

Socialist Worker

For a Workers' Republic and International Socialism 40p

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RICH FIDDLE TAX

BUT

NO RELIEF FOR PAYE WORKERS

FOR TWELVE years, the biggest Public Relations company in Ireland, Murray Consultants, fiddled its tax returns.

But that never stopped them getting government contracts worth tens of thousands of pounds.

They are part of the growing bunch of 'consultants' who can charge a fortune for the smallest amount of advice.

One of the jobs that Murray Consultants got was advising

the government how on to introduce self assessment of tax for businesses. And they really knew all about 'self-assessment'.

They had assessed themselves as having to pay little or no tax!

They even had the cheek to charge a staggering £88,000 for the advice. This little bill was of course picked up by the regular PAYE taxpayer.

Yet the directors of this company have not been branded as criminals. The "Hang 'em and Flog 'em"

Law and Order brigade who have been whipping up such an hysteria recently are only interested in the crimes of the poor.

None of the directors have served a day in jail.

Hidden

They were even allowed to have their names hidden under a Panamanian front company until some journalists from the *Irish Times* got hold of the story.

The whole episode shows

the difference between how the rich and the PAYE workers are treated.

There is no question of self-assessment for ordinary PAYE workers.

Instead every penny due in tax is gathered.

Yet when it comes to giving relief it is always the employers who gain. Quinn's last budget cut employers PRSI payments and reduced their Corporation Profits Tax.

For every 20 workers they employ, they will gain an extra £15,000. They will even

make a saving of £600 on their company cars.

Yet Quinn had nothing for PAYE workers. Despite numerous protests, PAYE workers are paying the vast majority of the income tax in this country. 40% of workers find themselves paying the 48% rate — because the rich pay so little.

It shows that all the talk of 'social partnership' since 1987, has been a joke.

At long last, the leaders of unions like SIPTU are beginning to say that. But we

should make sure that they are not just throwing shapes before getting into another rotten deal with this government.

The best way to do that is to start the ball rolling now for a 10% pay rise claim for all workers.

The nurses have shown the way with their huge rallies for higher pay.

But all workers deserve to make the some gains after years when scroungers like Murray Consultants have been reaping the benefits of Ireland's so called boom.

As Judge orders water disconnections "We should all keep up the non-payment"

On Thursday February 1, Rathfarnham District Court ordered that the water supply of Jim Campbell, a 74 year-old pensioner from Templeogue in South County Dublin, be disconnected.

Jim has refused to pay £105 in water charges for 1994 and 1995 to South Dublin County Council.

Jim and his wife both have health problems. Jim suffered a minor stroke two years ago and has been on medication ever since.

Problems

His wife has had a hip operation and has difficulty getting around.

Jim talked to *Socialist Worker* about his opposition to the charges and his determination to continue to fight.

"I'm not paying on principle. That's what I told the judge."

"I'm retired nine years now. I worked in Rowntree Macintosh and was paying taxes for forty years. They're still asking me to pay now."

But it's not just pensioners who aren't getting a fair deal according to Jim. Workers are in the same



PHOTO: JONATHAN PRATSCHE

Fighting pensioners: Eileen and Jim Campbell
position.

"I feel sorry for the PAYE workers. They're paying for everything, while people with money get tax amnesties. The beef tribunal was an absolute disgrace."

"Labour and Democratic Left have let us down very

badly. But people are getting very angry. I can see a revolution coming in this country."

So how far is Jim prepared to go?

"I will go the whole hog on this. Everyone should

Workers' action needed

The disgusting treatment of the Campbells in the courts shows clearly that legal battles will not defeat the charges.

But the mass non-payment campaign is as strong as ever. Thousands of people recognise that mobilising against disconnections can force the councils to back down, just like it did in Waterford two years ago.

The trade union movement must now be pushed to take up the issue of service charges and to organise action against them.

The court appearances can now only be a focus for building up local militancy. Any notion that the High Court can be used to win the fight should be scotched.

The only thing that this government will understand is mass militancy and workers' action.

keep up the non-payment. I don't like to see people downtrodden. I'm going to voice my opinion and if it means going to jail I'll do that."

inside the system

FINE GAEL NO FRIENDS OF WORKING CLASS:

Figures released about the Fine Gael Wicklow by-election campaign last year show what sort of stupidity our governing politicians get up to..

Instead of the projected £22,000, the party spent £40,000. They got 5,511 votes, which works out at £8 a vote.

£1,000 was spent on balloons for the final rally in Wicklow town, at which very few people turned up. Fine Gael lost the by-election pathetically.

THE SAD X FILES:

Who says some scientists are not thick? Members of America's prestigious SETI institute, who search for extra-terrestrial life, could well be.

The researchers, using their 64 metre radio telescope, report they found a distinctive radio signal at around the same time every day.

There was a lot of excitement - until it turned out to be coming from the microwave oven downstairs where a worker cooked his dinner.

GULF WAR RADIOS

An updated model of radios used by US forces during the Gulf War is being bought by the Irish Army.

The 400 radios are going to cost £5.5m and are be-

ing supplied through American company ITT - giving the Irish government some of the technology which helped slaughter more than 200,000 Iraqis.

WHEN WAS THE FIRST EVER STRIKE?

Were there any strikes in Egypt 4,750 years ago? Archaeologists have confirmed the labourers who built the pyramids were frequently worked to death.

The work was so hard many of them died with deformed bones and broken limbs.

An Egyptian dig recently

found the burial ground of hundreds of workers who helped to build the Great Pyramid for King Cheops 4,500 years ago.

Farmers make big bucks

Farmers are making big dosh - and it's mainly big farmers who are creaming it off.

Figures just released show farm incomes have topped the £2 billion mark for the first time. £766m of this was in di-

rect subsidies.

And if you include export subsidies on live cattle and dairy products, farmers get 50 percent of their income in subsidies.

Not content with this, hundreds of farmers are being investigated for "informally" supplying millions of gallons of milk to co-ops, with the money paid in non-taxable earnings.

New Scientist magazine reports that most of the workers' skeletons have abnormal outgrowths which were caused by chronic heavy labour.

Workers died on average between 30 and 35, while the nobles lived normally until 60.

An army of 36,000 labourers took 20 years to build Cheops's pyramid.

ANL protest at racial harassment



PHOTO: MICHAEL GALLAGHER

Local people crowd into Anti Nazi League meeting in Dublin's Phibsborough.

OVER 100 people crowded into an Anti Nazi League meeting in Phibsborough last week to discuss recent racist attacks in the area.

Laloo's Pharmacy and Laloo's shop, owned by two different families, were daubed with slogans such as "Blacks out of IRL" in January.

The pharmacy's locks were superglued and the Laloo's received threatening phone calls at night.

Gary Quinn of the Irish Refugee Council and Labour TD Joe Costelloe attacked the racist Irish immigration laws in their speeches.

ANL secretary Brid Smith said:

"It's evident that racist and fascist ideas are gaining credence around Europe and Britain. As part of a general

SPUC let into school

Recently over one hundred fifth year students in a large West Dublin community school were given an overdose of SPUC propaganda in religion classes.

Very graphic and biased leaflets produced by SPUC were handed out to the students to convince them of "the evils of abortion".

One of the parents complained angrily to the headmaster about the SPUC literature being distributed to the kids.

He pointed out to the principal that the kids were being fed "a one-sided and strongly Catholic argument". The headmaster's response was "as far as I'm concerned there is only one side".

Community schools are intended to be non-political, non-denominational but the Church holds positions on the boards of management, usually occupied by the local priests.

Socialist Worker spoke to one of the parents who said, "I believe the priests have an incredible amount of influence over policy and what is taught in the school."

The students were also subjected to watching a SPUC video on abortion. Several of them had to leave the class physically ill and extremely distressed.

Many more parents have now come forward to complain of intimidation of their kids.

It shows that the fight to separate church and state is far from finished.

fightback we should fight for people's hearts and minds."

Local people said they were disgusted with these attacks and wanted to show it

"We should all go up to the shop, every one of us, and show our solidarity, say 'we're sorry that this has happened to you', a speaker from the floor said.

A representative from a residents association asked the ANL to organise a meeting for school children in the area.

Names and phone numbers were gathered to organise future activity and a mass paint-out of the remaining graffiti.

we think

Church-State links still need to be unravelled

IN 1988 seven young girls aged between 11 and 12 were sexually abused by a Father Jim Grennan on the altar of the Monageer parish church near Enniscorthy, Co Wexford. The priest, who has since died, was supposed to be giving them instruction on how to make their Confirmation.

Despite the fact that a Garda investigation took place into the incident, neither the Church nor the Irish State did anything about it.

Instead the parents of the girls were intimidated into near silence. In the words of one of them, "there was very little that could be done against the might of the law and the church".

Modern

These events have happened in modern Ireland - not in the 1950s.

It shows that the whole issue of breaking the grip of the Church hierarchy on Irish law has by no means been solved.

The whole case is surrounded by a number of highly unusual procedures.

□ The Garda Sergeant who took statements from the girls was instructed to immediately send his hand-written notes to Garda headquarters in Wexford, without typing them up. When they were handed over, no direction to prosecute was issued. Since then the file on the case has now gone 'missing'.

□ A report from the South Eastern Health Board which confirmed that sexual abuse had taken place was sent to the local Bishop, Bishop Comiskey at his request.

Not only did he do nothing, but the abuser was allowed to return to his religious duties, two months after the incidents took place.

Socialist Worker can only draw the conclusion that there was a high de-

gree of co-operation between the church hierarchy and the Irish state, at least at local level, in the suppression of this case.

What is required now is a clear investigation into how that collusion took place.

In Italy in the 1980s, it was revealed that secret networks of right wing bigots linked officials of the church and state. The issue of whether such a network exists in Ireland needs to be scrutinised.

Mysterious

When Brendan Cuomiskey returns from his mysterious foreign trips, some will argue that he should not be subject to 'media harassment'.

We disagree. He should be subject to the most precise and detailed public questioning that is possible. Just as in the Fr Brendan Smyth case, there is still much that needs to be learnt about how the cover up happened.

GINO GALLAGHER was an able and articulate critic of what has been happening in the Irish peace process. As a result many have drawn the conclusion that he was murdered either by British intelligence or by republican opponents who wanted to silence his views.

