisive influence on the financial and economic affairs of the enterprise. Arising from this there should be a national council of workers to deal with the economic questions of the state.

The Penal Code does not prohibit wanting to change or overthrow the system. Seeking a change in the system whereby the power is exercised is not a crime, but is the right of those governed as guaranteed by electoral, constitutional and civil rights.

In this connection we should look at the question of the reform of the system whereby power is exercised in the state, and at the state system itself.

I wish to state my central idea on this question: *socialism can be reformed, Stalinism can not.*

In his Open Letter in 1965 Jacek Kuron and Modzelewski put forward the idea of workers' councils. I quote: "That is why it is necessary that the working class, through workers' councils in the workplaces, organises the representation of the staffs of the factories of the country, that is, a system of councils, of workers' delegates, with a central council. Through such a system of councils the working class could adopt an economic plan at a national level, fix targets for social production, take decisions on the use and sharing out of this production, correct these decisions and unceasingly check on their implementation." This idea corresponds to the programme of the PSPP as if it was its own.

In such an economic system it would be necessary to amend point 4 of Article 11 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Poland which outlines a state monopoly on foreign trade. I will give an example: 'foreign trade would be directed by a body set up for that purpose, but in agreement with the national council referred to above.' That is an example of possible amendments.

Mr. President, Mr. Judges,

These very partial formulations of an action programme cannot fully represent a total political creed, because the complexity of the problems in our country make up a gordian knot impossible to untie, yet at the same time essential to untie.

The changes which must be brought about are an impossible task for one man or one political party, whatever its strength. The task can only be accomplished by the whole of Polish society, because this is its own vital interest. Socialism cannot be decreed, it cannot be imposed by violence or decrees.

SOCIALISM IS THE EXPRESSION OF THE INTERESTS AND THE WILL OF THE WORKING PEOPLE.

Edmund Baluka, at his trial in Bydgoszcz 11-21 April 1983.

MAY PROTESTS

On May 1st, International Labour Day, and May 3rd, Poland's National Day, hundreds of thousands of Poles braved riot police, water cannon and arrest to take to the streets in massive demonstrations against the government.

In the city of Nowa Huta one demonstrator was killed. Throughout Poland demonstrators were injured.

The demonstrations were the biggest since last August, when demonstrations and rioting continued for several days as hundreds of thousands showed their support for the banned trade union Solidarity on the second anniversary of its foundation.

They show yet again that Solidarity is not dead, that the banning, the arrests, the jailings, have failed to crush the spirit of resistance of the Polish people.

USI "wreckers"

Since the education cuts were announced in the South there has been *no* national campaign by USI. Not even a press conference has been organised.

Why is this? There are many active students in the colleges willing to take up the issues and students generally certainly do not want these cuts.

The answer is a simple one, i.e. the Doris/Duffy leadership of USI. Students have no confidence in them, their crazy activity is rubbing off on local student unions, with the result that local student unions are being destroyed.

Students read in the newspapers that USI has called for a general strike, something which they themselves did not decide and in many cases probably never heard of. They also read that the President-elect of the union, Joe Duffy, says "the main point put by those against the general strike was that the idea was coming from the officers and that the ordinary students were over on the other side arguing against it. That's always been the case — we are the leadership; and we have to lead." (Irish Times, 14.4.83)

One important result of all this is that the work of active students is being destroyed by the Doris/Duffy leadership. When local students union leaders talk about education cuts to their members, they are increasingly regarded with the same animosity with which the USI leaders themselves are regarded because they are considered as local agents of Doris and Duffy.

Because of this, right-wing elements are gaining ground, especially in Dublin. People who have been seen as "militant" have been rejected by students and right-wingers have been elected to important positions in at least three colleges.

One of those in question went as far as suggesting "firing half the porters" to solve the cuts. Meanwhile other students, committed to a fight against the cuts, committed to a students' union have been split and demoralised, and USI has shown no way forward for a mass campaign.

So there is a total lack of confidence among students in USI. They do not feel that it is "their" union. It appears as an external, irrelevant body, which decides on strike action without consulting them.

Anyone who disagrees with the present leadership is labelled "pro-cut" or a "wrecker".

The real wreckers, I believe, are the present leadership, personified in Brendan Doris and Joe Duffy.

The only option, for the sake of the union, is for them to do the decent thing, admit they have made a mess of it, and resign. That would be the best way of showing us all that they really have our interests at heart.

The alternative is that instead of letting us fight the cuts, they will force ordinary students to spend their time kicking them out. If USI is to survive, Doris and Duffy will have to go.

T.L.

"Workers' Republic" is published by the League for a Workers' Republic, Irish Section of the Fourth International (ICR)
13 Lr. Camden St., Dublin 2.

NEVIN MUZZLES TRADES COUNCILS

"A key meeting in the trade union campaign for tax reform will be held today when representatives of trades councils from all over the Republic meet in Dublin to consider progress and future strategy," wrote Eugene McEldowney, Industrial Correspondent of "The Irish Times" on Saturday April 23rd.

It was no such thing — but Eugene McEldowney could be forgiven for thinking so, because ICTU General Secretary had announced that there would be a "special meeting" of the Co-ordinating Committee of Trades Councils to "consider progress and plan future action."

This did not happen. At the meeting of the Co-ordinating Committee which took place on April 23rd Nevin would not even allow a straw poll to be taken on action to pursue the tax campaign. Not even an agreed press statement could be issued — apart from what Nevin could dream up himself.

No wonder the representatives of the 19 trades councils present went home more frustrated and confused than when they arrived. They had just sat through several hours of Nevin telling them that he was not optimistic that Congress representations to the Government would have any immediate effect.

He also said that some of the 41 demands of the ICTU on evasion and avoidance were extreme and unlikely to be implemented.

He then said that the forms of the campaign would be necessarily limited because — wait for it — of the holiday season! Does he not know that most of us can't afford a holiday any more?

He tried to sidetrack the just demands of PAYE workers for more money in their wage packets by mouthing pious platitudes about unemployment.

He then put the tin hat on the whole charade when he outlined the following suggestions for action on behalf of the ICTU Executive Council:

1. All trades councils to organise May Day demonstrations on the theme of Jobs/Tax Equity/Protection of Social Services.
2. The E.C. to seek a meeting with the leaders of the four political parties in the Dail to seek their policies on these points.
3. Intensive lobbying of TDs and councillors locally.
4. Continuous attendance at politicians' clinics by large numbers of workers raising these issues.

These suggestions were seen by those at the meeting as totally inadequate and confirmed the suspicion that the ICTU were not prepared to prosecute the tax campaign to a successful conclusion, but wanted to divert it into useless protest action.

The worst feature of the meeting was that the Committee was powerless to give any direction to the Campaign, against the treacherous sell-out proposals of Nevin. The Coordinating Committee was revealed for what it is — a talking shop that is not even allowed to elect its own officers, let alone decide on any action.

But those at the meeting have not accepted this lying down. Two days later, a meeting of the South East Regional Trades Council unanimously agreed that the Coordinating Committee should be reorganised with its own standing orders and the right to elect its own officers, as a first step in trades councils throughout the country taking the tax campaign into their own hands.