

An Phoblacht

REPUBLICAN NEWS



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Saturday December 6th 1980

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INDUSTRIAL ACTION!

A CAMPAIGN of industrial action is being built, South and North, in support of the H-Block and Armagh hunger-strikers. Last Thursday, November 27th, Dublin building workers (pictured here) held a token work stoppage and marched to the British embassy (the scene of this Saturday's massive march and rally).

Next Wednesday, December 10th, the National H-Block Committee have called for a national day of

action when trade unionists are being urged to organise work-place meetings, token work stoppages, and local protests — pickets, marches, and rallies.

For information, leaflets, and posters, contact the H-Block office, 30 Mountjoy Square, Dublin 1 (telephone 747200).



TO THE EMBASSY!

Massive Dublin hunger-strike march expected

THE huge demonstration to the British embassy, this Saturday, will show the British government that the Irish people are not the apathetic nation that the Brits would like to paint them, indifferent to the present sufferings of republican prisoners on hunger-

strike in H-Block and Armagh jail.

Attempts by the collaborationist likes of Fine Gael leader Garret FitzGerald in the South, and unofficial unionist MP Gerry Fitt in the North, to isolate the large and widespread peaceful

protest demonstrations into republican-only mobilisations have failed miserably.

Nevertheless the inflexible attitude of the British government remains steadfast — an attitude which apparently

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 2)

HUNGER-STRIKE MARCH & RALLY TO THE BRITISH EMBASSY

Saturday 6th December
Assemblée 2.30 p.m. St. Stephen's Green
DUBLIN

Organised by the National H-Block Committee

SALE OF WORK

An Cumann Cabhrach's annual Christmas 'sale of work' will be held in Dublin's Mansion House over this weekend, December 5th, 6th, and 7th.

TO THE EMBASSY!

(CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE)

stems from a grand militarist design, which they conceived perhaps as far back as September 1976, when the blanket protest began. They believed that the political prisoners' protest had little support and that when they eventually forced it to a hunger-strike it would only bring out on to the streets republican marchers, and then when a prisoner died, the IRA, which could then be defeated in a military confrontation.

However, their thinking was — and is — wrong in every regard. It certainly did take a long time for massive mobilisations — and more so on a humanitarian basis, rather than a political solidarity basis — behind the prisoners.

But when one considers the propaganda barrage from the British and the resources at their disposal, including the resources of successive Free State governments, then it is understandable that it took a courageous hunger-strike to break through the lies and bring the prisoners' case to popular attention, nationally and internationally.

ERROR

The fundamental error, which the Brits are making, is to believe that the IRA could be finally broken, if the hunger-strikers were to die without achieving their demands. For, if hunger-strikers die, not only will republicans be outraged, but every person who has signed a petition form, has been on a picket or walked in a march, or even just expressed a sympathetic interest, will feel that something, which they — however modestly — subscribed to, has been trampled upon by British jackboots.

The confrontation is not, and will not be, between the IRA and the British government, but will be between the Irish people and the British government, and may well bring about changes hitherto unforeseen by the British.

STAGING

This Saturday marks a staging post in the mobilisations. Not just in that a new programme of (still peaceful) marches will now begin, but that the Dublin mobilisation — like the limited industrial action which has already taken place, like the protest by students at Queen's university in South Belfast last Wednesday, and like the walk-outs from Northern council chambers — has necessarily taken the protest out of the Northern nationalist working-class ghettos and rural communities.

This important extension needs to be intensified in the days ahead and next Wednesday's 'day of action' will hopefully see the sparks of industrial action — so well demonstrated by pockets of workers in Belfast, Derry and Tyrone in the North and Dublin, Leitrim, Tralee and Waterford in the South — fanned into a bright flame as the physical condition of the prisoners deteriorates and dictates the urgent need for even greater protests and mobilisations than we have seen to date.

Amach libh ar na sraideanna!

LE TOMÁS Ó SE

BHÍ slua an-mhór ar shraideanna Bhaile Átha Cliath coicís ó shin ag léirsiú i gcoinne an droch-íde atá á thabhairt do phríosúnaigh Poblachtacha sna Blocanna H agus i bpríosún Ard Mhaca. Bhí na léirseoirí ag iarraidh brú a chur ar rialtas na Sé Chontae Fíchead gníomhú ar son na bpríosúnach.

Tháinig mórán daoine ón Tuaisceart go dtí an chathair chun an agóid a dhéanamh. Ní thaca muintir Bhaile Átha Cliath an méid sin daoine ag léirsiú mar gheall ar chúrsaf Náisiúnta le fada an lá. Stad daoine ag féachaint ar an máirseál agus iontas ina súile. Ní raibh siad in ann a chreidiúint go raibh an máirseál chomh mór.

Tá ceist na mBlocanna H ag dul i bhfeidhm ar mhuintir an Deiscirt. Cloisim daoine timpeall orm i ngach áit ag caint mar gheall air. Thug an máirseál mór neart do dhaoine labhairt amach mar gheall ar na Blocanna H.

MNÁ

Anois, ós rud é go bhfuil na mná i bPríosún Ard Mhaca tar éis dul ar an stailc ocras chomh maith tá an choimhlint ag dul i ngéire agus tá dualgas orainn obair níos déine fós. Is ar na sraideanna is fearr is féidir linn cabhrú leis na stailceoirí.

Seo mar a scríobh duine des na stailceoirí ocras ceithre lá tar éis don stailc ocras tósú. "Is maith is eol dom a fulaingt atá romhainn, ... siócraas i mo bholg dúil de

shíor agam i mbia táim ag fáil bháis."

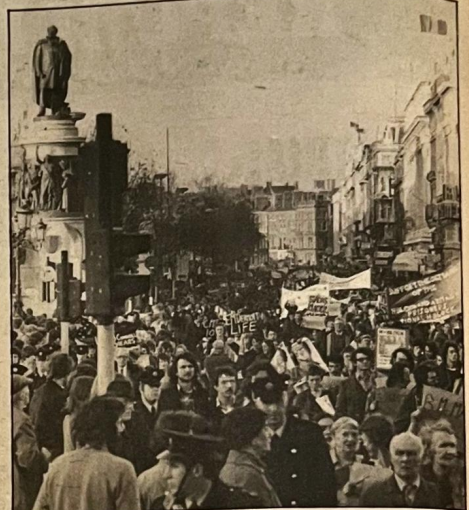
Sin mar atá na príosúnaigh agus cuid acu go dona tinn ag an bpointe seo. Ní féidir leo an stailc ocras seo a sheasamh ró-thada eile. Tá an bás ag bagairt orthu cheanna fein agus ní fada uathu anois é.

AMBASÁID

Beidh máirseál mór go dtí ambasáid na Breataine ar an Satharn seo. Tá géarghá leis na mílte míle a bheith ar an máirseál seo. Tagaigí amach ar na sraideanna agus biodh bhúr nuth le cloistéal.

Tá na póilíní sa Deisceart ag iarraidh eagla a chur ar dhaoine i dtreo is nach dtabharfaidh siad tacaíocht dos na léirsithe. Chuir na Gardai scéalta amach go raibh sé i gceist ag Oiglaigh na hÉireann buamaí a leagaint i siopaí Sasanacha sa Deiscirt. Tá an ráfla sin seanta ag Oiglaigh na hÉireann. Níl a leithéid i gceist.

Ná biodh eagla ar aon duine, tagaigí amach ar na sraideanna. Is ansin a chloisfeadh bhúr nuth.



Bíg ar an máirseál an Satharn seo in bhúr mílte. Beidh na Rialtas agus Sé Chontae Fíchead agus i Sasana ag faire go géar ar an máirseál seo agus is féidir linn a thaispeáint dóibh go bhfuilimid ag seasamh lena bpríosúnaigh.

British embassy march ARRANGEMENTS

IN ORDER to keep to a carefully worked out timetable it is crucial that Saturday's hunger-strike march in Dublin to the British embassy is ready to move off at 2.30 p.m. sharp.

Marchers will assemble in contingents in the area around St. Stephen's Green (as described below). It is essential that these instructions be strictly adhered to, in order that the march be disciplined and orderly.

The march will be led by ten relatives of the hunger-strikers, carrying large portrait photos of the

hunger-strikers. They will be followed by the National H-Block Committee banner, carried by committee members. If relatives wish to carry the names of the protesting prisoners they should be carried on their own section of the march. (All placards should be prepared locally.)

CO-ORDINATORS

Each local action group is required by the national committee to provide their own stewards for their contingents. Each bus or train should appoint a co-ordinator for every twenty-five people: the co-ordinators will be responsible for informing people where their

buses are leaving from after the march so that people are not wandering around the city looking for their respective buses.

In addition to local stewards and co-ordinators, there will be two hundred easily identifiable stewards appointed by the national committee. To assist in the proper organisation of the march it is most important that all instructions from the stewards are carried out without dissension.

ASSEMBLY POINTS

Disembarkation and assembly points are as follows:
Buses from Ulster will disem-

bark at the Municipal Art Gallery, Parnell Square, and contingents will march down O'Connell Street, into O'Flaherty Street and College Street, then up Grafton Street on to the north side of St. Stephen's Green. The assembly point will be from the Shelbourne hotel to the top of Grafton Street, and, if necessary, down Grafton Street, Dawson Street, and South King Street.

Contingents from Munster and Connacht, whether arriving by bus, car or train, will meet at 12.30 p.m. at Heuston station (where a new car park has opened), will march down the Quays, turn right at Parliament Street on to Dame Street, right again at Georges Street, and left on to Cuffe Street before coming out on to St. Stephen's Green.

The assembly point for the Munster contingent is the south side of St. Stephen's Green (in front of the Department of Justice building and university chapel), and, if necessary, back into Leeson Street and Earlsfort Terrace.

The assembly point for the Connacht contingent is the west side of St. Stephen's Green (the College of Surgeons' side), and, if necessary, using Cuffe Street and Harcourt Street.

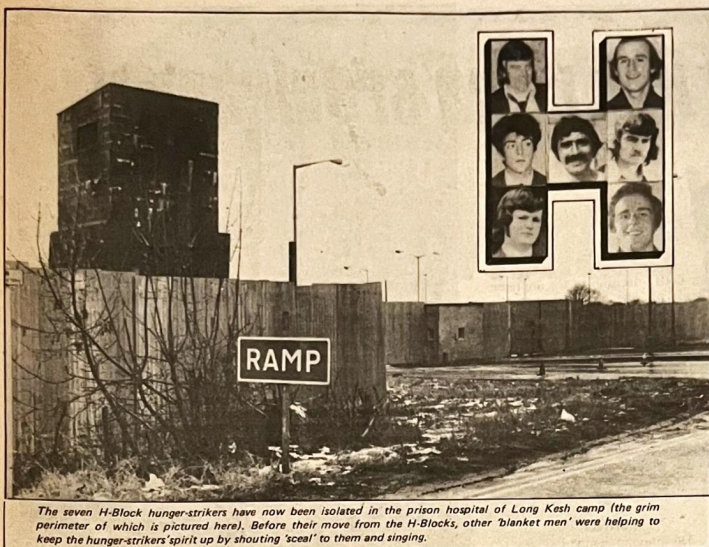
Contingents from Leinster are to converge at the Hume Street Hospital side of St. Stephen's Green.

The Leinster contingent will be the first to move and will move out on to Baggot Street and in behind the National Committee banner. When this section of the march has filed out, the next section to move will be the Ulster contingent.