We have no way of knowing. But the large turn-out to his funeral shows that many have come to have sympathy with his views.

It is not hard to see why. While the Tories encourage hard line Unionists in their ambitions for a Stormont style regime, working class Catholics are subject to the harassment of the sectarian RUC. There is still massive poverty as the few jobs on offer pay wages that directly reflect the fact that Catholic and Protestant workers are divided.

Offers

The latest answer that the republican leadership offers is to call for more US investment—with a barely spoken implication that it be located in the national areas of the North. On Gerry Adams latest trip to the US, he told his audience that "I'm not here to get money for guns, but I'm asking for in-



RUC attack mourners at Gino Gallagher's funeral

vestment for our economy" It is a pathetic shift. Capitalists generally do not need the advice of Adams or anyone else in spotting opportunities for making huge profits. But they do, like to line up people like Adams as supporters, all the better to get away with denying trade union rights.

The real question now is how an alternative to these disastrous politics can be built. Gino Gallagher offered one way. He saw through the duplicity and lies of the establishment and wanted more militancy. But the tragedy is that he felt he could only speak to, and for, the Catholic working class of

areas like West Belfast. Protestant workers were dismissed as reactionaries who will be always subject to loyalist ideas.

But if any settlement does eventually come out of all-party talks, it will be one that is designed to maintain sectarian structures.

It will harness that sectarianism to the cause of low wages and high profits for the multi-nationals that Adams is now inviting to the North.

That is why only a socialist perspective that seeks to break out of the ghettos that have been imposed on all workers in the North makes any sense.

Galway Rent Allowance victory

THE IRISH National Organisation of Unemployed has scored a small victory in having four out of five rent allowance categories significantly increased. On the eve of a planned picket on the Western Health Board, the rent rates were suddenly revised after discussion between officials and INOU representatives.

But despite the changes that were made single unemployed people who are in shared accommodation still get a rent allowance of just £21.90 per week regardless of

the cost of their rented accommodation. An INOU survey found that 43% of people on the dole or Community Employment schemes pay £40 or more in rent.

One woman told *Socialist Worker* that "My accommodation cost is so extortionate

that sometimes when I have bills to pay I'm forced to go to charities like the St. V. de P. for food vouchers. So much for de Rossa's Anti-Poverty strategy".

The Galway INOU is now stepping up its campaign to win further concessions.

Money for RUC but not for hospitals

Five of Northern Ireland's hospitals were unable to admit a heart attack patient because they did not have any beds. Ambulance staff treated Sarah Tosh from Bangor, Co Down for nearly two hours while trying desperately to find a hospital that would take her in.

The Ulster Hospital, the City, the Royal Victoria, the Ards and Whiteabbey Hospital all turned down requests to admit Sarah because

they were already overstretched.

Eventually the Ulster admitted her after moving another patient who was deemed to have "re-

covered sufficiently".

Meanwhile other hospitals are also facing considerable difficulties.

□ The Royal Children's Hospital was forced to close its doors for two weeks in January after an outbreak of bronchitis.

□ The Armagh Hospital's Accident and Emergency unit has been put on reduced opening hours.

□ The Strabane Hospital has been forced to close.

Meanwhile the Tories have announced that the annual budget for the RUC stands at £585 million. They have plenty of money for this bloated police force—but not enough for the health service.

Cashing in on security

Public buildings in Dublin are paying out fantastic sums to security firms.

One of the main beneficiaries is OSCAR, owned by two retired army commandants. The firm, which is believed to have Fianna Fail connections, has won the contract for most government buildings and hospitals. They even provide security for Dublin Castle and the Four Courts. (Why the police and the Special Branch cannot mind their own buildings remains a mystery.)

The security firm gets £9 an hour for every man employed. But the workers themselves get less than £4 an hour.

The uniforms they wear are often shoddy light weight seconds and are often not warm enough for outdoor duties.

Yet the men can be 'reported' for wearing a jumper to keep them warm.

Digging for gold

IRELAND's entrepreneurs have found a new way of getting their hands on loot.

Two companies, Glencar Explorations and Andaman Resources, put in an application to the Mayo County Council to dig for gold near Croagh Patrick.

The council voted democratically in 1992 by 22-8 against giving permission. Some objected for environmental reasons while others saw gold mining at Croagh Patrick as an affront to their religious beliefs.

But the mining companies have little interest in democracy. They don't care about the rea-

sons for any of the objections: they just wanted their money.

So they turned to the courts, to have Mayo Council fined for stopping them digging. Legal action has already cost the Mayo council £100,000. But now a fuller case is scheduled to go before the High Court.

According to a spokesperson for Mayo County Council the action could

"cost us in the order of £2 to £3 million if they are successful".

For that sort of a sum,

a small scheme of council houses could be built. Or a well staffed creche for working mothers could be set up. But this matters little to the mining companies.

They are determined to dig for gold—and if they don't get it in the soil, they know they can find it in the courts, which nearly always looks after them.

Not so clean F.G.

Fine Gael and Fianna Fail behave no differently when it comes to looking for money.

Dennis O'Brien from the ESAT company made a donation of £5,000 to the Fine Gael party.

Lo and behold, they also got the licence for the mobile phones.

When the fact of the donation was revealed in the *Irish Times* ESAT threatened to withdraw their advertising.

So much for the policy of transparency and openness.

As crime hysteria continues...

THE TRUTH BEHIND THE MEDIA HYPE

"Nobody wants to see anybody killed, but maybe a couple of dead gougers might send a worthwhile message to the rest of the scum who prey on the weak and the old."

This incitement to murder appeared in the editorial of the *Sunday World* on 28th January last.

If it had appeared in *Republican News* there would have been a wave of condemnation.

But in the current hysteria about crime it seems anything goes.

Politicians are terrified of being branded as 'do-gooders' or 'politically correct' by the tabloids.

The truth is that the media is using the recent spate of murders to exaggerate the crime problem out of all proportion.

The number of murders for 1995 is expected to be close to 30, up from 25 the previous year.

This is very low compared to most EU countries and the figure is only a fraction of the number of traffic fatalities in Ireland which always runs well into the hundreds.

Also, despite the hype there has been a huge decrease in attacks on the elderly in rural areas - from 432 in 1984, to 118 in 1988, and down to 69 in 1994. According to Pat Doyle of Muintir na Tire:

"The hysteria that's going around is doing a lot of damage to old people who will never be broken into."



Politicians shed crocodile tears for crime victims like Winnie O'Keefe (above)

Branding a whole community

Recently a judge in Sligo said Travellers who attacked the elderly 'brought shame on their community'.

Gardai investigating rural attacks in the West also pointed the finger at Travellers.

The media made constant references to the fact that some suspects were members of the Travelling community.

This disgusting behaviour is nothing short of an attempt to scapegoat a section of the Irish population.

In a statement the Irish Traveller Movement said, "the type of reporting we

have seen...has created fears among Travellers throughout the country of attacks or reprisals from individuals or groups".

The focus on Travellers has been justified on the basis of a racist myth that they 'protect their own'.

This is entirely hypocritical. When a Dublin based gang assaulted travellers in Bantry last year, local business people conspired to hide the identity of the person who had hired the thugs.

THE REAL CAUSES OF CRIME

Capitalism only treats certain types of action as criminal. It is legal for businessmen to speculate on the price of food—and push basic necessities beyond the reach of millions in Africa.

But it is illegal to take small items from supermarkets without paying.

Even its own laws are implemented selectively. No Irish building boss has ever been jailed -- although hundreds of workers have died as a result of their neglect of safety laws.

So recorded crime is only a small section of overall criminal behaviour in society. And the factor which best explains the rise or fall in this type of crime is unemployment.

The criminologist Paul O'Mahony has shown that between 1973 and 1988, "movements in indictable crime quite closely reflect movements in the number of unemployed".

In his book, *Crime and Punishment in Ireland*, O'Mahony said, "unemployment is the one

socio-economic indicator that has exhibited increases over the study period which are comparable to or exceed the increases in crime".

And he backs this claim with a wealth of information. For example, a staggering 80 per cent of prisoners were unemployed before their convictions. Only one in four stayed in school beyond the age of fifteen.

Denying the link between crime and unemployment serves the interests of the politicians. They can blame crime on 'bad individuals' while absolving themselves or their system of any blame.

The government sheds crocodile tears for the victims of crime. But real concern for those victims means fighting to end the system that causes crime in the first place.

Is bail the problem?

LAST YEAR the budget doubled the amount of money spent on prisons. This year Ruairi Quinn gave another £3.5 million to open more prison spaces.

The right wing hysteria has forced the government to go back on its decision not to open Castlerea prison.

But the 'hang 'em and flog 'em' brigade are still not satisfied. They now want to remove people's right to bail before they have been tried and convicted.

Nora Owen's plan to change the bail laws is



Nora Owen

based on the myth that a large number of crimes are committed by people out

on bail.

But in 1994 only one in every 23 offences were committed on bail.

Reducing the right to bail will simply give more power to the gardai over prisoners in their custody.

It would give them the power to intern people for months on end before allowing them a trial.

Detain

In the past when the police had the power to detain people for seven days, it led to several miscarriages of justice. In one case, the Wicklow Councillor, Nicky Kelly was systematically

beaten to help frame him for the Sallins train robbery.

Ill-treatment in Garda stations is still continuing. The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture visited Garda stations in 1993 and concluded that, "persons held in certain police establishments ... run a not inconsiderable risk of being physically ill-treated".

The Committee also recommended, "the provision of suitable education on human rights questions" to prevent ill-treatment.

Why should anyone trust a police force that has to be 'educated' against beating up people in custody?

Myths that serve the right

THE CRIME hysteria has been inspired by right wing commentators like Gay Byrne and the newspapers that are controlled by Tony O'Reilly.

At the moment they are giving two explanations for crime which happen to fit in with their right wing outlook.

Moral Values:

The anti-divorce fanatics of Muintir na hEireann claim that crime has risen because moral values have broken down in Ireland.

They got support from Dr Patricia Casey who links this absence of morals with a weakening of the authority of the Catholic Church.

But it is nonsense. Ireland in the 1950s was a place where child abuse was hidden and where domestic violence was not supposed to be spoken about.