SOUTH DUBLIN MAP SHOWING MARCH ROUTE

St. Stephen's Green (above) is the starting point for the march, the route is shaded on the map, and the spot marked 'X' (see right) is the destination at the British Embassy.



The seven H-Block hunger-strikers have now been isolated in the prison hospital of Long Kesh camp (the grim perimeter of which is pictured here). Before their move from the H-Blocks, other 'blanket men' were helping to keep the hunger-strikers 'spirit up by shouting 'seal' to them and singing.

SCREWS TURNED AGAINST H-BLOCK HUNGER-STRIKERS

Isolation tactics

THE CORE of the British approach to dealing with the seven H-Block hunger-strikers (who were moved to the Long Kesh prison hospital at the beginning of the week) appears to be a deliberate attempt to isolate them from other prisoners and to try to psychologically undermine them by strictly censoring the news of the protest campaign available to them.

Now that the hunger-strikers are declared medically unfit for prison work some of the 'privileges' the blanket men lost on the protest have been re-instituted to them by the prison regime. (Clearly exposing the Brits' 'self-infliction' propaganda myth.)

The availability of newspapers and limited television viewing are two such 'privileges' restored to them — but the papers and programmes are strictly restricted in order to closely censor the men's knowledge of the news.

For example the only newspapers which they are allowed to read are the heavily-biased pro-British 'Irish Independent', the 'Belfast Telegraph', and the 'News Letter', but not the 'Irish Press' nor the 'Irish News', both of which are consistently carrying relatively accurate and comprehensive reports of the widespread H-Block protests.

Similarly, the men are allowed to see only BBC television news, because the BBC miraculously manage to shrink twenty thousand demonstrators into four thousand through their Orange, and

Red-White-and-Blue, tinted camera lenses.

ADDITIONAL

Of course, an additional cruel but characteristic twist to the prison regime's mistreatment of the hunger-strikers is the practice of leaving uncovered plates of food by their bed-sides.

Despite this campaign of psychological warfare, and more, being waged against them, the hunger-strikers' spirits and morale remain as high as ever. Physically, however, their condition, not surprisingly, continues to seriously deteriorate; they are said to be in almost constant pain of one kind or another; and within the next week or so they are expected to reach a critical stage of dehydration.

WEIGHT

Soon they will have little more weight to lose.

The latest weights of the seven, (details of which were smuggled out of the H-Blocks last weekend), are said to be: Leo Green 7 st. 11 lbs., Brendan Hughes 8 st. 4 lbs., Raymond McCartney 8 st. 6 lbs., Tom McFeeley 8 st. 8 lbs., Tommy McKearney 7 st. 4 lbs., Sean

McKenna 7 st. 3 lbs., and John Nixon 8 st. 11 lbs.

All seven men now bear a frightening appearance, made worse by rambling beards and long matted hair. They are moving very slowly, seemingly mechanically, and are speaking very softly and slowly as if it is an effort, or hurts, to do so.

TENDER

Such is the tender state of the hunger-strikers' bodies that medical orderlies are rubbing them, every four hours, with cream to prevent bed sores and to prevent protruding bones from breaking the skin.

Lights are reported to be deliberately left turned on at night time, and this helps prevent the men from sleeping. All seven find it extremely difficult to sleep, anyway, and when sleep comes it is restless and turbulent.

Up until recently, and this still may be the case, prior to visits the men were being thoroughly searched, and their visitors are now being limited to two immediate relatives only, and no children.

POLICE SPECULATION

POLICE SPECULATION in England and Belgium is that military operations carried out in those two countries this week were the work of the IRA intent on drawing British and international opinion to the plight of their comrades on hunger-strike in the H-Blocks of Long Kesh and Armagh jail.

On Tuesday evening, December 2nd, two bombs rocked an army barracks in London. The bombed barracks was the Territorial Army centre in Hammersmith and, after the explosions, fire swept through the building. There were no military casualties but several nearby civilians suffered slight shock. Less than twelve hours later, on Wednesday morning, December 3rd, gunmen shot at a British Commissioner to the EEC as he was leaving his Brussels home. But Christopher Tugendhat, aged 54, a former Tory MP, escaped unhurt. As *An Phoblacht/Republican News* goes to press no credible claims have been made by any organisation for either action.

Derry attacks

THE IRA carried out two shooting attacks against members of the British occupation forces in Derry last week. During the late evening of Tuesday 25th November, Volunteers shot dead a full-time member of the Enniskillen UDR just outside Derrygonyally RUC barracks in County Derry. And during the early evening of Friday 28th November a plain-clothes RUC man — a detective inspector — based at Strand Road barracks — was shot in the head and seriously wounded as he was driving a car along the riverside road towards the lower deck of Craigavon Bridge.

Attempted assassination

A LOYALIST GUNMAN, who was a former British soldier, was jailed for sixteen years at a Belfast court last Wednesday, November 26th, when he pleaded guilty to the 'attempted murder' of a Catholic from the Oldpark district on a bus in Belfast last year. Former Royal Irish Ranger Mark Mills, aged 20, of Forthriver Road, Belfast, who was said by his defence counsel to have been 'involved in a paramilitary organisation from an early age', boarded a bus on the morning of September 5th and shot his victim three times from close range. (The victim made a full recovery after hospitalisation.) In February of this year, after a drinking bout, Mills confessed his involvement in the attempted sectarian assassination, to the RUC, who had no option but to prosecute him.



Driver killed

A BRITISH SOLDIER died in a motor vehicle accident near Aldergrove airport on the Tully Road, about half-a-mile from the junction with the Killead Road, when the car he was driving hit a lorry head-on at about 7.20 a.m. last Saturday, November 29th. The dead man, Steven Atkins, aged 20, from Hinckley, Leicestershire, was a driver attached to the 3rd Infantry Brigade based at Portadown.



sections of the nationalist community, on the march in Belfast

press upon him that this is not work. He wasn't prepared to give our advice unfortunately, through those discussions didn't seem to wish to listen I mean looking at it in regret that I have to say

It shows that the 'blanket' listed all avenues before in the hunger-strike. Re-

one or more of the demands of the hunger-strikers provided a mediator acceptable to both sides can be found."

But these 'fresh revelations', if they were anything to begin with, went stale very quickly as the NIO by mid-afternoon stated that the Brits did not intend calling in "any mediators in any shape or form."

Having got its fingers burnt, like Cardinal O'Faigh and Bishop Daly before it, the 'Irish News' editorial on Monday

Gang of thieves

FIVE BRITISH SOLDIERS received slap-on-the-wrist fines for stealing money off a youth, who had in turn stolen the money off his father, when they appeared in a Belfast magistrates court on Monday, December 1st, charged with theft. The youth had stolen £169 from his father, £154 of which the Brits took, when they found the youth with the money in a delinquent house in Cromac Street. The thieving Brits were Rodney Avison, aged 22, and Kevin Donnelly, aged 26, both of the Royal Anglian Regiment, and Robert Edwards, aged 24, Anthony Richardson, aged 26, and Alston Walters, aged 28, of the 25th Field Regiment, Royal Artillery. All were stationed at the notorious Belfast city centre Grand Central 'den of thieves' barracks at the time, and are now serving in Germany. Last Monday, after hearing the usual tale from their officers that all five have good records as soldiers, the magistrate fined Donnelly, the patrol leader, £150, and the other four £100 each.

Berrigan protests

FATHER DANIEL BERRIGAN, the Jesuit priest noted for his anti-Vietnam war activities in America, is now taking part in a series of one-day token hunger strikes, with five companions inside Montgomery county prison, Pennsylvania, in solidarity with the demands of the H-Block hunger-strikers. All six men are being held on remand to later face charges ranging from criminal conspiracy to harassment, and for which they could be sentenced to terms of imprisonment up to sixty-four years.

The charges arise out of an incident in September, when six men and two women entered the General Electric Space Division plant in a Philadelphia suburb and damaged newly-developed war-head nose-cones destined for Minuteman 111 missiles. The selection of the plant as a focus for a nation-wide campaign to dissuade America from its thermo-nuclear 'first-strike' stance, was based on General Electric's manufacture of multiple re-entry missiles which more than quadrupled the United States' capacity to kill indiscriminately. Once in the plant the protestors had graphically illustrated this point by pouring blood over tools and blueprints before damaging the missiles with hammers. Damage is believed to be in the region of forty thousand dollars.

F. Berrigan previously made headline news last August when his delegation of clergymen was refused entry to the H-Blocks of Long Kesh after they had arrived in Ireland on a fact-finding mission. Commenting on that British decision at the time, he said, "We wonder if it is because they want the truth hidden of the inhuman treatment these prisoners are suffering."

Bradford's latest ravings

THE RAVING Reverend Robert Bradford, Official Unionist Westminster MP for South Belfast, proposed, on Monday, that republican prisoners in the six counties should be granted prisoner-of-war status, conditional on their fulfilling the Geneva convention terms of wearing a uniform while on active service. But his stance should not be welcomed, for Bradford's proposal was, in fact, a thinly-veiled justification for killing Catholics, under the guise that republicans captured not wearing uniforms

should be shot dead. Referring to republicans — and to a loyalist lunatic like Bradford, the term 'Catholic' and 'republican' mean the same thing — he said: "The solution is to take the cancer out of society, and the best way to do that is to execute them."

Bradford was, of course, given full and sympathetic coverage by the media — for example, local BBC television interviewed him as though he was a reasonable man — thus giving credence to his genocidal sectarian fantasies.

Campaign to abolish hanging revived

BY ASHY McDERMOTT

ON Thursday 27th November, for the second time in four years, the non-jury Special Criminal Court in Dublin imposed sentences of death by hanging, and the following Monday, as expected, refused leave to appeal. The actual carrying-out of the sentences on the three men, Colm O'Shea from Cork, Patrick McCann from Waterford and Peter Pringle from Dublin, which was originally scheduled for December 19th, has now been postponed whilst they appeal against that refusal to the Central Criminal Court — a process of several months.

This appeal in fact now becomes an actual appeal against sentence and, if unsuccessful, a further appeal can be made to the Free State's Supreme Court. It is therefore unlikely that, in the event of the death sentence being upheld in all the courts, that the Free State government will be considering commutation of the sentences until the end of next year.

Free State governments, then it is understandable that it took a courageous hunger-strike to break through the lies and bring the prisoners' case to popular attention, nationally and internationally.

ERROR

The fundamental error, which the Brits are making, is to believe that the IRA both government and media at the time (and now published after the trial) none of those involved was in any way connected with the Republican Movement, and the IRA issued a statement to that effect. Moreover one of the men now facing the death penalty — Peter Pringle, has been on a picket or walked in a march, or even just expressed a sympathetic interest, will feel that something, which they — however modestly — subscribed to, has been trampled upon by British jackboots.

The confrontation is not, and will not be, between the IRA and the British government, but will be between the Irish people and the British government, and may well bring about changes hitherto unforeseen by the British.

STAGING

What the hunger-strike was for him or for the people of Ballyfermot (for where he is a councillor), and went on to make a virulent attack on Sean MacStiofain's hunger-strike (which had nothing to do with political status), the like of which would have gladdened the heart of any 'Sunday Express' columnist.

But MacGiolla's hysteria is much more than just another example of his paranoid anti-republicanism. It also reflects the growing dismay of his party leadership at the widening cracks in the ranks on the H-Block and Armagh issue.