If robbery has increased today it is not because of morality -- but simply because there are more opportunities to take moveable goods without being caught.

In the 1990s there are videos, TVs and stereos which can be robbed from houses where both parents might be working. This is a huge change from the 1950s where the main items of move-

able property might have been agricultural equipment.

This is why researchers like David Rottman from the ESRI have pointed out that it is the *situation* rather than the morality which has changed.

Aggression:

The media commentators are also trying to whip up a fear that there are hundreds of young men who are prone to instinctive aggression.

The *Irish Times*, for example, quoted the racist Professor Richard Lynn who argued that criminality is passed on genetically. Lynn claims there is a

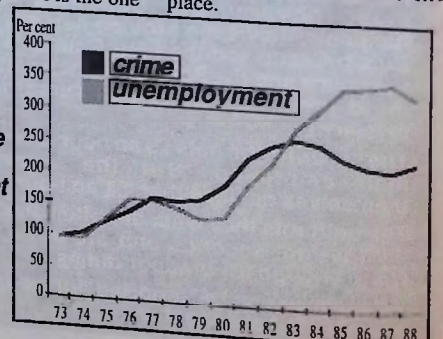
criminal underclass which is breeding faster than the rest of society.

But this does not explain why people who go to prisons come from a certain class.

It ignores the fact that people who are brought up in violent circumstances have a greater propensity to use violence than those brought up in comfortable upper class homes.

Right wingers like Lynn always want to find scapegoats for the failings of capitalism. This is why he tried to point the finger at black people—and at individuals who have been messed up by the system he supports.

The table shows the relationship between crime rates and unemployment between 1973 and 1988



Russian miners force Yeltsin to concede

by Russian Socialist

STRIKING RUSSIAN miners returned to work this week having forced Boris Yeltsin's government to make big concessions.

Workers insisted they would restart the action on 1 March if Yeltsin breaks his promises.

A strike by hundreds of thousands of miners in neighbouring Ukraine over the same issues, coordinated to take place with their workmates in Russia, continued on Monday.

Many workers in other Russian industries have been given new hope by the miners and are discussing their own action.

Among the gloom about economic and political collapse in Eastern Europe, the strikes show the way forward.

The 500,000 Russian miners walked out on Thursday of last week demanding immediate payment of wages that have been withheld for up to four months.

One striker said, "To be a miner today means being a non-person. We don't exist any more."

It was the biggest miners' strike for five years, closing 161 pits, 32 open cast collieries and involving 80 percent of the mining workforce.

As they marched out strikers' placards read, "Russia is sick. Its fate is in the balance. This is our last chance to defend our future. All out strike, scabs out of our ranks."

Miners earn an average of £120 a month in a country where most prices are similar to Britain. Many live in small wooden cottages and have survived since last autumn from food they grew

on allotments in the summer.

The anger is not confined to wages. Yeltsin is bent on closing 140 of Russia's 240 mines if he is re-elected in June.

With his popularity plummeting after the bloody end to the hostage crisis in Chechnia, Yeltsin had to give in to the workers.

February is the coldest month of the year and the strike caused almost immediate power cuts in some areas.

Serious

Miners were careful to maintain emergency coal supplies to hospitals, but were serious about their threat to black out the rest of Russia.

After a few days of a solid action the government promised to provide £85 million of back pay and a further £1.5 billion to fund the industry for the rest of the year.

Not all miners were happy with the settlement.

"I am not sure we should have returned to work. We have heard promises before but we have not seen the money," said a miner in the Arctic town of Vorkuta.

The miners' action coincided with a three day strike by 200,000 teachers demanding back pay. One Moscow teacher said, "It is no longer enough to go to work to get paid. Now you have to stop work to get your



"Market reforms" have done nothing to halt the accelerating collapse in living standards.

wages. This is the only way left to us."

Armaments

Air traffic controllers announced that they will restart a strike soon that was launched in December but suspended shortly afterwards.

There is simmering resentment over back pay among health workers, workers in nuclear power

plants, armaments workers and members of the armed forces.

A Russian MP said last week, "The miners could start a chain reaction that would bring about an emergency situation. It is enough to make a concession to one industry and others will come in for the same."

Miners strikes in 1993 sparked widespread action throughout Russian industry.

Many Russians lose illusions

MANY RUSSIAN workers no longer trust any of the politicians. Some are beginning to rely on their own activity.

Djamila Khalilova, a miner's wife, told reporters, "We don't believe in Yeltsin or Zyuganov (the Communist Party leader). You can only believe in yourself."

Zyuganov, who is the leading candidate in opinion polls for the presidency, insists that he is not opposed to the ideas behind the economic "reforms" that Yeltsin and the pro-marketisers have launched.

He is worried only that the pace of change may encourage too much opposition.

While miners were on strike the head of the Communist Party was dining with bankers and businessmen in the Swiss ski resort of Davos.

He promised the bosses, "Our party is full of people who can create the sort of authoritarian organisation which can enable business to be done."

In 1989 and 1991 miners' strikes helped weaken Gorbachev and propel Yeltsin into power. But few miners support him now.

Workers suffered low wages and terrible conditions under the state capitalist system before the collapse of Stalinism. The "market reforms" have done nothing to halt the accelerating collapse in living standards.

When they were last on strike many miners called for privatisation of the pits. This time there were no such demands.

Average incomes fell by 16 percent last year and, despite official pronouncements that the economy has "turned the corner", bosses are pessimistic and expecting the slump to worsen.

Response

The strikes now come as the government is reeling from the response to the slaughter carried out by Russian troops in Chechnia. There is widespread public disgust at the brutal military intervention.

The governor of Nizhny Novgorod, a Yeltsin appointee, last week presented Yeltsin with one million signatures (over a quarter of the city's population) calling for troops to be pulled out of Chechnia immediately.

Many workers are making links between their poverty and the massive war expenditures.

Moscow's most popular daily newspaper calculated that the cost of the war so far would have built 1,500 hospitals, 2,500 schools or 180,000 flats.

During the miners' strike, Viktor Semyonov, head of an independent union of Vorkuta miners said, "if the finance ministry has managed to find money for the continuation of the war in Chechnia, let it find some for the miners."

In Chechnia itself between 15,000 and 40,000 protesters marched through the capital Grozny last weekend demanding talks on Russia's withdrawal.

But again the Communist Party refuses to back protests. Zyuganov says that withdrawing Russian troops would cause "instability".

Oil wells blockaded in Mexico

A NEW wave of protests has hit Mexico as the corrupt Party of Institutionalised Revolution reels from crises to crises.

Thousands of protesters are blockading 51 oil wells to demand compensation for peasants whose land has been damaged by drilling.

The protests are taking place in the Tabasco province where there is considerable anger over a rigged election which gave victory in the Governorship to the PRI candidate.

The oil wells are owned by the state company, Pemex.

The company has had to pay for huge advertisements to deny that it has siphoned off money to PRI candidates.

But few believe that this is the case.

According to one protester, the government would need "20,000 sol-

diers to control this movement, because there are 200,000 of us willing to wage a peaceful struggle for our rights."

The protests have

been backed by the local leadership of the Party of Democratic Revolution.

Protests

But nationally the

same party is extremely wary of the actions.

The government has embarked on the policy of launching a 'peace process' and is hoping to bring as many opposi-

tion parties into talks with it as possible.

The militancy of the new protests is cutting across the policy of co-operation with the corrupt Mexican government.

SPAIN GOES TO POLLS

SPAIN is bracing itself for a general election on March 3 which could see a return to power of the heirs of General Franco.

The right wing Popular Party of Jose Maria Aznar are scoring 40% in the opinion polls compared to 30% for the Socialist Party and 12% for the more radical United Left.

There is mass disillusionment with the Socialist Party—the equivalent of the Irish Labour Party—who have been in government for nearly a decade and a half.

Unemployment in

Spain has soared to 40% for under 29 year olds.

The response of the Socialist party has been to launch more and more attacks on workers.

In one measure, dubbed the 'father and son' scheme, they opened the way for yellow pack pay rates in the public sector. But these measures have done nothing to solve the jobs crisis.

The leader of the Socialist party, Felipe Gonzalez is almost certainly implicated in the campaign of assassination against Basque militants.

Death squads operating under such names as 'Hitler's division' gunned down Basque separatists

in the mid 1980s.

It now transpires that the orders for these death squads came directly from the top.

A Minister in Gonzalez government is already on trial for the issue and the trail of evidence increasingly leads back to Gonzalez himself.

Implicated

Initially the right wing made a lot of the scandal, but now they want to close the issue.

The reason is that they too knew about the operations of the death squads and were also implicated in their activities.

A shift to the right will do nothing for Spanish workers.

As Major stalls the Peace Process

In 1968, Eamonn McCann played an important role in the Civil Rights movement which opposed the Stormont regime. Today he is a member of the Derry branch of the Socialist Workers Party and has played a prominent role in helping to organise non-sectarian marches by the Derry Trades Council. Here he talks to CATHERINE CURRAN about what Major's plan for an elected assembly in the North really means.

SW: What will be the effect of the Tories' plan for elections if it goes ahead?

Eamonn McCann: The real problem with this proposed election is that there will only be one issue involved and that is the constitutional issue.

Any other matters such as the health service or unemployment simply won't figure.

The point is to elect negotiating teams to sort out the national question and therefore this will be, in terms of its political content, the single most divisive election the North has ever seen.

The likelihood is that there will be in fact two separate elections, one in each community with different parties in competition and each party trying to outbid one another as to which will give the most vigorous and uncompromising expression to the communal identity of the Catholics and the Protestants respectively.

This is a recipe for division and sectarianism.

The other problem with it is that it'll be an election held entirely on a 6-county basis and, conducted as it will be on the single issue of the constitution, it will yield a unionist majority more or less automatically.

That will be taken by unionist leaders as an endorsement of old-style majority rule. It will therefore formalise the problem rather than leading to any solution. So all in all it won't aid democratic expression and it won't deepen democracy. It will provide no opportunity whatsoever for people to express themselves politically in a non-sectarian way.

SW: What's the mood on the ground among the republicans?

EM: There's certainly a mood among working class Catholics that form the bulk of republican support that under no circumstances will a return to Stormont be tolerated. The very big turnout at the Bloody Sunday march in Derry was an expression of defiance and determination not to go back to the situation before the Troubles.

On the other hand, there is also puzzlement and confusion about where events are leading. There is a concern, the beginning of a questioning of the political strategy of the nationalist parties in the peace process and some degree of political disillusionment with the republican leadership among their own rank and file.

Of course what's important in that situation is that socialists are arguing with them that the

New assembly foster secta

alternative is not a return to armed struggle, to go backwards. The alternative is a return to class politics.

SW: What is the strategy of the leadership of Sinn Fein in this situation?

EM: The Sinn Fein leadership strategy is to keep the coherence of the pan-nationalist alliance around them, and not to lose contact with the Dublin government, the SDLP, the Irish-American lobby and the other components of the pan-nationalist alliance.

Their strategy is to try and use the pressure which that alliance can exert to try and get as significant concessions as possible from the British and to get the fullest expression of the nationalist identity in the institutions of the state in any new settlement.

The problem is that it's very unlikely that the pan-nationalist alliance is going to deliver for them the kind of changes which come close to what some of their rank and file have expected and changes which can be regarded as commensurate with the energy, pain and suffering which they have put into the struggle this past 25 years.

SW: What effect has the much publicised Mitchell Commission had on the peace process?

EM: Major's rejection of the Mitchell plan was presented as a coup for David Trimble in particular.

The corollary of that is that the Mitchell plan became shimmered with green politics in the minds of many people.

But the truth of the matter is that the Mitchell plan demanded very difficult things of the Republican leadership.

Principle E of the Mitchell plan by implication demanded that the Provo leadership accept a definition of "consent" which is very close to the unionist definition. It would have committed them to accepting the outcome of the talks process.

Everyone apart from themselves has agreed in advance that any settlement that comes into the talks will have to be endorsed by a referendum in the North. That means that the Provos would go into the negotiations accepting a Northern veto. And a Northern veto and a unionist veto are not very different things.

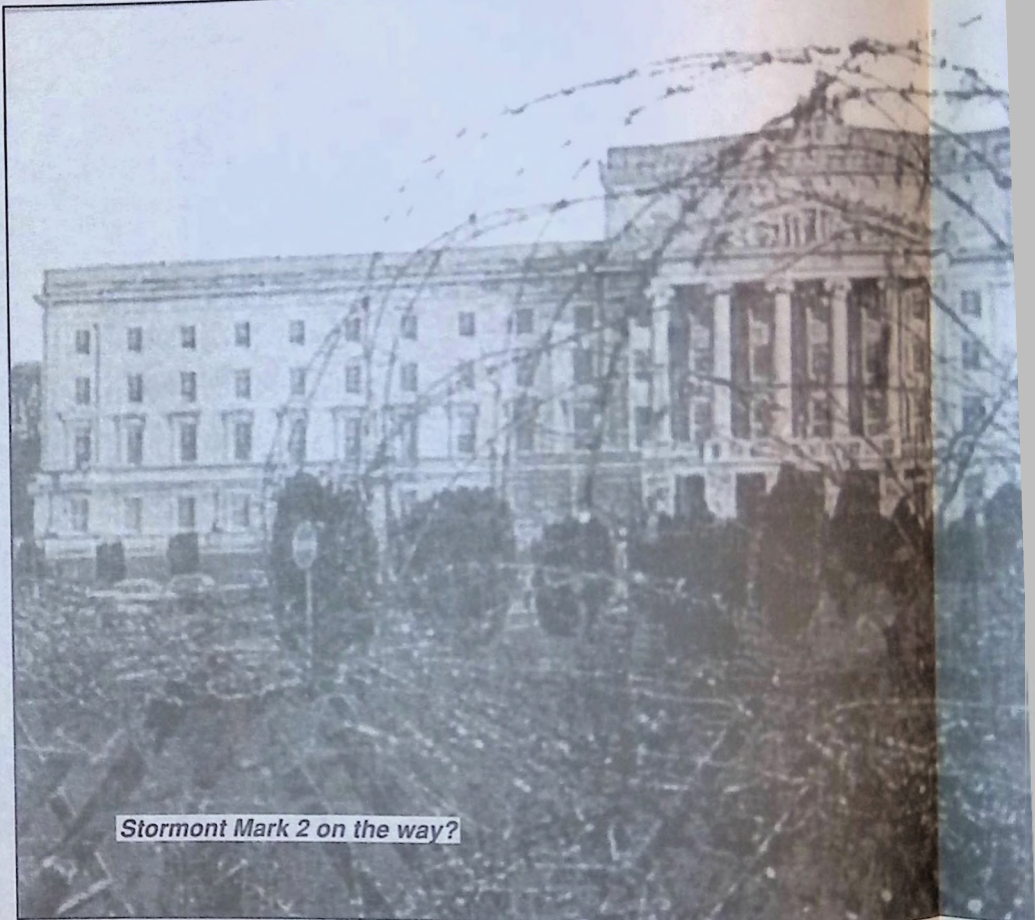
The Mitchell plan didn't really give the Adams group within the republican movement very much. But what the brouhaha has done is that, strangely, it has made it easier for Adams to sell the Mitchell plan to his rank and file.

SW: If things keep going this way what do you envisage a year or two down the road?

EM: Well, the shape of a settlement that the ruling classes North, South and in Britain, would be happy with is beginning to emerge very clearly.

The Forum report says that the North shall remain constitutionally part of the UK for the foreseeable future.

That represents a defeat for the Republic-



Stormont Mark 2 on the way?

can movement. The Republican struggle was waged to detach the North from the UK. That is not going to happen.

There will be established, and almost certainly accepted by everyone including the republican leadership, the notion that any future change in the constitutional status of the province will depend on a vote of all the people in the North. That is copperfastening partition.

In exchange there are going to be North-South institutions. These will cover mainly economic matters—tourism, attraction of investment, fisheries, and so forth—highly non-contentious matters—and the shape of the settlement is going to be around these North-South institutions.

This will be the Irish dimension and ultimately the Southern vote will merely be to endorse what has been already agreed in the North.

Ten years ago it was common ground between Republicans and Socialists that a new Ireland would involve fundamental change and transformation in Southern Irish society as well as in the North.

Republican leaders including Gerry Adams said frequently that if a settlement would leave the South as it is—they

wouldn't contemplate it. We don't hear that anymore. We don't hear anything anymore about change in the South and in fact the most conservative elements, like John Bruton, are indeed working with the Provos.

This tells you how far the Provos have detached what Connolly called "the national question" from the social question. The two are now completely detached. As far as the Republican leadership is concerned a settlement of the national question has got no social implications for Southern Irish society at all.

So we're seeing a settlement which explicitly leaves capitalism intact. We will have an adjustment to the situation in the North to give some semblance of equality to Catholics in the institutions of the state, and some acknowledgement of Catholic identity, but most of all, the Catholic working classes and the Protestant working class will make no advance.

SW: How will this type of settlement impact on the basic divisions between Catholic and Protestant workers?

EM: We've already seen Gerry Adams before he left for the United States complain-

ing that too much ing in to what we resented by Union gauges for Protesta

At the same time to set up the Ulster work (UCAN) to a are now being depr and social provisi "corporate plan" f areas.

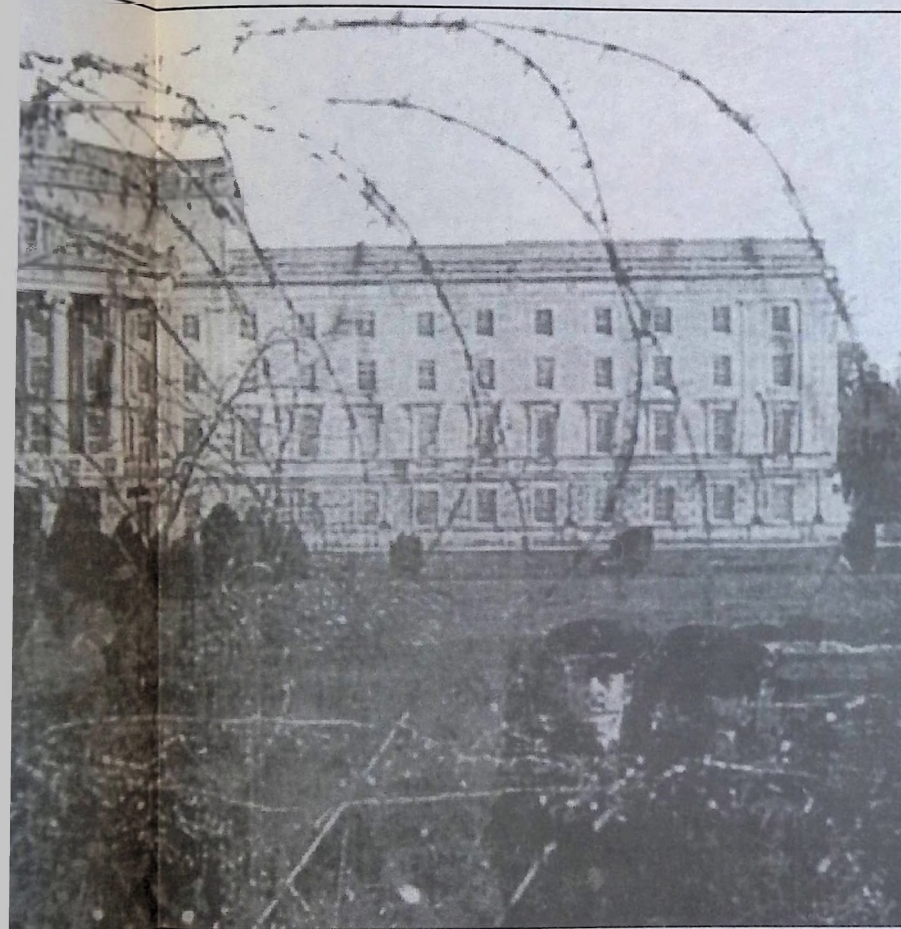
So here you have saying for years: it taken by the republ people who called t unionist side was t competition betwe estant sections of nomic competition w constitutional com actly that happenin

SW: So basic Catholics and are going to be

EM: Well yes, the ised, there's no que be institutionalisec anymore about endi

cess again...