AGAINST

Official party policy is uncompromisingly against the H-Block blanket men and the Armagh women on protest: it is totally opposed to political status. This in itself is a massive contradiction. Prisoners belonging to the so-called 'Official IRA' accepted political status in 1972 when it was won by republican hunger-strikers. About twenty of them retain this political status to-day in the cages of Long Kesh, as do others in Portlaoise prison.

MacGiolla himself accepted political status when imprisoned in Mountjoy jail in 1957 and again in 1961-62. One of the party's most influential members, its

Colm O'Shea, belongs to the viciously anti-republican group, the British and Irish Communist Organisation, and all indications are that the whole operation was carried out for personal gain.

OPPOSED

Nevertheless, state executions must be opposed and if resurrected, after what has been a twenty-

Anois, ós rud é go bhfuil na m-
i bPríosún Ard Mhaca tar éis dul as
an stailc ocrasí chomh maith tá aif
choimhiúnt ag dul i ngéire agus é
duaglas oraínn obair níos déine fóis
ar na sraideanna is fearr is feidh
linn cabhrú leis na stailcoirí.

Seo mar a scríobh duine de na
stailcoirí ocrasí cethre lá tar éir
don stailc ocrasí tosdú. 'Is maith tré-
id dom an fálaint atá romhainn i
sagorae i mo bholá ... dúil éle-
ment launching a new campaign
for abolition.

A similar campaign was launched
four years ago when Noel and
Marie Murray were sentenced to
death; it was extensive and drew
major international support. How-
ever the sentence was set aside by

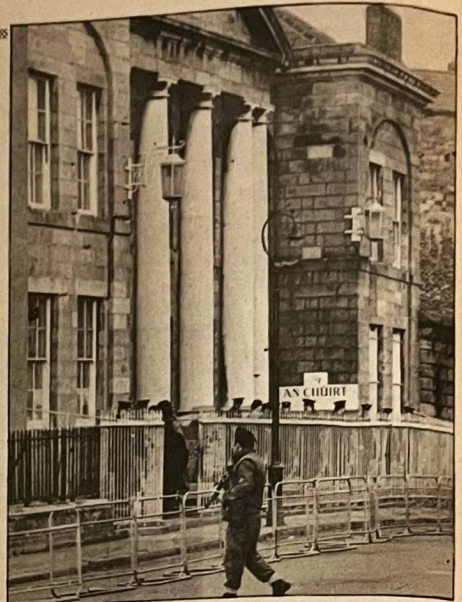
a majority decision of the Supreme Court on the grounds that the garda shot dead was not in uniform and could not have been known to be a garda. This does not apply in the present case.

Informed opinion at the time was that the coalition government had already decided not to commute the death sentences and to allow the hangings. They were also determined to hang anyone convicted of the assassination of the British ambassador and firmly return hanging as a state weapon.

UNKNOWN

The present Fianna Fáil government's position is unknown. But in 1977, answering a question in Leinster House, the present Free State Minister for Justice, Gerry Collins, would not support the deletion of capital punishment from the 1964 Criminal Justice Act. And it was Charles Haughey himself, who, as Fianna Fáil's Minister for Justice, introduced that act into Leinster House.

But a powerful lobby for hanging has already revealed itself. Within three days of the latest sentences being passed, the 'Sunday Independent' devoted its front page to an opinion poll which purported to show that 51% of the population in the twenty-six counties favoured the death penalty. The one question posed was framed in the widest possible terms asking did the questioner



Dublin's Special Criminal Court, where three men were last week sentenced to death

feel there were any circumstances under which they would agree with the death penalty being actually carried out.

COINCIDENCE

And, in a strange coincidence, the Murray case was revived once again in the Supreme Court last week where Anthony Walsh and Carmel Connelly are applying for a jury trial on a charge of 'scandalising' the Special Criminal Court. The latter court had brought the charge against them and are apparently determined to try them and, if convicted, sentence them for a statement issued during the Murray campaign which criticised the Special Criminal Court.

The statement in question contained the remark that the death sentence "was particularly reprehensible because it was passed by the Special Criminal Court, a court composed of government-appointed judges having no judicial independence which sat without a jury and which so abused the rules of evidence as to make the court akin to a sentencing tribunal."

That was the description given then to the court which last week handed down three more death sentences and will shortly be hearing another case in which Belfast man Peter Rogers faces a similar sentence arising from the shooting of a garda in Wexford.

ARE IN MacGIOLLA'S THROAT

IN ORDER to keep to a carefully worked out timetable it is crucial that Saturday's hunger-strike march in Dublin to the British embassy is ready to move off at 2.30 p. m. sharp.

Marchers will assemble in contingents in the area around St. Stephen's Green, was 'on the blanket' in Portlaoise prison for four years from 1943 to 1947, gaining the right to wear prison uniform following the death, on hunger-and-thirst strike of Sean McCaughey, and finally being released in 1948.

WIDENED

The position of the party leadership on the current campaign for political status has now widened these glaring contradictions into the threat of a split.

In the North, members of the Sticky 'Republican Clubs' have been severely embarrassed as to how to react. In Belfast, groups of their members have been seen watching the various marches together, not in hostile fashion, but more as a half-hearted attempt to appear as 'participating bystanders'. More definite action was taken by the party's councillor in Omagh, Frank McElroy, who, on Tuesday this week, joined an Irish Independence Party councillor and an SDLP councillor in a protest walk-out from Omagh district council in support of the hunger-strikers.

BROKEN

In the twenty-six counties, councillors belonging to the Sticky 'Work-
ers Party' have also broken with



Thomas MacGiolla, seated on the platform (left of photograph) at the Sticks' ard heis in December 1974, where ironically — as the platform posters show — a major theme was the end of internment and the release of political exiles recently for continuing to recognise that there are political prisoners in Ireland.

the party line. In Donegal, their county councillor Seamus Rodgers supported a motion from Sinn Féin's Eddie Fullerton condemning the treatment of the prisoners some months ago. He then, along with Fullerton, and one member each of Fine Gael, Fianna Fáil, and the Blaneyites, put his name to a letter calling a meeting to form the Donegal H-Block Action Committee.

And at the latest meeting of the county council, he was one of seven councillors who remained in the council chamber to unanimously pass an emergency resolution, again from Eddie Fullerton, urging Charles Haughey, to ask the British government to

grant the prisoners' five demands.

ANOTHER

In Tralee on Thursday 21st November, another party member, Tom Foley, who is a member of the urban district council spoke at an H-Block/Armagh meeting. In his speech he described the prison situation as arising out of the national question and declared class issue.

Elsewhere in Kerry, Redmond O'Sullivan, who was a county councillor for the Sticky 'Workers Party' until the last elections, is a member of the Killarney H-Block action committee as are, at least three of his closest election

workers.

And in Cork four members of the party in Mitchelstown, including their leading figure in the area, Mickey McEldowney, are reported to have been expelled from the party for helping to form the local H-Block action group.

In addition, several party members who are on trades councils around the country have been very reluctant to follow the party line when motions in support of the prisoners have come up for debate and been subsequently passed.

If MacGiolla imagines that his headline seeking outbursts in Dublin can hide this reality, he is sorely mistaken.

BRIT INFLEXIBILITY UNDER FIRE : PRISONERS DETERMINATION SHINES THROUGH

THE British government's inflexible attitude to the H-Block and Armagh crisis — with the men's hunger-strike almost through its sixth week and three women in Armagh jail now also on hunger-strike from December 1st — continues to draw growing criticism from concerned sections of the Irish people.

But with the men's condition becoming critical (they were moved to the prison hospital last Tuesday), and with their heroic determination winning increasingly widespread sympathy, the polarisation fostered within the nationalist community in the North (by leading elements of the Catholic middle-class, who were trying to put the brakes on the flourishing local H-Block action committees), has appeared to have passed its peak, and there are growing indications of unity against the ugly face of British inflexibility.

BACKING

The backing of the prisoners' five demands by the mid-Ulster Constituency Council of the SDLP, who described the demands as 'reasonable', the walk-outs from Fermanagh and Omagh councils by twelve nationalist councillors protesting against the British government's handling of the situation, and the largest nationalist mobilisations seen on the streets in ten years, are the healthy signs of a reasonably united people using its muscle in a fresh experience of peaceful and disciplined protests.

(Even Gerry Fitt, whilst attempting to maintain a tenuous consistency with his originally disastrous anti-prisoner statement, has slightly pulled in his horns and has emphasised that he is not against general prison reform.)

In the Free State a similar polarisation appears to have subsided, with H-Block campaigners gaining the upper hand in public sympathy. The grass-roots of Fine Gael have ignored their leader's directive not to involve themselves in H-Block activities, and Garret FitzGerald's defeat in the Donegal by-election, the debacle of the Leinster House '1970 Arms Crisis' debate, and the increase in Fianna Fáil's popularity according to a recent poll, have apparently chastened him and subdued him for the moment.

And Free State premier, Charles Haughey, who refused to repudiate the demands of the 'blanket men' during a recent Leinster House debate (and who must be seriously worried about the political repercussions in the Free State from the Brits' mishandling of the situation), raised the H-Block question during a meeting he had with his British counterpart, Margaret Thatcher, in Luxembourg last Monday.

WALK-OUTS

The council walk-outs came during council meetings in county Fermanagh, and Omagh in county Tyrone, last Tuesday. There had been a resolution on the agenda asking the Fermanagh council to write to the British government supporting the prisoners' demands but, before it was reached, SDLP member Thomas Murray stood up and said they were walking out in protest against the way the British government was dealing with the H-Block situation. The six SDLP members, two independents and one Irish Independence Party (IIP) member then left.

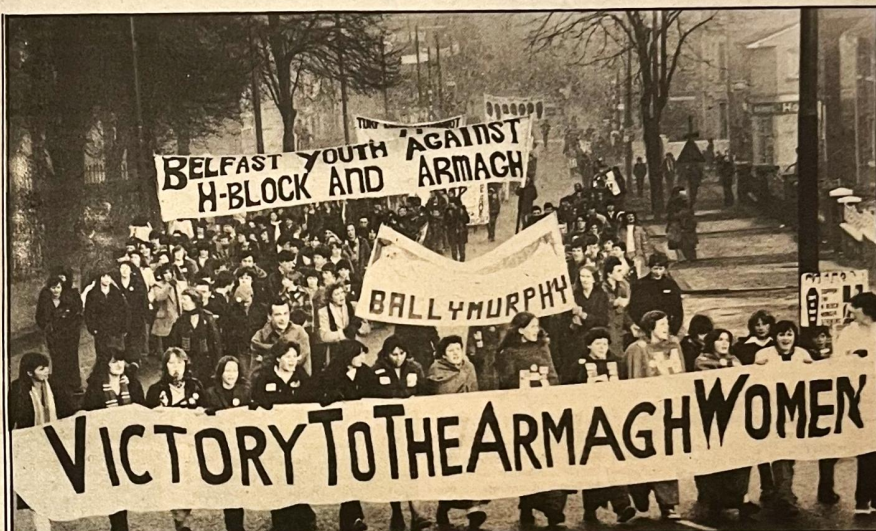
Fergus McAteer, co-chairperson of the IIP, has called for a convention of all anti-unionist district councillors to formulate a concerted plan on the hunger-strike issue. He said they could not be expected to keep the wheels of local government turning while the British government refused to accommodate the hunger strikers' 'humanitarian demands'.

In Omagh, three councillors, one SDLP, one IIP and one conscientious member of the so-called Republican Clubs (who are opposed to the demands of the prisoners) walked out.

Also on Tuesday the mid-Ulster Constituency Council of the SDLP described the

Polarisation passes its peak : growing criticism and widespread sympathy

BY PETER ARNLIS



Youth and women: two of the increasingly organised sections of the nationalist community, on the march in Belfast

five demands as "reasonable, basic demands that should be supported by everyone with an humanitarian feeling." This was a break from official party policy and is an indication of grass roots' pressure.

The constituency council correctly pointed out that support for the five demands could not be interpreted as support for any 'political or para-military grouping', such a suggestion being one of the methods used by FitzGerald in the South and Fitt in the North to scare off possible humanitarian support. The council said they were appalled at the recent hard-line attitude of Margaret Thatcher when she appeared to look on the basic demands as concessions, and they also expressed support for a statement issued by the Northern Catholic bishops the previous Thursday.

BISHOPS

The bishops' statement called for an end to violence and called upon the seven men to come off their hunger strike (and for their families to appeal to them to do so). The signatories included Bishop Daly and Cardinal O'Faich, who must be aware that the reason why the hunger-strike had been postponed for so long was to give their initiative a try. Speaking on British television last Tuesday night Bishop Daly admitted that he and Cardinal O'Faich "have already tried and failed."

Bishop Daly also spoke for the first time of what transpired at their meeting with direct-ruler Humphrey Atkins when they especially flew into London from the Bishops' conference in Rome on October 23rd. He said: "We arrived in London supposedly to a confidential meeting. About three hours before the meeting was due to take place came an announcement on radio to the effect that prisoners in Northern Ireland were going to be allowed to wear their own clothes, or civilian clothes."

"When we went to the meeting at 4.30 p.m. we discovered that the situation was not quite that but that it would be prison-issue clothing that was going to be given to prisoners. Now, we tried at that meeting to explain to the Secretary of

State and impress upon him that this simply would not work. He wasn't prepared to listen to our advice unfortunately, as, I'm afraid, all through those discussions (six in all) he didn't seem to wish to listen to our advice — I mean looking at it in retrospect and I regret that I have to say that."

This statement shows that the 'blanket men' had exhausted all avenues before embarking upon the hunger-strike. Responsibility for breaking the impasse rests with the British government whose breaking of the 1972 prison agreement and disastrous policy of criminalisation has led to this confrontation. As the Bishops' statement noted: "The hunger-strike would probably never have arisen if a more urgent and sensitive attempt had been made, long ago, to prevent the present situation from deteriorating."

SPECULATION

Speculation from two newspapers during the week went against the generally perceived view of British inflexibility and stated that the British position was not irreversible.

On Thursday 27th November the 'Irish Times', in its leading article, floated a story, "Mediation moves under way on H-Block protest", which was provided by a source, which did not wish to be identified, but which suggested that it had been in contact with both the prisoners and the British administration. (The only people with whom the prisoners would talk are friends, relatives and the prison chaplains.)

The British administration denied that there were any 'behind-the-scenes' moves or initiatives but this did not deter the 'Irish News', whose lead story on Saturday was 'Movement possible if Mediator is found', suggested SDLP leader John Hume for that role, and spoke confidently of 'NIO leaks'.

"There were fresh revelations last night," said the 'Irish News' that, "the Northern Ireland Office may be prepared to grant

one or more of the demands of the hunger-strikers provided a mediator acceptable to both sides can be found."

But these 'fresh revelations', if they were anything to begin with, went stale very quickly as the NIO by mid-afternoon stated that the Brits did not intend calling in "any mediators in any shape or form."

Having got its fingers burnt, like Cardinal O'Faich and Bishop Daly before it, the 'Irish News' editorial on Monday harangued the British: "The official response continues to be indifference and has developed into a no-surrender attitude."

MEETING

The other major development during the week was the meeting between Haughey and Thatcher. Their bi-annual review of Anglo-Irish relations (that is, the state of the British occupation), originally scheduled for Dublin in early December, has now been postponed because of the H-Block and Armagh crisis, and a date has not been firmly set for their next meeting. However, he did see her for half-an-hour (during a break in the EEC summit in Luxembourg) on Monday night and it was expected that he would press Thatcher to ease the situation by compromising and amending prison rules. It is generally believed that he did just that last Monday.

After the meeting Haughey explained his government's position: "Our entire efforts are directed to bringing forward some solution which will make sure that no lives are lost, directly as a result of the hunger-strike, or indirectly as a result of an escalation of violence."

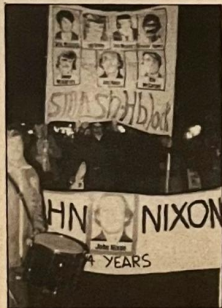
He did not say how Thatcher reacted, apart from suggesting that she was "very concerned about the situation." Nothing since has emerged to indicate if 'the lady' is for turning, though from now on the condition of the H-Block hunger-strikers will be critical, and the Brits will increasingly feel threatened by every new face on a march or protest, every new area of support and declaration of concern.

Armagh

THE series of estate meetings and torchlight processions in Lurgan and Armagh city, and in surrounding areas, continued in the last week.

On Tuesday 25th November over one thousand took part in a torchlight procession through Keady in South Armagh, despite a heavy RUC presence and harassment of demonstrators. The list of speakers included Mrs. McKearney, mother of hunger-striker Tommy; Teresa Trainor, sister of a blanket man; local action group chairman Eugene Casson, and Tony Fields (Sinn Féin). A significant development was the appearance of local football and camogie clubs on the Keady march.

At their annual convention on November 24th, the Pearse Og GFC (for which hunger-striker John Nixon played) condemned British brutality and expressed



Torchlight procession in Keady, on Tuesday 25th November

ed support for the blanket men on humanitarian grounds. The Armagh Harps GFC, the Armagh GAA supporters' club and the Armagh Irish National Foresters also support the prisoners' five demands.

On Wednesday 26th November a public meeting of H-Block activists in Armagh city and surrounding areas was held in the local clubrooms and was well-attended. Also that evening public meetings were held in Lurgan in the Shankill and Derrymacash estates, followed — on Tuesday evening — by public meetings in the Craigavon estates of Ardowen and Meadowbank.

On Friday evening a meeting of local youth groups met to form a Lurgan Youth Committee, and on Saturday, Sunday and Monday contingents from Lurgan supported marches in Monaghan and Belfast, and the picket outside Armagh jail.

On Tuesday evening a two-thousand-strong torchlight procession was held from Levine Road to a rally at Francis Street in Lurgan, organised by the Lurgan and Craigavon hunger-strike action committee. The crowd were addressed by Peter Corey (Lurgan Sinn Féin), Gerry Ruddy (hunger-strike action committee), Sean Kerr (Tyrone Sinn Féin) and Teresa Green, sister of hunger-striker Leo.

Derry

H-BLOCK protesters continued their series of marches, road-blocking and occupations over the past week, causing massive disruption to the city's traffic and commerce and clearly demonstrating to unionist vested interests the depth of nationalist feeling and concern for their political prisoners.

Thursday 27th November: Several hundred demonstrators staged hour-long road-blocking pickets at three points in the afternoon: outside Fort George, and at Buncrana Road and Strand Road.

Friday: Several hundred people occupied The Diamond in the city centre for one hour in the afternoon, stopping buses and other traffic and causing severe snarl-ups.

Saturday: About one thousand demonstrators marched from all over the city to a rally at the Guildhall Square at which the chairman of the local H-Block action committee, Paddy Logue, called on all nationalist councillors to walk out of the councils. This theme was repeated by Sinn Féin vice-president Gerry Adams who also said that those who called on the prisoners to call off their hunger-strike should also say whether or not they supported the prisoners' five demands. Other speakers were veteran republican Sean Keenan, former Armagh protestor Liz Lagura, Ann Mellon (a friend of Pauline McLaughlin) and

HUNGER-STRIKE PROTESTS: NORTH



H-Block protesters ending their token hunger-strike in Mountfield, County Tyrone, last Saturday

Jimmy McCartney, brother of hunger-striker Raymond.

Sunday: On the eve of the commencement of the Armagh hunger-strike, one thousand people converged with torchlights on the Guildhall for a rally. Speakers were Sean Keenan, Paddy Logue and Rose Hogan.

Monday: All commercial banking transactions in the city ground to a halt for an hour at eleven o'clock — the morning's banking rush hour — as demonstrators occupied and shut down all seven city-centre branches, as well as the Shantallow branch of the Allied Irish Bank. Banners were suspended from upstairs windows, where posters were stuck up. In the afternoon, two hundred protesters moved to The Diamond square and shut down Woolworth's store in Serryquay Street for one hour before marching down along Shipquay Street.

Other activities in County Derry included a fifty-six-hour vigil by H-Block supporters in Toomebridge which was followed by a several-thousand-strong torchlight rally which converged on the village from three points on the Antrim and Derry sides of the Bann. The rally was addressed by Marie Moore (Sinn Féin and comhairle), Liam Hannaway (Belfast Sinn Féin), Kevin Agnew (Sinn Féin) and Liam Haddock (Sinn Féin and comhairle).

Kevin Agnew was also one of the speakers on Sunday afternoon at a fifteen-hundred-strong march from Ballyknock to Loughgill chapel in north Antrim, which was led by four bands. And also that afternoon, a car cavalcade was staged from the parents' home of hunger-striker Tom McFeeley to the Castle Ballroom in Dungiven where an indoor public meeting was held.

Fermanagh Newry

FOLLOWING a recent call by the National H-Block Committee, nine nationalist councillors (the entire nationalist contingent present at the meeting) staged a walk-out from a meeting of Fermanagh District Council last Tuesday. The councillors — six SDLP members, one IIP member and two independents — left the remaining ten unionist councillors to contemplate their navel as SDLP councillor Tom Murray led the walk-out after one hour of the meeting, saying they were leaving because of the British government's "ineptitude in dealing with the H-Block situation".

The councillors went on to join twenty protesters picketing the meeting, outside Enniskillen town hall, where Councillor Patrick McCaffrey (IIP) addressed the crowd and said the councillors' boycott in support of the hunger-strikers was taken for humanitarian



Marching in Strabane last week

reasons.

At Ivinestown, on Sunday, thirty-four men walked on to the pitch during the half-time interval at the match between Fermanagh and Sligo. The men stood in silence for several minutes as two men toured the perimeter carrying a banner, inscribed 'Smash H-Block'. The protesters were members of the GAA in the South Fermanagh area.

A successful and enthusiastic Youth against H-Block committee has been established in Newry, comprising several hundred members. As well as participating in the recent Camlough to Newry march, the committee has staged a torchlight procession through the town, and on Saturday it picketed Woolworth's store in Newry's main street.

Fifteen hundred demonstrators took part in a torchlight procession on Wednesday 26th November along the Camlough Road.

Tyrone

WORK stoppages in a number of County Tyrone towns and walk-outs by nationalist councillors in Omagh (only hours after a similar walk-out in Fer-

managh) have signalled the beginning of the next phase of protest, complementary with continuing mass marches, pickets and occupations, which is vitally necessary as the hunger strike by three women in Armagh commences and the condition of their seven H-Block counterparts approaches a critical state.

Thursday 27th November: Work stoppages for a couple of hours during the afternoon affected Dungannon, where eight hundred workers and school children took part; Coalisland, where a similar number were involved; and Omagh and Cookstown where three hundred people took part in each town. A number of roads were blocked by marching demonstrators, and in Omagh, where demonstrators blocked the Derry Road, the RUC arrested five men (and charged them with assault) after the RUC had charged the crowd pushing and punching them. Later that evening seven hundred people attended a torchlight parade in Loughmacrory.