Assembly will staritarianism



stant young people.

And in the health service as well there's quite a lot of activity across the sectarian divide. There's a lot of struggle against privatisation.

But we're fighting all the time against the tendency to handle even these matters in a sectarian way. There's always someone who'll say well if we are going to lose 2,000 ACE jobs—and ACE jobs are rotten jobs anyway but we have to defend what crumbs we have—we have to ensure that Protestants—or alternatively Catholics—accept their fair share of the pain, we want equal distribution of misery. This comes up again and again.

There's Gerry Adams on the one hand and Roy Beggs, the Unionist MP for E. Antrim on the other and both demanding that particular factories go to their constituency and complaining alternatively that Protestants are getting an unfair share or that Catholics are getting an unfair share.... The potential for activity which can unite the working class is certainly there but at all times there's a struggle against the tendency to impose the sectarian division.

SW: *The key to fighting this sectarian tendency is establishing a minority in both sections of the working class who have socialist politics. How do socialists in the North argue?*

EM: Well, the socialist argument has to be that the peace process can't deliver to the working class. We do not wish to see the armed struggle returning but the process which has been put in place as the alternative to the armed struggle is clearly not going to deliver anything worthwhile to working class people. It's not going to advance their position.

All that it's going to do is perhaps to inch forward the position of the Catholic community as a whole within Northern Ireland while leaving the levels of deprivation virtually untouched.

If you balanced it out and put equal shares of misery between the Catholic and Protestant working class in the North, the Protestants would lose a bit and the Catholics wouldn't gain all that much.

At the same time the peace process is not going to end in the dismantlement of the Northern Ireland State.

So the institutions which have generated sectarianism down through the years are going to remain intact. We're going to have a society at least as divided as ever.

What socialists have to do is to argue against all that; to argue for class politics, for working class unity against the state and the institutions of the state. And to work within that by involvement within whatever struggles arise.

They talk about managing it. They talk about each side "respecting the other's traditions" and not encroaching on each other's territory.

They make an equation of political morality between the two traditions as if the Orange Order, King Billy, Edward Carson, Lord Brookeborough, was a mirror image of the tradition of Wolfe Tone and James Connolly. One almost hears now that one is being aggressive against the Protestant working class when one denounces the rotten traditions of Orangeism.

What Republicans say nowadays is that they just want it to stay within its own areas. "Just don't march in our areas."

Of course the socialist argument is that working class Protestants shouldn't be associated with the rotten tradition at all—we try to provide alternatives to it.

SW: *Is there a real possibility of working class unity now?*

EM: Well, there are small stirrings—the attack on ACE jobs at the moment in Derry for example.

There was a march the last week of January at which there were Catholic and Prot-

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ing that too much new investment was coming in to what were, as he put it, "areas represented by Unionist MPs". This is code-language for Protestant areas.

At the same time we have people working to set up the Ulster Community Action Network (UCAN) to argue that Protestant areas are now being deprived of inward investment and social provision and to get together a "corporate plan" for specifically Protestant areas.

So here you have what socialists have been saying for years: the implications of the line taken by the republican movement and those people who called themselves radicals on the unionist side was that you'd have economic competition between the Catholic and Protestant sections of the working class. Economic competition would replace political and constitutional competition. And we see exactly that happening now.

SW: *So basically divisions between Catholics and Protestant workers are going to be made worse?*

EM: Well yes, they're going to be formalised, there's no question about that. They'll be institutionalised. Hardly anyone talks anymore about ending the sectarian division.

Behind the Headlines 'EURO' UNRAVELS

Later this year, the Irish government will take over the Presidency of the European Union. It had been hoped that the meetings held under its auspices would put the final pieces in place for a European single currency.

But now there are signs that the great 'Euro' experiment is beginning to unravel.

It now looks as though even Germany, the economic powerhouse of Europe, may not qualify for the Single European Currency.

The main reason for this is that its economy is already showing signs of a major slow-down.

Deficit

The main test each country has to pass to qualify for the 'Euro' is that, by 1997, the government deficit—the difference between what the government spends and what it receives in revenue—should be no more than 3 per cent of the total output of the economy, known as GDP.

But Germany's deficit now stands at 3.6 per cent of GDP and economic growth is expected to slow down to 1.5 per cent this year.

The response of Germany's rulers to this crisis is to launch new attacks on welfare and the public sector.

The economics minister, Guenter Rexrodt, has announced a reduction in early retirement rights, job losses in the public service and a speed-up in privatisation plans.

This sounds exactly like the Juppe plan that provoked the recent revolt in France.

Unfortunately the leaders of IG Metall, Germany's biggest trade union, have accepted wage restraint in an 'alliance for jobs' with the employers.

But if the French

strikes take off again they could inspire a similar upsurge against German Chancellor Helmut Kohl.

The threat of a new revolt in France has led to splits among French politicians.

The parliamentary speaker Philippe Seguin has argued that postponing monetary union would not be a disaster.

President Jacques Chirac and Prime Minister Alain Juppe have insisted that France will stay on course and pass the 'Euro' test.

But staying on course means stepping up the attacks on welfare and public services.

Every government in Europe is committed to these policies.

Not only can this provoke huge revolts but it now appears that austerity policies themselves have led to an 'economic pause', bringing Europe close to a new recession.

The bosses' *Financial Times* has admitted that unemployment and public spending cuts are contributing to a lack of consumer confidence.

The paper quoted a Belgian economist who said:

"There is a real risk of a vicious cycle developing where consumer pessimism causes companies to cut their investments, which has a broader impact."

Put simply, if governments slash welfare and employers cut wages workers will have less money to spend on consumer goods.

Companies will therefore shy away from investing and growth will slow down even further.

A recent survey published in Brussels showed that confidence among both

businesses and consumers deteriorated throughout the EU during December.

A City of London economist has produced a report showing that public spending cuts are accompanied by a rise in interest rates leading to slower growth in the economy.

This results in the economy's output, or GDP, being smaller than originally expected.

If GDP is smaller, the amount of government spending comes to represent a bigger percentage of GDP than originally planned.

The magic 3 per cent becomes like a mirage—as soon as governments have it in their sights economic growth slows down again and the mirage moves further away.

Crisis

The crisis in the main economies means that only Ireland and Luxembourg are now set to qualify for monetary union.

The Irish government is worried that delaying the deadline might allow enough time to expose the shallow nature of this country's economic 'boom'.

Dick Spring has called on his fellow foreign ministers in the EU not to be "unnerved by a reflex of pessimism".

"We ought to adhere to our goals and approach them with a realistic sense of purpose", said Spring.

In other words the Labour leader is urging Kohl and Juppe to keep up their policies of wrecking millions of lives.

Now we know what Labour really meant when they said they were 'good Europeans'.

by DAVID SCOTT

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Karl Liebknecht 1871-1919



No to the war! Yes to revolution

GERMAN SOCIALIST Karl Liebknecht stands out as one of the most inspirational figures in the history of the socialist movement. He spent much of his life on the extreme left of the Social Democratic Party, the German equivalent of the Labour Party, before breaking from it and helping to found a revolutionary organisation.

He was murdered along with his life-long collaborator, Rosa Luxemburg, on 15 January 1919 during the German Revolution. Liebknecht came to international prominence at the start of the First World War in August 1914. The SPD, like other socialist parties across Europe, had agreed at congress after congress that it would oppose any such war and would launch joint activity with workers in other countries to stop it.

As late as 25 July 1914 the SPD leaders issued an appeal to the working class which read, "The ruling classes which in peacetime oppress you, despise you, exploit you, want to use you as cannon fodder.

"Everywhere the cry must ring in the deserts, 'We want no war! Long live international brotherhood!'"

Yet on 4 August the SPD voted in the German parliament to allow the government to raise money necessary to fund the war.

Liebknecht and fellow left-winger Rosa Luxemburg spent frantic months trying to organise those in the SPD who opposed the war. It was in vain. On 2 December 1914 there was a second vote in parliament to grant the government more money for the war. This time Liebknecht stood out and voted against the war credits. Every other SPD MP voted with the government. News of Liebknecht's opposition spread across Europe. It provided an inspiration for those socialists, like Lenin and the Bolsheviks in Russia, who were fighting against the war and against their own bosses.

Spartacus

At the beginning of 1916 Liebknecht and his fellow thinkers decided to launch an organisation which would draw together the most left wing elements of the SPD.

They called it Spartacus after the slave who led the legendary revolt against Rome.

In order to put forward genuinely socialist policies it was necessary to break from the SPD.

When Liebknecht was later criticised for lacking "unity" with the SPD he replied, "Unity! Who could yearn and strive for it more than we? Unity which gives the working class the strength to carry out its historic mission.

"But not all unity breeds strength. Unity between wolf and lamb makes the lamb a meal for the wolf. Only forces pulling in the same direction are made stronger through unity. We strive to combine forces that pull in the same direction."

The Spartacus group called an anti-war demonstration for May Day



REVOLUTION on the streets. Workers in Berlin in 1919 fighting the Government forces.

1916. About 10,000 workers turned up, making it the first sizeable protest against the war.

He opened his speech with: *"Down with the war! Down with the government!"* He was immediately arrested.

He was found guilty of treason and sentenced to two and a half years hard labour by a military court.

But discontent with the war was growing. Over 50,000 munitions workers struck on the day of his sentencing.

As the war dragged on, more and more workers and soldiers became angry and bitter at the terrible losses at the front and the declining living standards at home.

In October 1918 large numbers of workers spontaneously began to demonstrate against the government.

The government was forced to release Liebknecht.

In November sailors at the ports of Kiel and Wilhelmshaven mutinied against their officers. It sparked off a wave of mutinies and strikes across Germany. Hundreds of thousands of workers took to the streets and at the front soldiers simply put down their guns and refused to fight.

Within days the Kaiser (king) was forced to abdicate and the government resigned. Workers' revolt had ended the First World War.

But who was now going to rule Germany? Everywhere workers and soldiers set up democratic councils which organised the strikes and mutinies in each locality. In many areas these councils began to take over some of the functions of government—policing, food distribution, setting prices.

Power essentially lay in the hands of the elected workers' and sailors' councils which had mushroomed across Germany.