Friday: Over a thousand people took part in a torchlight procession in Pomeroy, and seven hundred supported an H-Block concert in Rock village.

Saturday: A token hunger-strike held in Mountfield ended in the evening where one hundred people attended at prayers.

Sunday: Almost seven hundred demonstrators travelled from different

parts of Tyrone to support the demonstration held in Belfast that afternoon. And non-unionist councillors meeting in Edendork passed a resolution in support of the prisoners' five demands.

Monday: Three hundred 'flying pickets' from Tyrone picketed Armagh jail for twenty minutes on the evening of the first day of the women's hunger-strike. They switched the venue of a proposed protest to Armagh at the last moment and ferried in the three hundred demonstrators, mostly by car.

The RUC were only able to delay a similar number who travelled in seven buses en route to the city. The successful picketers shouted slogans and sang songs which were clearly heard inside the jail, and the organisers promise that similar surprise actions will continue.

Tuesday: Rosary vigils were held in the evening throughout County Tyrone. But the most significant event, also in the evening, came when three members of Omagh District Council staged a walk-out from the council meeting shortly after it started, in support of the prisoners' demands and in condemnation of British government intransigence. Demonstrating the wide spectrum of support for the hunger-strikers, the councillors involved were: Patrick Donnelly (Irish Independence Party), Brendan Martin (SDLP) and Frank McElroy (Sticky 'Republican Clubs').

HUNGER-STRIKE PROTESTS: BELFAST



Belfast's Casement Park stadium (above), last Sunday, after the GAA cancelled a match to facilitate the hunger-strike campaigners.

A HUGE demonstration held in Belfast last Sunday afternoon again demonstrated the wide spectrum of support from all sections of the nationalist community which the prisoners' demands enjoy.

Almost as large as the six-county eve-of-hunger-strike rally held in Belfast on October 26th, this local march assembled in the Lower Falls and marched to a rally held in the Casement Park GAA ground in Andersonstown.

In a welcome move the GAA cancelled a match scheduled to take place in Casement Park and allowed marchers to rally there instead, and there were large numbers of GAA members actually present on the march, as well as supporters from cultural organisations and 'teachers against H-Block' who, earlier, signed a petition calling on the British government to support the prisoners' demands.

Speakers at the rally were Gerry Adams (Sinn Féin vice-president), Sean Flynn (IRSP), and a local trade unionist. Recently-released Armagh protestor Shirley Devlin and former blanket man Peter Kavanagh also spoke to a rapturous reception, and Casement Park almost exploded when the crowd was addressed by John McMullan who is currently 'on the blanket' in H-Block and who had been temporarily released on a few hours' 'compassionate parole'.

Some other local activities during the week included: **Monday:** Eight hundred took part in a march and rally through the New Lodge district, and in Short Strand an indoor public meeting was packed to capacity. Earlier in the day five Turf Lodge ex-prisoners were arrested by the British army and held in Springfield Road barracks for three hours after being caught suspending a support banner from a block of flats in Ardnamagh gardens in Turf Lodge.

Wednesday: Eight hundred took part in a march and rally through the New Lodge district, and in Short Strand an indoor public meeting was packed to capacity. Earlier in the day five Turf Lodge ex-prisoners were arrested by the British army and held in Springfield Road barracks for three hours after being caught suspending a support banner from a block of flats in Ardnamagh gardens in Turf Lodge.

Friday: Ex-prisoners and youth in the Turf Lodge area picketed the carriageway alongside the former Fort Monagh Brit base, and in Turf Lodge itself ex-prisoners began a series of thirty-six-hour hunger-strikes in relays. In Andersonstown, the local hunger-strike action committee occupied the

social security office for one hour, and in the city-centre protestors from Short Strand occupied the fourth floor of the College of Technology, while in Short Strand itself several scores of building workers downed tools for an hour in solidarity with the hunger-strikers and workers and relatives blocked the Mountpottinger Road for an hour. That evening, one hundred people picketed the local RUC barracks on Mountpottinger Road for an hour, despite harassment and sectarian abuse from the RUC.

Throughout Friday, Saturday and Sunday a seventy-two-hour vigil by ex-prisoners and RAC members took place in Ardoyne.

Sunday: Prior to the Belfast march three women dressed in blankets attended eleven o'clock mass at St. Luke's chapel in Twinbrook, in solidarity with the Armagh women hunger-strikers. (The previous Sunday, a similar protest was carried out by seven 'blanket men' in Twinbrook, in solidarity with the H-Block hunger-strikers.)

Monday: Four ex-prisoners, from Turf Lodge were arrested after scaling the top of the Albert clock in the city centre and hoisting a thirty-foot banner in support of the hunger-strikers. The men remained for almost an hour on the clock tower before the RUC climbed up and arrested them, and the banner was clearly visible to traffic entering the city from east Belfast.

In Turf Lodge itself, a picket was staged outside Fort Jericho and car horns were sounded for several minutes. A group of protestors from the New Lodge occupied the tax office in High Street for half-an-hour before dispersing.

Tuesday: Torchlight processions were held in the Lower Falls and in the Cloona/Glengoland area adjoining Twinbrook, while a march through Andersonstown Park by several hundred people ended with a picket of Andersonstown barracks.

Three hundred took part in the Lower Falls march, and a similar number took part in the march through Cloona and Glengoland, which witnessed an extraordinary mobilisation of Brits and RUC (outnumbering the demonstrators) in an apparent (and unnecessary) attempt to 'protect' the Cloona home of Alliance councillor John Cousins. Cousins' home was the scene of a peaceful picket two weeks ago following his congratulation of Gerry Fitt, and his hysterical outburst then apparently occasioned Tuesday's 'home protection'



A huge force of armed RUC men enforced a British government banning order against a students' H-Block march on Wednesday afternoon. Paisleyite Peter Robinson congratulated the RUC for their handling of the situation. This 'handing' included a brutal assault on a young woman, Agnes Catney, pictured (below, right) with her sister, Annie, at hospital having been kicked almost unconscious by the RUC.

service against local 'voters'.

Wednesday: On the recommendation of the RUC, direct-ruler Humphrey Atkins banned a march to the city hall organised by students against H-Block, thus maintaining Belfast city centre as an Orange preserve.

A one-thousand-strong crowd of students, and groups of supporters of the hunger-strikers from areas around Belfast, assembled at Queen's University for a march to the city hall, but a massive force of RUC stopped the march, and sealed off side-streets, preventing the march from moving off. After the banning a number of speakers addressed a rally outside the students' union attended by contingents from Queen's University, New University of Ulster, Ulster Polytechnic, Magee College, University College Dublin, and the Dublin School of Catering.

A counter-demonstration of one hundred loyalist students was led by Paisleyite rabble-rouser Peter Robinson

who congratulated the RUC for their handling of the situation. This 'handing' included a brutal assault on a young woman from the Markets district, returning home from the march.

Two RUC men attempting to snatch a banner from a group of protestors walking along Omas Street knocked twenty-one-year-old Agnes Catney to the ground, barely one hundred yards from her home, before kicking her almost unconscious. She had to be carried in a chair into an ambulance and had to receive hospital treatment.

A UTU crew on the spot apparently recorded the unprovoked assault — which was in the worst traditions of the RUC — but viewers at home saw only the small figure of Agnes curled up on the road-side, surrounded by shocked and angry neighbours.

That evening in Belfast a several-hundred-strong torchlight procession in support of the ten hunger-strikers took place in the New Lodge district.



Portrait
of a
hunger
striker



TOMMY MCK

A quiet, sincere, uncompromising

BY SEAMUS BOYLE

TOMMY MCKEARNEY is a very quietly spoken, twenty-eight-year-old Tyrone man. He was born in the small village of Moy, which is separated from the County Armagh border, and nearby Charlemont, by the fast flowing River Blackwater, which passes only a field away from the McKearneys' home.

He also has a strong affinity with County Roscommon, where his mother, Maura, was born and reared. Her father Tom Murray, was a veteran of the Tan War, and took the republican side during the civil war, becoming adjutant of the north Roscommon Brigade of the IRA.

Both Tommy and his grand-father Tom were, in their time (although separated by half a century) 'on the run' from the Brits and the Free Staters, a situation which Tommy's staunchly republican parents came to expect.

"I never saw anything else, but what I'm seeing today," says Mrs. McKearney. "You don't love to see your sons go out. You are worried naturally. But what can you do."

Her parents' home, the Murray house, was a frequent meeting place for republicans. Mrs. McKearney has fond memories, as a young child, of the late Moss Twomey (a Corkman and outstanding IRA leader, who became Chief of Staff) coming into the house, picking her up and setting

one of the oldest families in the south-east Tyrone area.

Kevin McKearney's parents were supporters of the republican struggle after the 1916 Rising, with some of his mother's family, the O'Neills from Ballymackleduff being involved in the IRA. His mother was also related to Joe McKelvey, deputy Chief of Staff of the IRA, who, along with Rory O'Connor, Dick Barrett and Liam Mellows, was executed by a Free State firing squad in Mountjoy jail in December 1922.

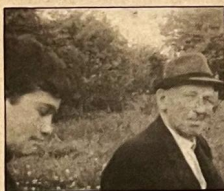
Maura and Kevin got married and settled down first in College-lane, which is just across the Blackwater, in County Armagh, and then in the Moy where they have lived for the past eighteen years.

ELDEST

Tommy, their eldest child, was born in September 1952, followed by Margaret and Padraig in 1954, Sean in 1956, Kevin in 1959 and Angela in 1968.

Mrs. McKearney recalls Tommy when young: "He was a quiet, dependable child, maybe because he was the oldest. I think the oldest in a family have a lot of weight put on them. For example, when I would be getting ready to go out, Tommy would have helped me by putting the younger ones' coats on, taking my place for odd jobs etcetera."

Being eldest in the family



Tommy with his grand-father, veteran republican Tom Murray.

her on his knee, while he chatted away to her father.

Just before Christmas 1968, old Tom Murray moved into the McKearney home in Moy, and Tommy's close relationship with his grand-father was fastened, until Tom's death in 1973 and his burial in his native Roscommon.

"They were very close," recalls Mrs. McKearney, "and, in fact, my father left his thirty-six acre farm and house in Roscommon to Tommy, which if it were not for these troubles, Tommy would be on now."

MOY

In 1949, as a young woman Maura had left County Roscommon to go to work in Dr Coyne's surgery in the Moy and it was there that she met Kevin McKearney, who along with his brother owned a butcher's shop in Main Street, where the McKearneys have now been in business for over forty-eight years.

The McKearney's roots in the Moy go back centuries: they are

Tommy had a heightened sense of responsibility.

One of the lesser advertised reasons for the hunger-strike being undertaken by the mature men was the victimisation of the teenage 'blanket men' by prison warders, who, when they realised it was useless attempting to crack the mature men, would beat and try to terrify the very youngest off the protest.

On a visit Tommy once spoke of his total frustration at hearing the helpless young lads being kicked and punched and screaming out for it to be stopped, while he could do nothing to intervene.

HISTORY

At primary school, Tommy was an eager reader, especially of history books, and not necessarily Irish history. He passed the 'eleven plus' and went to St. Patrick's Academy in Dungannon, the grammar school where Father Faul teaches. At St. Patrick's Tommy passed nine GCE 'O' levels and two 'A' levels — Ancient and Modern History.

Later he was to combine this knowledge with his brilliant grasp of Irish history, for lectures which he delivered night after night out of the cracks in his H-Block cell door to the joy of his 'blanket men' comrades, denied all other mental stimulation.

The three eldest boys were extremely close and went about together. "The first time they went to a teenage dance in Eden-dork," recalls Mrs. McKearney, "they were involved in an argument and got a hiding. They all stuck together, but Tommy took the brunt and came home the worst! He first had to be brought to the hospital for stitches!"

Tommy was a good footballer and local teams sought after him. He played for the Academy, and the Grange, and once played for Tyrone County Minor GAA team though it was his younger brother, Sean, who won all the medals.

DISRUPT

Like so many other thousands of families the suppression of the civil rights protests, and the intervention of the British army in 1969, was to disrupt the happy McKearney home and stamp suffering on their existence ever since.

Shortly after internment was introduced the British army and the RUC raided their home and



Spring 1964, at the Moy school. FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Tommy (now on hunger-strike), Margaret (now South), Padraig (now held on remand in Crumlin Road jail), and Sean (killed in a premature bomb explosion years later).

took away sixteen-year-old Padraig who was put in Long Kesh. The family decided that Tommy would be better out of the way, and from this period on Tommy, then aged 19, never returned to sleep at home.

Tommy committed himself to the republican cause and quickly rose through the ranks and was extremely popular throughout Tyrone.

In June 1973, his comrade and best friend, Paddy Carty, was killed on active service in Omagh, along with Sean Loughran, a married man who had left England to return to his native land because of 'the troubles' and Dermot Crowley their comrade from Cork. (Tommy would have been with them, but for other business which arose and detained him.)

TRAUMATIC

But 1974 was the most traumatic year for the McKearneys.

Dawn raids for Margaret, then aged 20, meant that she had to move South. And young Sean, then aged 18, and even quieter than Tommy, had been inevitably drawn into the struggle and joined 'B' Company (Moy) of the 1st Battalion of the IRA's East Tyrone Brigade. On a commercial bombing operation on March 13th 1974, along with his life-long friend, Eugene Martin, also from Moy, tragedy struck when a bomb exploded prematurely killing both young Volunteers.

Tommy took Sean's death very badly. They were very close and he felt all the worse because he couldn't attend the funeral for fear of arrest.

Then, to crown that year's misfortune, Padraig and Tommy were arrested: Padraig in the North,

eventually being sentenced to seven years for allegedly causing an explosion, and Tommy being arrested in Dublin and sentenced to one year's imprisonment in Mountjoy Jail for IRA membership.

Padraig served his time as a political prisoner and was released in August 1977 but only saw Tommy on a few occasions — the major one being at Margaret's wedding that September, a few weeks before Tommy's arrest in Coalisland. Padraig has not seen Tommy since, and he is once again behind bars as a republican prisoner in Crumlin Road jail since August of this year.

The McKearneys were again in the news in 1975 as a result of a

major blunder by police. Margaret, then a dangerous woman when in fact she was a Scotswoman, was said that it was taken from her by an source who seized opportunity to snare picture."

Relatedly, misreading implications of this, the story and a photograph had been found in a raid in Manchester. The photograph was not alleged, the family Val McCann published the police of 'at-



Tommy (aged 3) boxing with his father.



The two young boys are life-long friends Eugene Martin and Tommy McKearney at their first communion. Eleven years later, they died on active service together.

McKEARNNEY

Promising socialist



Margaret (who had to be removed from the bomb explosion ten

under by the British... Margaret, then aged 21, headlines as "the most woman in Britain,"... ct she was in Dublin, ...ard issued a photo-... Press Association and... "was taken in south-... by an information... seized a unique... to snatch a quick

realising the political... of this, they then deny... and said the photo-... been found in a house... Chester. Although the... was not of Margaret as... family solicitor, ...n publicly accused... of 'attempting legal



in (left) and Sean... as IRA Volunteers,



The McKearney family in 1971, just before the introduction of internment and the break-up of the family. BACK ROW, FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Tommy, Kevin, Sean and Padraig. FRONT ROW: Father, Angela, mother and Margaret.

murder' — an accusation which turned out to be only too tragically true; a few weeks later, loyalist gunmen shot dead two elderly people, Peter and Jane McKearney who lived just outside of Moy, but who were not related to the McKearneys.

QUIET

Tommy who is small and of slight build (a point which has told on him during the hunger-strike) never, according to his comrades of those days, raises his voice, and yet his determination shines through, and one of them says he had 'nerves of steel'. He also had a sense of humour and when stopped at checkpoints often offered the soldiers, who were looking for him, cigarettes and a light.

His politics are variously described as 'very socialist', and 'an uncompromising socialist', and from the H-Blocks Tommy has drawn up lectures on governmental structures and on small farmers.

As well as being active in Tyrone, Tommy moved into Fermanagh, but he billeted mostly in the Coalisland / Moy area, eventually being arrested in October

1977 out of a house in Coalisland. A family with whom he quite regularly stayed describe him as being a 'real gentleman' and 'very quiet at first'.

"He often helped the kids with their homework and would get up and make everyone tea. He was the type of person whom we got used to and became part of the family.

"One night we were out and Tommy, who doesn't normally take any more than a bottle of stout, was joined by a few of his comrades. They pumped different drinks into him, and mixed drinks none of which he was used to. When we came home he was giggling his head off! It was perhaps the lightest moment he had had in all those years of pressure and the ever-present threat of death or arrest.

"The children just adored him. We called him 'Tommy Black' and said he was a bar man in the Four Seasons Hotel in Monaghan. Every time we drive past the hotel they shout that's where Tommy works! Then when the hunger-strike began and Tommy's photo was on TV the daughter, who hasn't seen

him in over three years, said: 'there's Tommy Black, daddy'.

"We last saw Tommy on the Sunday night before he was arrested early the following Tuesday morning."

CASTLEREAGH

On October 18th 1977, Tommy was finally arrested. He was taken to the RUC barracks in Dungannon and then to Castlereagh for interrogation and a severe beating.

Television journalist Peter Taylor covers Tommy's case (which also featured in Amnesty International's June '79 Report) in his recent book, 'Beating the Terrorists?'

He says:

"When Dr Irwin saw him at Townhall Street a week later, he was pale, nervous and exhausted. He had a black eye that looked fairly recent and bruises whose colour suggested they were five to six days old. His forehead was swollen and many of the muscles at the back of the neck, forearm and abdomen were swollen and tender. His fingers were trembling.

"At the beginning of his examination, McKearney was reluctant

to complain or say anything about his interviews. It was only after Dr Irwin had questioned him about his injuries that he was prepared to admit that he had been assaulted....

"McKearney alleged that he had been held by the elbow whilst his wrist was bent; that he had been punched in the stomach, slapped around the face and grabbed around the throat until he nearly passed out; and that his fingers were also bent. The following day, Friday, 21st October, he alleged he was beaten again. He was made to remain in a crouch position for long periods. On Monday, 24th October, he said the beatings started again....

McKearney alleged that his head and trunk were covered with a black plastic sack, the type used for laundry and refuse collection. He said that he was beaten around the head while the bag was pulled tight around his throat. He managed to tear a hold in the bag so he could breathe.

"When he examined McKearney, Dr Irwin was angry. The prisoner had come from Castlereagh, pale and trembling, with a black eye, bruising and abrasions and no note from the medical officer at Castlereagh to explain how the injuries had been received."

When Tommy's father, and younger brother Kevin, saw him after his Castlereagh ordeal they were shocked and needed no convincing that he had been tortured.

H-BLOCK

Despite the fact that the police doctor, Robert Irwin, testified



Tommy's sister, Margaret, speaking at an H-Block meeting in Dublin's Mansion House.

that Tommy was beaten, and that a key witness stated that Tommy was not one of those who held her at gunpoint, an alleged statement was ruled admissible and Tommy, after fourteen months on remand, was sentenced to life imprisonment with a minimum recommendation that he serve twenty-five years for allegedly killing a UDR man, possession of arms and ammunition, and assault.

For almost two years now Tommy has been on the blanket in H3-Block of Long Kesh, where he is presently hospitalised.

His parents say that three weeks before the hunger-strike started Tommy told them on a visit that the men were going on hunger-strike and that he would be among them. "Naturally we were shocked," they said, "but then we accepted his reasons."

He said to us: "I'll put my cards on the table. I'm going on hunger-strike. I and six others have volunteered.. If and when I die I want to be brought back to Roscommon and be buried alongside my granda... Don't let people try to influence you, your only friends will be the Republican Movement."

"If I die, never let the family be ashamed. If I die, I'll die in the knowledge that my life was for the cause and for the other boys here. This will break the Blocks. It may be too late for me, but I've given this a lot of thought. I did not decide lightly. If at my funeral the press say, 'see how the IRA let your son die', just say, 'my son died an Irish soldier, not a British criminal'..."

Since the hunger-strike began Mr. and Mrs. McKearney have been at protests over the length and breadth of Ireland. Mrs. McKearney has attended a press conference in the British House of Commons and has met Free State premier Charles Haughey over the H-Block issue. Tommy's brother Kevin was on protest outside Leinster House, as has been Margaret, and young Angela spoke at the recent big rally in Coalisland.

Speaking of Tommy, an old friend with whom he often billeted, says: "If he was ever guilty of anything he was guilty of over-sincerity. No one I ever met could match up to the calibre of Tommy McKearney."

America

THE Pennsylvania State Legislature has become the fourth such American body to pass a resolution on the H-Block and Armagh prisoners. They urge the United States government "to petition the prime minister of Great Britain to cease their grievous mistreatment of these brave men and women, and promptly return them to their previous status as political prisoners."

The town council of Upper Darby in the same state has adopted a similar motion.

The powerful Californian Labour Federation, AFL-CIO, which represents nearly two million workers has sent a telegram to other trade unions around the world, including the British TUC, urging them to use their influence towards a restoration of political status.

The American Labour Committee for Human Rights in Northern Ireland has sent a message to the British government demanding the restoration of political status. The message was signed by Thomas Gleason, president of the International Longshoremen's Association, which has also stated that it will boycott British goods if a hunger-striker dies.

Last week the offices of the *Washington Post* were picketed in protest at its pro-British line when reporting on Ireland. A delegation consisting of former blanket man Fra McCann and two Noraid members, Mary Baggerly and Jack O'Brien met the editor urging him to alter his position. The protest received maximum coverage on local television.

On Monday 1st December, a Catholic priest began a three day token hunger-strike dressed in a blanket outside the United Nations headquarters in New York. The priest, Fr Joseph McVeigh of the Clogher diocese in Ireland, was due to deliver a letter of protest to the British consulate at the end of his fast.

Belgium

THE visit of British Queen Elizabeth to Brussels last week was the focus of much activity in support of the hunger-strikers.

On Monday 24th November she was besieged by demonstrators on her way into a gala ballet, and the following day smoke bombs were hurled at her as she went to address the EEC parliament.

Also on Tuesday several Belgian MPs called at the British embassy to express their concern about the hunger-strikers. In the afternoon the British tourist office in Brussels was occupied by protestors.

The two Irish solidarity groups, 'Collectif Irlandaise Libre' and 'Werk-groepje Ierland' have been promoting the formation of a National Committee for the defence of Irish Political Prisoners.

Already many prominent individuals and organisations have expressed support for the hunger-strikers' five demands. These include trade union leaders, members of the Belgian senate, the president of the Communist Party, university professors, students, writers and lawyers.

Britain

LONDON

A number of public meetings and street leaflettings were again held in London, and a number of resolutions passed by prominent bodies.