Liebknecht and the Spartacists argued for the old state to be dismantled and for the councils to take power nationally. But they had only a few thousand supporters.

Although millions of workers who had previously voted for the bosses' parties were moving leftwards, most looked to the best known socialist party, the SPD.

Breakaway

Many others looked to a left breakaway from the SPD called the Independent Social Democratic Party. The Independents had broken away in 1917. The SPD leaders mobilised trade union and party officials to dominate the local councils. They fought to break up the movement and hand power back to parliament. The Independents believed the councils should continue but should exist alongside parliament and the old state machine. They formed a government with the SPD.

Liebknecht hammered home the need for more fundamental change. At a meeting of the Berlin Workers' and Soldiers' Council he brilliantly denounced the SPD leaders,

"The counter-revolution is already on the march.

Danger threatens not only from those circles that up to now have held the reins—the demagogues, big landowners, capitalists, imperialists, monarchists, princes, and generals—but also from those who today support the revolution, but were still opposing it the day before yesterday."

But most workers could not believe that their left sounding SPD leaders wanted to keep the bosses in power.

Liebknecht did not have a large organised force of supporters who could win over their fellow workers.

Hope in defeat

THE BOSSES and the SPD leaders knew that power could not be shared between workers and capitalists. They moved quickly to provoke battle before the revolutionaries had a chance to deepen their roots in the working class.

A clash over the sacking of a well respected left winger, Emil Eichorn, rapidly became a major battle.

The Communist party, which Luxemburg and Liebknecht founded at the beginning of January 1919, argued against a premature attempt at revolution.

But most of its members were very inexperienced. They could not carry out the difficult task of taking part in the movement while waiting until the left was stronger before starting a frontal battle for power.

Overthrow

Even Liebknecht got carried away. He issued a call to overthrow the government.

Rosa Luxemburg and other leaders pulled him back to earth but the confusion left revolutionary workers isolated.

The January struggle ended in defeat as the government mobilised the army to crush the rising. The SPD leaders unleashed bloody repression.

The SPD's daily newspaper "Vorwärts" published a poem on 13th January which incited the murder of Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht and Karl Radek.

Liebknecht and Luxemburg were arrested and taken for "questioning". A soldier smashed their skulls.

Vorwärts announced that Liebknecht had been shot trying to escape.

In the following weeks the government moved to re-establish the state based on the same people who had run it before and during the war.

But over the next four years there were repeated upsurges of workers' struggle. Many workers drew the revolutionary conclusions Liebknecht had argued for.

The night before his murder Liebknecht recognised that the January battle was lost but he believed that the fight for socialism was far from over.

He wrote an article entitled *"Despite Everything!"*

He looked forward to the day when large numbers of workers would sense their own power:

"Those who were beaten today have learnt. They have been cured of the delusion that they could depend upon their leaders. From the bitter lessons of this week the motto that the liberation of the working class can only be achieved by the working class itself has acquired a deeper meaning."

GUATEMALA

US and British backed murderers

THREE YEARS ago Jennifer Harbury's husband, Efrain Bamaca, "disappeared" in the Central American country of Guatemala.

Jennifer, an American lawyer, went on hunger strike last year to find out what happened.

She forced the US government to admit Efrain was kidnapped and murdered on the orders of Colonel Julio Alpirez of the Guatemalan military.

When Jennifer visited Britain some months ago expecting to meet officials from the Foreign Office she found they suddenly pulled out of a meeting.

It was no wonder. The Tory government which preaches daily about the need to de-commission weapons was forced to admit that they also had been arming and training the Guatemalan military. The regime's death squads have murdered an estimated 150,000 people in the last 15 years.

The American government has armed and trained the death squad throughout that time.

Colonel Alpirez was on the payroll of the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) when he ordered Efrain Bamaca's murder.

He is a graduate of the US military's school of the Americas in Fort Benning, Georgia.

The graduates of this "school" have a chilling record.

They are the people who have run brutal regimes and death squads across Central America-- from El Salvador to Haiti.

The US military organised a coup in Guatemala in 1954. The elected government had planned mild reform which threatened the profits of the giant American corporation, United Fruit.

Since then the US has backed a succession of regimes in the country which have meted out savage repression.

The repression has provoked resistance. Much of that has been a fight for land and other rights by native Indians.

GENOCIDE

They are the descendants of the original Mayas and form the majority of the Guatemalan population.

The Guatemalan military, backed by the US embassy, has attempted to crush all opposition.

In the 1980s the right wing pro-government newspaper El Grafico had to admit, "The type of genocidal annihilation that is taking place in the Indian zones of the country is truly horrifying."

Throughout the decade bodies of union activists were routinely found on the streets of the capital.

The repression grew so blatant that the US tried to engineer a civilian facade to the Guatemalan regime and

"Guatemalan military and police are being trained in British military establishments"

officially cut off military aid in 1990.

But little changed in Guatemala, as Jennifer Harbury's campaign has revealed. Her husband was a native Indian and a commander in the Guatemalan guerrilla resistance.

He attended peace talks in Mexico with the Guatemalan regime in 1992. On his return to Guatemala he was tortured and murdered.

His murderer, Colonel Alpirez, has now been pushed off the CIA payroll-- though with a \$40,000 "golden handshake".

The outrage the case provoked has forced the Clinton administration to sack two senior CIA officials. But the killing continues.

THUGS

In February this year the bodies of 22 young men were found on the streets of the capital. Each had been killed with a single bullet to the head.

Over the last year 24 trade union leaders have been assassinated.

If the US is now too embarrassed to openly train and arm the thugs responsible for such atrocities, surrogates are at hand.

One is Israel which has armed and trained some of Central America's most unsavoury regimes.

And now Israel has been joined by Britain and its defence establishment under its Minister for Defence, Michael Portillo.

Guatemalan military and police are being trained in British military establishments such as Sandhurst. The British government has just lifted a ban on sales of military equipment to Guatemala.

"We are supporting the peace process," says a British foreign office spokesman.

They and the US say the same the world over. The record of their involvement in Guatemala should be a warning to anyone tempted to take such words at face value-- from Belfast to Bosnia.

Susan O'Connell

Macbeth:

Violence of the ruling class in crisis

Reviewed by
Richard Boyd Barrett

AT THE time *Macbeth* was written English society was in turmoil.

Following the death of Elizabeth I uncertainty reigned in England as various sections of the nobility scrambled for power.

At the same time the rising middle classes were increasingly frustrated by a feudal regime that denied them political power.

The official view was that kings were directly appointed by God and the hierarchy of society was part of his plan. However, many rejected this view subscribing instead to the radical ideas of those like Nicolo Machiavelli.

Machiavelli argued that power was achieved by force and fraud. Religion and the ideology of the divine right of kings was just a cover used to justify social privilege.

Such ideas were heavily censored. The playwright Christopher Marlowe was assassinated by government agents for expressing such views.

But the plays of the day still reflect the new conflict of ideas. Machiavellian characters and ideas figured highly in the drama of the time. To get around censor-



The Abbey's production by and large does justice to the complexity of the play

ship the Machiavellian villain was usually punished in the end.

However, often the plays carried the veiled suggestion that those who ruled society operated on Machiavellian principles themselves.

Macbeth is such a play. In it Shakespeare reflects the sense of crisis in English society and the tensions between the world views of the different classes that made

up his audience.

A "noble" warrior, Macbeth, is tempted by a combination of fate, personal ambition and the promptings of his wife to kill Duncan, the king. He does so and replaces him as monarch.

The murder triggers a spiral of blood-letting, madness and chaos that continues until Macbeth is killed, and the king's son is installed in his

"rightful" place.

At one level the play suggests that anyone who challenges the appointed social order will suffer the consequences.

Ambiguous

More traditional interpretations of the play tended to support this conservative view. In reality, however, the play is far more ambiguous.

The darkness and violence of the play dominate and this is not relieved in any convincing way by the ending.

Even the few comic moments, handled very well in the current Abbey production, are either black or subversive in content.

The overall effect is to paint a picture of a society dominated by violence and deceit.

Brown Thomas at the Point:

SUPERMODELS: Fashion, money and sexism

by ROISIN CRONIN



Idealised and objectified

AT THE beginning of the month the Point Theatre in Dublin played host to the Brown Thomas showcase of Irish fashion design.

It was hyped as the biggest fashion show ever held in Ireland. The main attraction was the appearance of the supermodels at the event.

These women, through exposure on MTV and in magazines like *Vogue* and *Cosmopolitan*, are known to millions right across the globe. In recent years the supermodel has replaced the Hollywood star as the icon of the age.

These models make huge sums of money--they joke about how they won't get out of bed for less than \$10,000.

The clothes they model are almost as expensive as the women's time. The vast majority of the women who watch them and read about them will never get their hands on these top designs.

The cult of the supermodel reflects some of the ways in which women are oppressed in society. Women are sex objects, sex is a commodity and it is used to sell.

One Italian designer showed quite clearly what the fashion industry thinks of models when he said about Cindy Crawford "Women want to be her, men want to do her". Australian model Elle MacPherson is simply known as "The Body".

The supermodel is idealised and objectified as the perfect woman.

Naomi, Kate, Claudia are not people like us but bodies we are pressurised to aspire to.

So thousands of women, and young women in particular, strive to look like them. They starve themselves to get the same slender body, spend \$20 billion a year on cosmetics to have perfect faces, and some will have cancer-causing breast implants to get that perfect figure.

The results of all this can be appalling. Many women end up miserable because they can't be like these models. Some end up with eating disorders like anorexia and bulimia.

Male models have never been objectified in the same way. They have never been held up as ideals that all men should follow. The clothes they model are much more important than the models themselves. But can anyone read off a list of male supermodels?

It's an important point to make because too often aspects of women's oppression, some of which are epitomised by features of the fashion industry, are brushed aside by people who claim the fight for women's liberation is old hat.

television:

Our friends in the North

THIRTEEN years of Tory rule, slum housing, poverty and corrupt police. New and improved Labour are about to take power. Sounds familiar?

This is how *Our friends in the North*, the BBC's new political drama begins--but in the sixties. Harold Wilson is set to bring the Labour Party into office as four working class mates set off, full of hope, determined to make something of their lives.

The series covers three decades and shows how their fortunes are tied to the precarious events in the political world.

Nicky starts out as a Labour Party activist. He realises his dad was right when he warned him that they would do little for ordinary people, once in power.

The reality, shown through the corruption of local councillors, is that big business calls the tune.

If your socialism is made

The end of the play, when Duncan's son says he will reward those loyal to him, echoes the beginning of the play when Duncan rewards Macbeth for his bravery. The suggestion is that the violence and intrigue may well continue.

A particularly nice touch in the current production is a clever reference to the beef tribunal in the porter's speech where he criticises magistrates for achieving little except enrichment for themselves.

The effect of censorship at the time makes it difficult to know what exactly Shakespeare's views on the regime were.

He may have been echoing the radical views of those who saw the regime as essentially corrupt.

On the other hand the play may simply reflect the fear that all the traditional institutions are falling asunder.

In any event Shakespeare's talent is to appeal to several audiences at the same time and to reflect accurately the sense of crisis that pervaded English society at the time.

The Abbey's production by and large does justice to the complexity of the play. The acting is generally very good, as is the directing.

The fight scene, the porter's speech, and Macbeth's hallucinations are particularly well done.

Occasionally, the action sags and more could have been made of Lady Macbeth. Overall, however it's a performance well worth going to see.

through decisions in council chambers and parliament buildings, then sooner or later you will dance.

Betrayed and disgusted Nicky becomes "agitator". His best friend Geordie runs away from his pregnant girlfriend to London.

He gets work in the growing sex industry where the managers display a hatred of women.

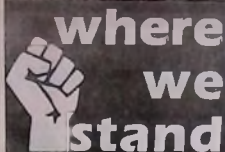
Mary finds she is pregnant and becomes a victim of Labour's treachery.

Given one of the new 'Palaces in the Sky' as the new high rise flats are called, she finds that the tower blocks are just a cheap way of solving the housing crisis--prone to damp and decay.

The firm involved makes mega-profits while councillors pass the cost of modernising the flats on to the local population.

The great strength of *Our friends in the North* is that it shows that millions are affected by handfuls of people.

If you missed the series so far, catch the rest and wait for the repeat.



Workers create all the wealth in capitalist society. A new society can only be constructed when they collectively seize control of that wealth and plan its production and distribution.

FOR REVOLUTION, NOT REFORM

The present system cannot be reformed out of existence. Parliament cannot be used to end the system.

The courts army and police are there to defend the interests of the capitalist class not to run society in a neutral fashion.

To destroy capitalism, workers need to smash the state and create a workers' state based on workers' councils.

FOR REAL SOCIALISM, EAST AND WEST:

The SWP welcomed the break-up of the USSR and the end of the East European dictatorships. These states were not socialist but were run by a state-capitalist class. We are against the domination of the globe by imperialist powers and we oppose their wars. We are for the right of all nations, East and West, to self-determination.

FOR AN END TO ALL OPPRESSION

We oppose all forms of oppression which divide and weaken the working class. We are for full social, economic and political equality for women.

We stand for: free contraception and free, legalised abortion and the right to divorce; the complete separation of church and state, an end to church control over schools and hospitals; an end to discrimination against gays and lesbians; an end to racism and anti-traveller bigotry.

We argue for working class unity in the fight against oppression.

FOR WORKERS' UNITY IN THE NORTH:

Northern Ireland is a sectarian state, propped up by the British Army. Catholic workers are systematically discriminated against by the state. The division between Catholic and Protestant workers weakens the whole working class. Workers' unity can only be won and maintained in a fight to smash both the Northern and Southern states. We stand for the immediate withdrawal of British troops. Violence will only end when workers unite in the fight for a workers' republic.

FOR A FIGHTING TRADE UNION MOVEMENT:

Trade unions exist to defend workers' interests. But the union leaders' role is to negotiate with capitalism - not to end it. We support the leaders when they fight but oppose them when they betray workers. We stand for independent rank and file action.

FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY:

To win socialism socialists need to organise in a revolutionary party. This party needs to argue against right-wing ideas and for overthrowing the system. The SWP aims to build such a party in Ireland.

news & reports—politics; the unions—

An Post workers score a significant victory

POSTAL workers scored a minor but significant victory over the company after 24 workers were re-instated.

The row broke out in the new "state of the art" sorting office in Dublin. Management tactics of over-supervision of the workers went too far when the new plant manager, Mick Burns, created an extra supervisory position.

Workers

Workers at the depot who spoke to *Socialist Worker* said "The place is like *San Quentin*. There's cameras everywhere and it's all open plan so you can be seen at all times. There's already at least one supervisor to every 50 workers. This was a row waiting to happen."

The local union branch were very organised and within hours of the new supervisor's appointment - as one worker put it "to spy on the staff round the clock" - the union went into action.

Workers immediately implemented a work-to-rule and what followed was very impressive and militant solidarity action from postal workers all over Dublin and around the country.

24 workers were taken off the payroll as a result of the action. But within one day a back-log of over 7 million pieces of mail was log-jammed at Dublin Airport and ten other sorting depots around the country.

Van drivers refused to touch the mail. When the company engaged hackers to lift the mail, it just moved from one depot to another. Despite offers of abundant overtime, nobody touched the work.

Action by casual and auxiliary workers who have been seen as a threat to jobs and union organisation in the past was also solid.

It looked as if the company would dig in their heels. But the action of the workers was so effective that the company knew if they didn't settle the action would quickly spread.

After hours of talks in the Labour Relations Commission the company re-instated the workers and withdrew the supervisor. Talks finished

at 4 o'clock in the morning.

The action represents a significant turn around in An Post. According to one shop steward,

"This is a real change to what has happened in recent years. The union committee and shop stewards were so well organised that they were ahead of the company all the time."

Issue

The L.R.C. are to issue a recommendation on the supervisory issue within

two weeks. That recommendation may try to concede ground to the company by reinforcing the line that An Post is vulnerable to future competition.

As one union rep said, "I've never been impressed with the Labour Court or the L.R.C. You either win an argument or you don't. But there's always a tendency of the L.R.C. to come down on the side of the company by going on about the economic situation."

But the union are in a strong position and postal

workers should not concede to the company's bullying tactics or put their faith in the L.R.C. recommendation.

This sort of action shows that solidarity and militancy is not a thing of the past but a real weapon for the future to secure jobs and conditions.

The action in An Post proves that strong union organisation on the shop floor offers a real alternative to workers.

Eircell dispute

TELECOM Eireann management have breached an agreement on ending the use of the FAS scheme to fill vacancies in Eircell. CPSU members are threatening a work to rule if the contracts are not ended and posts are not filled with fulltime staff.

Eircell is now a subsidiary and the union is demanding that any new recruits should be given the same pay and conditions as existing Telecom workers.

Bar strike continues

The strike at the Mountview Inn in Clonsilla near Dublin has continued into February. The strikers are looking for extra security at the pub and payments due to the barworkers. A quiz to raise funds for the strike attracted 150 people including an old folks group from the Clonsilla area. This support needs to be built on with collections among other barworkers.



SWP branch meetings—all welcome

BELFAST
Meets every Wednesday at 8pm Penny Farthing Bar Central Belfast Feb 14th: Marx and the Communist Manifesto; Feb 21st: Can Socialism liberate women?

CORK
Meets every Thursday at 8pm in Dennehy's Pub, Cornmarket St. Feb 15th: Is there an Alternative to the market?; Feb 22th: Marx and the Communist Manifesto

DERRY
Meets every Tuesday in Badgers Bar at 8pm Feb 13th: Is there an Alternative to the market?; Feb 20th:

Marx and the Communist Manifesto
BRAY
Meets every Monday at 8pm in Mayfair Hotel. Feb 12th: Is there an Alternative to the market?; Feb 19th: Marx and the Communist Manifesto

DUBLIN NORTH-WEST
Meets every Tuesday at 8pm in The Old Brogue, Dorset St. Feb 13th Fascism: What it is and how to fight it. Feb 20th: The politics of the Communist Manifesto.

DUBLIN ARTANE/COOLOCK
Meets every Thursday at

8.30pm in the Artane/Beaumont Family Recreation Centre, Kilmore Rd. Feb 15th: Is Ireland a more violent society?; Feb 22nd: The politics of the Communist Manifesto.

DUBLIN DRIMNAGH
Meets every Tuesday at 8.30pm in the Bentley Pub, Drimnagh Road Feb 13th: Is Revolution possible in Ireland?; Feb 20th: The politics of the Communist Manifesto.

DUBLIN NORTH CENTRAL
Meets every Wednesday at 8pm in Conways, Parnell St. Feb 14th 5years after the Gulf war; Feb 20th: The politics of the Communist Manifesto.

DUBLIN RATHMINES
Meets every Wednesday at 8pm in O'Connell's Pub, Richmond Street. Feb 14th: Is there an Alternative to the market?; Feb 21st: Marx and the Communist Manifesto

DUBLIN SOUTH-CENTRAL
Meets every Thursday at 8pm in Trinity Inn, Pearse St. Feb 15th: Is there an Alternative to the market?; Feb 22nd: Marx and the Communist Manifesto

DUBLIN TALLAGHT/CLONDALKIN
Meets every Wednesday at 8.00pm, Clondalkin Sports & Leisure centre, Feb 14th How to fight Racism; Feb 21st The politics of Leon Trotsky.

DUN LAOGHAIRE
Meets every Tuesday at 8pm in Smyths Pub. Feb 13th The politics of Leon Trotsky; Feb 20th: The politics of the Communist Manifesto.

GALWAY
Meets every Thursday at 6pm in Currans Hotel, Eyre Square Feb 15th: How do we solve the jobs crisis?; Feb. 22nd Is Ireland becoming more violent?.

MAYNOOTH
Meets every Thursday at 6

pm in Class Hall D, Arts Block, Maynooth College. Feb 15th: Is there an Alternative to the market?; Feb 22nd: Marx and the Communist Manifesto

WATERFORD
Meets every Thursday at 8pm in ATGWU Hall, Keyser St. Feb 15th How to fight Racism; Feb 22nd The politics of Leon Trotsky.

JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

If you want to join *Socialist Worker*, fill in this form and send it to: PO Box 1648, Dublin 8, Tel: (01) 872 2682

Name

Address.....

.....