On Thursday 27th November the general management committee of the Labour Party's Vauxhall branch passed a resolution in support of the hunger-strikers' five demands and political status, and agreed to affiliate to the Charter '80 campaign. In the past week too, support for the demands has come from the Labour Party's Hammersmith North branch.

About forty people picketed Amnesty International's British office on Friday to put pressure on them to act to save Pauline McLaughlin's life. The picket was organised by the London Women's Co-ordinating Committee on Armagh.

On Saturday one hundred people marched from Cricklewood in north London to Kilburn Square where a rally was held. The march was organised by London IRSP and supported by Sinn Fein, TOM, RCG and RCT.

On Monday the influential British newspaper, *The Guardian* carried — for the third time — an editorial recommending (albeit in a roundabout way) that the British government make concessions to the prisoners. And later

HUNGER-STRIKE PROTESTS: ABROAD



that day hunger-strike supporters dropped stink bombs amidst lunch-time patrons of Fortnum and Mason's exclusive store. The intervention took place in the confines of Fortnum's luxurious food hall, and as its rich and privileged shoppers scattered in panic, the demonstrators claimed their actions were to give people a whiff of the intolerable conditions of republican prisoners in H-Block and Armagh.

A welcome development this week has been a statement from the influential Haldane Society of Social Lawyers which has endorsed a resolution which last month was passed by the congress of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers held in Malta. The resolution, on general prison reform in the North, in effect endorses the five demands of the prisoners on protest and calls for restoration of full remission of sentence for those prisoners, as well as calling for a British withdrawal and for a complete overhaul of the judicial system here.

In central London this week the prominent socialist bookshop 'Collectif' is holding an 'Irish week' with a window display on the hunger-strike. At the end of the week, on December 7th, a major demonstration in support of the hunger-strikers is being held in London.

LEEDS

A number of support activities have been organised in Leeds in the past fortnight.

On Saturday 22nd November, Leeds RCG held a street meeting in a busy shopping area, addressing shoppers through a megaphone and displaying placards supporting the protesting prisoners. The meeting carried on till its agreed time despite police harassment which included seizing RCG literature.

The following Friday the RCG organised a public meeting in Leeds Trades Hall. Statements of solidarity were read out by representatives of the Leeds University Students' Society and Turkish Progressives (Leeds), and by Leeds TOM and Leeds IMG. A collection was taken up, to be forwarded to the National H-Block Committee.

COVENTRY

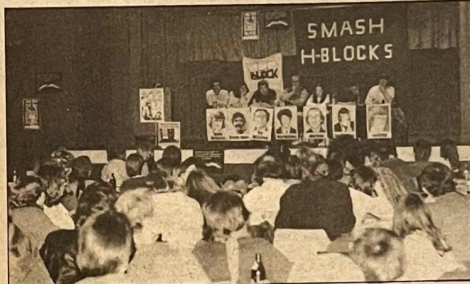
LEAFLETTING of the shopping precinct, a blanket protest, a book-stall and petitioning, form part of the activities each Saturday of the Coventry hunger-strike action committee. In addition, the committee is supporting Birmingham Sinn Fein in their Sunday leafletting of Catholic churches in Coventry.

A twenty-four hour fast on December 10th (International Human Rights Day) is being organised by the Coventry Women's group, supported by the action committee, in support of the Armagh hunger-strikers and Pauline McLaughlin.

EDINBURGH

NINE people were arrested on Saturday afternoon in the centre of Edinburgh following an open-air meeting organised by the RCG in support of the hunger-strike. After fifteen minutes of the meeting police moved in to arrest three of those taking part, later charging them with breach of the peace, loitering, and illegal use of a megaphone. At a peaceful picket of the local police station afterwards police moved in and

above: local television interviews demonstrators protesting against the pro-British bias of the *Washington Post*; below: a five-hundred-strong meeting in Frankfurt recently, addressed by Kieran Nugent and Maureen Gibson



arrested another six, charging them with obstruction.

GLASGOW

A successful public rally was held in Glasgow city centre on November 22nd, organised by the RCG and supported by the Scottish Hunger-Strike Action Committee, 'Socialist Organiser', Sinn Fein and the Troops Out Movement. The rally lasted for two hours during which speakers outlined the situation in the H-Blocks and Armagh and distributed three thousand leaflets. It is the first such activity of its kind held in loyalist-dominated Glasgow city centre in many years.

Canada

FORMER blanket man Raymond Crane has been continuing his tour of Canada gaining significant support from the labour movement and radical political organisations in French Canada.

On Monday 17th November he attended a fund-raising concert in Charlottetown Nova Scotia, attended by nearly five hundred people. On Tuesday he gave an interview to Canadian radio and a newspaper and spoke at a university meeting sponsored by Catholic and Protestant chaplains. This meeting was filmed by television and went out on the evening news. The same evening Raymond had a one-hour meeting with Bishop Spence of Charlottetown.

On Wednesday 19th November he gave several more interviews to the press and a second interview to Canadian radio for its week-end current affairs programme.

More interviews followed a meeting on Thursday 20th November at Acadia University in Wolfville, at which Raymond spoke. The meeting itself was filmed for cable television.

On Sunday 22nd November Raymond spoke at after-mass meetings in Charlottetown and Surrey and was warmly received by both priests and parishioners.

A resolution supporting the five demands, passed by a section of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, is to be presented to the forthcoming Convention of the Ontario Federation of Labour.

Catalonia

FORMER Armagh protest prisoner Eileen McConville, and Richard Behal of Sinn Fein's Foreign Affairs Bureau, began a tour of Catalonia on Saturday 29th November with a visit to the historic monastery of Monserrat (which figured prominently during the Spanish Civil War), where eighty monks signed the international H-Block petition.

On Monday 1st December, the delegation was received by the president of the Catalan parliament, Herri-barrers, who pledged his support.

Support for the hunger-strikers has also come from the Esquerra Republicana Catalana, who have several MPs in the Catalan parliament, and from the Human Rights Commission of the parliament.

The delegation has also received full backing from the Confederación Nacional de Trabajo, which has a membership of over one million workers.



EILEEN MCCONVILLE — former Armagh protestor

Denmark

ON Saturday 29th November, Joe Austin, of Belfast Sinn Fein, addressed the annual congress of the political party 'Ventse Socialisterne' on the current hunger-strike situation. He received a standing ovation and was publicly congratulated by the party's six MPs.

The congress passed a resolution pledging itself to work for the restoration of political status and condemning British imperialism in Ireland.

A collection for the H-Block Appeal Fund was taken up and all the delegates at the conference signed the international petition.

On Sunday former Armagh protest prisoner Maureen Gibson and former blanket man Kieran Nugent arrived in Copenhagen and they too attended the 'Ventse Socialisterne' congress where Maureen's address to the delegates received a tumultuous ovation.

On Monday 1st December, the H-Block/Armagh delegation was received at the city hall in Copenhagen, and had lunch with various civic dignitaries.

The following day the delegation met more civic leaders in Copenhagen and several Danish MPs.

Flanders

SINCE the visit of the European H-Block/Armagh delegation to Flanders, many organisations and prominent individuals have expressed support publicly for the hunger-strikers.

They include twenty-five socialist senators, the chairman of the governing Flemish Socialist Party, the chairman of the Flemish regional government, the chairman of the Flemish National Party, and seven other MPs. The Bishop of Limburg has also signed, as have youth organisations, peace groups, cultural groups, actors and writers.

France

A RING of steel now surrounds the British embassy in Paris because of the numerous protests aimed at it in recent weeks. The embassy phone is also reported to be left unanswered.

The powerful Confederation of Democratic Trade Unions has condemned repression in Ireland and come out strongly for political status. Several staff members at the Sorbonne University in Paris have sent an appeal to the British embassy calling for action on the hunger-strike.

A successful concert in aid of the hunger-strike fund was organised by the Irish solidarity group 'Comité Irlandais' last weekend.

Germany

THE European delegation of Maureen Gibson, Kieran Nugent and Dave Farrell toured West Germany from November 21st to 29th receiving wide media coverage.

On Friday 21st November the delegation arrived in Bochum and gave several press interviews. The same evening they spoke at a meeting of two hundred people.

In Frankfurt the delegation addressed a meeting of five hundred people, with major media coverage, and on arrival in Berlin on Tuesday 25th November they met reporters from the Berlin press, West German press agencies, radio and television, and a reporter from the Soviet news agency TASS.

Maureen Gibson was interviewed for a women's programme on Berlin radio.

In the afternoon the delegation met representatives of groups working on behalf of German political prisoners.

'The Anti-Imperialist Collective' in Heidelberg and the 'International Commission for the Protection of Prisoners against Conditions of Isolation' have expressed support for the hunger-strikers. Other messages of support have been received from prominent sportsmen, writers and lawyers.

Norway

A MOTION of support for the five demands of the hunger-strikers was adopted unanimously by the Students Society in Trondheim, Norway, at a meeting on Saturday 22nd November.

Russia

ON Monday 1st December Soviet television praised the seven hunger-strikers as fighters for civil rights. Broadcaster Lev Novikov referred to the "courageous seven who are on hunger-strike in the Long Kesh concentration camp."

Dublin

ON Wednesday 26th November, over one hundred young people took part in a torchlight march through Greenhills estate in South Dublin, organised by Youth Against H-Block and Armagh. A meeting after the march was addressed by recently-released 'blanket man' Peter Kavanagh and Eilish Carlisle, sister of a 'blanket man'.

On the same evening, a meeting held by Trinity College action group was attended by around one hundred students. The meeting, chaired by Noel Murphy, was addressed by Terry Hughes, brother of hunger-striker Brendan, barrister Seamus Barrett and Rose Dugdale.

On Thursday 27th November, two hundred Dublin building workers stopped work for the afternoon and marched to the British embassy and the ICTU office in Ballsbridge. Letters were handed in calling on the British government to concede the five demands and for the ICTU to back the call. The march was organised by the workers following a week of 'on-site' meetings, which were addressed by Margaret McKearney, sister of hunger-striker Tommy, and by Paddy Healy, Vincent Dempsey and Paddy Bolger of the National H-Block Committee's trade union group.

All the sites visited were represented on the march. A meeting at the British embassy was addressed by Terry Hughes, Paddy Healy and Peter Kavanagh.

On Friday 28th November, a lobby of relatives of the H-Block hunger-strikers and Dublin trade unionists requested a meeting with the National Executive Council of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions meeting in Dublin. The executive council refused to meet the delegation, and although they said that H-Block was on the agenda of the meeting, no statement was subsequently issued.

Later the same evening, thirty members of the Dublin Students Against H-Block group occupied the offices of the Union of Students in Ireland (USI) in the city centre, demanding that the USI ends its silence on the H-Block issue, and acts in accordance with resolutions concerning the H-Block conditions passed at its 1980 congress. The six-hour occupation took place whilst USI officers were leading a student occupation of Free State Department of Education offices in pursuance of an increase in grants.

The H-Block protestors' occupation ended when the students' executive issued a press statement condemning the present H-Block conditions and calling for immediate action from the British government.

On Saturday 29th November, a meeting at the roundabout in Arane, which followed a march, attracted a large attendance. The meeting was chaired by Dermot O'Hara of Dublin Sinn Féin, replacing Niall Taylor of the local cumann who was arrested on his way to the meeting. The meeting was addressed by writer Ulick O'Connor, Paddy Bolger, Seamus Crowe of the Armagh Solidarity group, and Rose Dugdale. Following the meeting the Malahide Road was blocked in protest at Niall Taylor's arrest. He was released four hours later.