Phone.....

★ There are *Socialist Worker* members in: ENNISKILLEN; COLERAINE; LURGAN; CAVAN; DONEGAL; NAAS; LIMERICK; KILKENNY; DUNDALK; ATHLONE; DROGHEDA. If you would like to get in touch, contact our national office at (01) 872 2682, PO Box 1648, Dublin 8

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ESB Cost and Competitiveness Review

Privatisation is the real ESB agenda

THE UNIONS in the ESB have still to ballot workers on the Cost & Competitiveness Review which has taken nearly three years to negotiate.

The company have deliberately dragged out talks on the new plan as a way of conditioning the workforce into accepting that major cutbacks are necessary.

They have used videos that workers took home to be convinced of the need for competition - even the Irish soccer team starred on the video to drive home the case the bosses wanted to make.

Objective

But the main objective of the plan is to prepare the ground for privatising the ESB in the future. Workers are well aware

of the immediate implications for their jobs - at least 2,000 jobs are to go. Some categories of

workers will have to accept drastic changes in work practices. Many workers, especially those with longer service see the deal as being a very attractive redundancy package.

The issues affecting the various categories of workers are very complicated and differ depending on the nature of the jobs. But there are a number of issues which are common to all within

the ESB.

It is likely that the unions will ballot separately on the issues affecting each group and on an aggregate basis for the issues which are common.

SIPTU MEMBERS CALL FOR A NO VOTE

Already there are signs of resistance to the deal. The SIPTU general operatives group, where many of the jobs will be lost, are likely to recommend rejection of the deal.

One of their shop stewards told *Socialist Worker* that "there is a lot of insecurity in the

plant and a lot of dissatisfaction with the outcome of the talks." In Moneypoint the fit-

ters group were allowed only one hour to meet and discuss a 50 page document on the future of their jobs despite the fact that it took two years to negotiate it. One of the fitters explained,

"The issues are ex-

tremely complicated and there's a lot that needs to be clarified. But the big picture is very clear. We are well aware of what this deal means in the long term - it's all about profits at the expense of jobs and the service."

Nurses' anger at lousy offer

NURSES throughout the country have reacted angrily to the terrible offer that has been made by the Minister for Health, Michael Noonan, to their recent pay campaign.

Nurses have fallen behind other grades in recent years while stress levels have continued to increase. "We are expected to spend more time helping to train student nurses, but they think they do not have to pay us more for this", one psychiatric nurse told *Socialist Worker*.

Noonan's offer amounts to a maximum rate of £19,207 a year for nurses. This is £1,800 below what the union have been looking for.

But Noonan's offer is even worse than it first appears. The first £500 of his offer will only be paid after 12 years service and the rest after 15 years, whereas the maximum rate is currently paid at 9 years. It will come into effect in June 1997.

Nothing is being offered to nurses at the lower end of the pay scale.

"It is yet another attempt to divide us. But it will not work. The stress level on a young nurse is just as high as that on someone who has worked for nine years. We need a general improvement for all nurses", one worker



More than two thousand nurses packed into a meeting at Jury's Hotel, last month. 200 other workers had to be turned away. The mood was one of overwhelming militancy with 500 of *Socialist Worker's Health Workers Bulletins* sold.

Meanwhile workers in Sweden have just finished a major strike, winning a 13% pay rise. The government was forced to back down—although some nurses believed that the full claim of 18% could have been won.

said.

On top of that the Department of Health are also trying to attach strings to their miserable offer. They are looking for changes in rostering, more flexibility and a no strike clause.

The four main unions are now set to ballot their members with a recommendation for rejection. But many nurses feel that the insulting offer is only a stalling tactic to try to break the

momentum of the nurses campaign.

By rights, the unions should really be balloting for strike action and going ahead in March as planned.

Tactic

However, Noonan's tactic of trying to slow down the momentum that is building up behind the nurses claim will not work. The offer that is being made to

teachers—even though it is full of strings—will spur them of.

More importantly, the rallies that happened last month have been so big and enthusiastic that it has fuelled a determination to win.

Des Kavanagh of the PNA reflected some of this mood when he said, "The government will have to cough up—otherwise they will have a hot summer.

We Think

Workers across the ESB should stand up to the company plans and reject the deal. There is a lot at stake for the future. The lifetime of this deal is only three years.

If the company get what they want by dividing the workers over the different issues, they will have no problem coming back for more in the future.

ESB bosses and the Government use the argument for competition and the market as the big stick to beat workers with.

The same argument for the need for competition was used by Juppe in France just before Christmas to try to get massive cuts in jobs and public spending. But the resistance of the French workers was fantastic and they forced the government to retreat on their plan.

The key is the unity of the workers involved. And this will be crucial in the ESB. Workers in the ESB should remember that they are still very powerful. They have it in their grasp to beat off the drive towards privatisation. Without their co-operation the lights go out and the bosses would be forced to concede.

The ESB is efficient, it provides good jobs, it provides the cheapest consumer service in Europe and it has an important social function. The only reason the company is being turned on its head is to cater to greedy profiteers at the expense of workers.

Early Learning strike: Step up the solidarity

SEVEN strikers at the Early Learning Centre on Patrick St. Cork, members of MANDATE have been picketing the shop for over nine weeks.

The strike began over the issue of pay. Elsewhere in the retail industry there is an accepted scale of pay increases for experienced staff. But the Early Learning Centre is refusing to acknowledge union rights in any way.

As a result the shop assistants in the Early Learning centre have seen their pay increase by only 62p over six years. Experienced staff are £2 an hour behind the union rates. One striker earned more eight years ago as a shop assistant in another store.

The company insists that the staff take a written exam and undergo yearly assessments. It also expects them to do all the cleaning duties—as there is no cleaner employed and to unload pallets.

In Cork this involves breaking the Health and Safety act in getting untrained workers to heave substantial weights up the stairs. For years the company also avoided paying bank holiday pay—including Christmas and Stephen's Day. Nor have Irish workers in the Early Learning Centre been allowed to join the company pension scheme.

The British based multinational is owned by John Menzies, the magazine dis-

tributors. They have opened four new shops in Ireland, where the staff are employed on 6 hour contracts. This means no statutory sick pay or maternity leave. It's no wonder that one picket commented that "they just want profit and they don't care whose backs they have to tread on."

A lot is at stake in this strike. There has been a trend identified by *Industrial Relations News* of new companies coming to Ireland and refusing to recognise trade union rights. A survey of 32 companies planning to employ over 100 workers showed only two agreeing to union recognition.

The Cork strikers are fighting for all workers, especially those in the retail sector. For example Argos intend to set up in Ireland but without paying a special Sunday working rate.

The support for the pickets has been "fantastic". One striker finds that "people come up to me when I'm shopping. They recognise me from the picket line and come up to offer their support."

But after nine weeks its time that the rest of the trade union movement rallied to these strikers and raised the funds to keep them going as long as it takes to win.

All collections and messages of support should be sent to: Early Learning Strikers c/o MANDATE, 1, Emmett Place, Cork.

STRIKES UP

ACCORDING to figures released by the Central Statistics Office there were more days lost through strikes in the third quarter of 1995 than were lost in total in 1993 and 1994.

A total of 129,245 days were lost in the first three quarters of 1995. This includes the Dunnes strike, involving 8,057 workers, which was one of the biggest and most significant strikes in Ireland in recent years.

There has been a massive increase in the number of days lost through industrial action since 1994.

While the government and bosses endlessly push the idea that the partnership approach works, workers in this country have seen that this never works. This is why more and more we see that taking strike action is the only way to win.

Socialist Worker

inside:

**PEACE PROCESS:
New assembly
will foster
sectarianism**

—centre pages

For a Workers' Republic and International Socialism 40p

HOUSING BENEFIT CUT

NEW DOLE RESTRICTIONS

Tories attack the jobless

THE Tories are cutting Housing Benefit for the unemployed. And now their latest attack on the jobless is the Job Seekers Allowance.

It is due to be introduced in the North over the next few months.

It will halve unemployment benefit entitlement from 12 months to six and pay 20 percent less benefit to 18 to 24 year olds.

Already, people who have been out of work for over a year are being told at Restart interviews that the JSA will mean having such interviews more often, even every fortnight.

Claimants have also been given 'Jobseekers'

Diaries' to fill out.

The Tories expect unemployed people to fill out one of these 'diaries' to show what they have done each day to look for work.

Every time you sign on, you hand in your di-

ary for that fortnight and are given a new one.

Refused

If you are, say, a nurse or an electrician and are only applying for jobs in nursing or your trade,

you can be forced to take a job cleaning or labouring or be refused benefit.

One of the JSA rules means that men who wear earrings or women with unusual hairstyles can be told to conform to the norm or be consid-

ered not seriously seeking a job.

As one dole worker told, *Socialist Worker*, "The Tories are laying off civil servants; they're cutting jobs within the DHSS just as jobs are being cut in industries all

over the North.

So, how do they expect people to be able to find jobs?"

If the JSA is allowed in, it will mean thousands of unemployed people will be harassed off the dole.

The Tories boast that in its first year in England, it will strip 90,000 people off benefits completely with another 150,000 being forced onto means tested benefits.

BUT THEY CAN BE FOUGHT!

BUT ALL these attacks on the unemployed can be fought.

In England, workers in 38 dole offices have been on indefinite strike, since early December over pay and conditions. Opposition to the JSA is part of the reason for their strike.

These low paid workers have been offered a 2.5% pay rise if they accept 'performance related pay',

Chris Tilley, one of the strikers explained the link between performance related pay and the JSA. "With performance related pay, the more people whose benefit you stop, the higher pay you are supposed to get. In effect, we'll turn into benefit police".

The NIPSA, the union which represents dole workers here, should also come out against the Job Seekers Allowance.

Most rank and file members already know the disastrous effects it will have on claimants and on their own working conditions.

Unites

What's needed is a campaign which unites dole workers and unemployed, ACE workers and people whose Housing Benefit has been cut to fight these Tory attacks.

Students, workers, pensioners and unemployed in France showed it can be done.

And in the North such a campaign would be even more important because it would bring Catholic and Protestant workers together against all the attempts to divide us into our sectarian camps.

It could also help force a weak and divided Tory government to climb down and scrap the JSA,