On the same afternoon, also on the northside of the city, almost one hundred people took part in a torchlight march in Finglas. The meeting was chaired by Joe McDonagh of the local action group, and addressed by Terry Hughes, trade unionist Dermot Whelan, Eibhlín ní Sheidhir of the Armagh Solidarity Committee and Des Dixon of the local action group.

Also on Saturday, a car cavalcade took place in south Dublin touring through Drimmagh, Crumlin, Walkinstown, Tallaght and Kilmacanogue. Loud-speaker equipment was used to call for support for the British embassy march this Saturday, and leaflets were distributed at all the shopping centres en route. The Connolly Youth Movement, at its annual conference in Dublin last weekend, resolved overwhelmingly to support the fight for political status and to take part actively in the National H-Block campaign.

Other declarations of support appeared in Saturday's 'Irish Times' where a joint letter from ITGWU general secretary Michael Mullen, writers Benedict Kiely, Ulick O'Connor and Francis Stuart, and Abbey Theatre director Tomas MacAnna backed the hunger-strikers' demands, as did a letter from Michael O'Riordan, general secretary of the Communist Party of Ireland.

And during last week two more organisations issued statements in support of the hunger-strikers. The Operative Plasterers' and Allied Trades Society unanimously passed a resolution condemning the H-Block conditions, and the

HUNGER-STRIKE PROTESTS: SOUTH



Several thousand people on the march in Monaghan last Saturday

Irish Sovereignty Movement expressed its support for the five demands of the hunger-strikers on humanitarian grounds.

In a Radio Eireann interview on Sunday Thomas Hammerberg, secretary-general of Amnesty International said that he had urged Humphrey Atkins to take a more flexible approach to the H-Block hunger-strikers. "We are quite convinced that there are areas where it is possible for the British authorities to take steps to open up the situation," he said.

Cavan

IN the last few weeks every church in Cavan has had after-mass meetings, and posters and slogans supporting the hunger-strikers cover the county. Public meetings have been held in Ballyconnell and Blacklion, addressed by a variety of local speakers including local Sinn Féin county councillor Charlie Boylan.

On Sunday 30th November a function in Swanlinbar was addressed by Maura McCrory of the National H-Block Committee. On Tuesday a number of young men from West Cavan began a sponsored walk to Dublin to arrive in time for the British embassy march on Saturday.

Clare

ON Saturday 29th November, four members of the Shannon H-Block Action Group managed to scale Bunratty Castle and hang H-Block and Armagh banners and posters from its ramparts. Two hundred people attended a meeting outside.

On Sunday evening, a special mass was said for the hunger-strikers by Fr. Hugh of Corofin, after which a large proportion of the village attended a meeting addressed by Joe Stagg of the National H-Block Committee and former Long Kesh prisoner Frank Johnson. A local action group was formed following the meeting.

On the same evening a well-attended meeting in Kilkeel was addressed by Kathleen Greene, who has two sons 'on the blanket', and Niall Lennoch of the National H-Block Committee.

Cork

SPEAKING at a commemoration of the Kilmichael ambush in Cork, in which seventeen British auxiliaries were killed by Barry's Flying Column, former Fianna Fáil minister, Kevin Boland, urged a massive show of public opinion to force the Dublin government to act on behalf of the hunger-strikers. "It is a matter of fact, not of opinion, that they are political prisoners and that there is no gain either to Irish or British society

in the pretence that they are not", he said.

Donegal

DONEGAL County Council, at their most recent meeting, suspended standing orders in order to pass an emergency resolution urging Charles Haughey to ask the British government to grant the five demands of the H-Block hunger-strikers. The resolution, which was proposed by Sinn Féin councillor Eddie Fullerton, received the support of Sticks' councillor Seamus Rodgers in defiance of his party's policy.

The same day, the executive committee of the Donegal GAA county board issued a statement asking all GAA clubs to join them in sending telegrams to the British and Free State governments calling for immediate action to bring to an end the H-Block hunger-strike.

Also in the county a meeting of the Ballyshannon branch of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union unanimously passed a resolution calling on the Irish Congress of Trade Unions to act now in furtherance of the demand that Britain concede the five demands of the prisoners.

A relay walk from Ballyshannon to Dublin, to join the British embassy march, left the town on Sunday morning and by Wednesday was in Mullingar. Public meetings were held en route in Sligo, Carrick-on-Shannon and Longford.

Kerry

ON Saturday 29th November, a torchlight procession was held through the centre of Tralee ending at the Mall, where five hundred people attended a public meeting. Speakers at the meeting included George Stagg of the Sinn Féin Ard Comhairle, and Liam Cotter and George Rice of Kerry Sinn Féin.

On Sunday morning after-mass meetings in Causeway, Ballyduff and Ballyunion were addressed by local speakers, including Sinn Féin councillor Robert Beasley.

Kildare

ON Saturday 29th November, the Kildare action group held a token fast outside the post office in Newbridge. During the afternoon, a well-attended meeting was addressed by Joe Stagg and Patrick Saunders of the National H-Block Committee.

Six hundred students at Maynooth College attended a meeting on Tuesday 2nd December, organised by the Students Union in conjunction with the college H-Block/Armagh action group.

The meeting was in the form of a debate with John Cushman of the Alliance Party and Gerry Grainger, president of

the Union of Students in Ireland, both speaking against support for the prisoners.

Bernadette McAleisley, Rose Dugdale, and a former H-Block remand prisoner Gerald Gibney spoke on behalf of the prisoners. College authorities attempted to prevent the meeting by barring the speakers from the campus, but it went ahead, despite this, off-campus.

Kilkenny

IN Kilkenny, on Sunday 30th November, there was a large picket on the Newpark Hotel, where the Flanna Fail youth conference was in session. Terry Hughes, brother of hunger-striker Brendan, was allowed to enter the hotel to hand in a letter to Free State premier Charles Haughey, whom Terry spoke with for about five minutes. Haughey expressed his concern about the H-Blocks and Armagh, and particularly for the families of the hunger-strikers. He said that he was not too pessimistic about his forthcoming meeting with Mrs. Thatcher on the issue.

Laois

A meeting on Saturday night, 29th November in Portlanning, was addressed by Kathleen Greene, mother of two 'blanket men'. The following morning an after-mass meeting was held in the town centre.

Longford

A meeting in the Market Square, Longford on Saturday 29th November was chaired by Sean Lynch of Sinn Féin, chairman of Longford County Council. Speakers included Tony Carbury and Oliver Moylan, independent members of Longford Urban District Council, Lily Fitzsimmons of Belfast RAC, local journalist Eugene McGloin and Ruairi O'Bradaigh, president of Sinn Féin.

Louth

ON Tuesday 2nd December, Paddy Bolger, of the National H-Block Committee's trade union committee, addressed a meeting of workers at the Wexford shoe factory in Dundalk, which has a workforce of six hundred. Speaking at the invitation of ITGWU shop stewards, Paddy Bolger particularly urged support for the December 10th industrial day of action.

Mayo

IN recent weeks the Mayo action group has set up four sub-committees in the county. A meeting in Castlebar on November

19th was addressed by Margaret McKearney.

Several buses and cars travelled from the county to Dublin for the Leinster House march on November 22nd.

On Saturday 29th November a token fast was held in Castlebar.

Meath

THREE hundred people attended a meeting in Castle Street, Kells, last Saturday night, which was addressed by Fr. Piaras O'Duill, chairperson of the National H-Block Committee, Eibhlín ní Sheidhir of the Armagh Solidarity Committee, Terry Hughes, and local councillor Dermot Forde.

Monaghan

SEVERAL thousand people attended a march and meeting in Monaghan town on Saturday 29th November. Overnight snow did not prevent contingents travelling from every county in Ulster with the major turnout from Monaghan, Tyrone, Cavan and Armagh.

The march through the town to Church Square was led by seven blanket-clad figures and included bands from the New Lodge Road in Belfast, Knockatallan in Monaghan and South Armagh.

The meeting chaired by Caoimhín O'Caolain of the Monaghan H-Block/Armagh Action Committee, was addressed by Fr. Piaras O'Duill, Maura McCrory and Bernadette McAleisley of the National H-Block Committee, Margaret McKearney, and Sinn Féin vice-president Daibhi O'Connell.

The march and meeting received television coverage from RTE, UVF and BBC.

In Castleblayney, on Sunday night, several hundred people paraded through the town in a torchlight procession to a meeting addressed by Tom Green, brother of hunger-striker Leo, Tony Fields of Armagh, Bernadette McAleisley and Margaret McKearney. In the morning all masses in the town were leafleted.

Offaly

A very successful meeting took place in Tuam, on Sunday 30th November, after the Roscommon versus Offaly GAA football match. Lily Fitzsimmons and Kathleen Greene were among the speakers.

Tipperary

ON Saturday 29th November, members of the Carrick-on-Suir H-Block Action group held a display on the town's Main Street. The following day a churchgate meeting was held at Kilsallish and was addressed by Jackie Phelan of the local action group and Eddie O'Doherty of Carrick-on-Suir district council.

Waterford

A meeting of three hundred trade unionists in Waterford on Monday 1st December was addressed by local branch secretaries of the ITGWU and ATGWU. A unanimous resolution was passed pleading all those present to walk off their jobs on Thursday this week for a hunger-strike march and meeting, as a build up to the 'day of action' on December 10th.

Westmeath

A successful meeting was held in Kibbegan on Saturday 29th November and was addressed by Lily Fitzsimmons and Bridie McAleisley of the local action group.

An after-mass meeting in Moate on Sunday was addressed by Lily Fitzsimmons and Ruairi O'Bradaigh. Members of the local action group spoke at other churches.

Wexford

AT their November meeting, Ennisclorthy Urban council passed a motion calling on Charles Haughey to take action aimed at getting the British government to concede the prisoners' five demands. The motion was proposed by local Sinn Féin councillor Sean Doyle.

On Sunday 16th November after-mass meetings in Ballyfad, Kilanerin and Castletown were addressed by members of the Gorey H-Block committee including Joe Cullen, Oliver Murray and Diarmuid O'Suilleabhain.

SINN FEIN AGMS

Cabra.

THE Annual General Meeting of the Frank Carroll cumann, Sinn Fein, Cabra, Dublin, took place on Saturday 22nd November. The following officer board was elected:- chair: Dermot Whelan; treasurer: John Phelan; secretary: Sheila Fanning.

Dublin.

COMHAIRLE Aithi Cliath held its Annual General Meeting on Tuesday 25th November. The following officer board was elected:- chair: Peter Cunningham; secretary: Lita Campbell; organisers: Andy Connolly and Pat Curran; PRO: Michael O'Flanagan; youth: Jack Crowe; culture: Eamonn O'Mathuna; welfare: Doreen Golden; trade union: Dermot Whelan; community: Mick O'Mahony; education: Dermot O'Hara; finance: Noel Sillery; treasurer: Larry Clarke.

Leinster.

THE Annual General Meeting of Comhairle Cuige Laignean was held in Dublin on Sunday 30th November, and the following officer board was elected:- chairperson: Christine Ni Elias; secretary: Aine Ni Gabhan; treasurer: Larry Clarke; PRO: Sean Halpeny; education: Dermot Whelan; youth: Liam Connolly. The two Leinster representatives elected to the Ard Comhairle are Lita Campbell and Sean Halpeny.

THANKS

THE H-BLOCK APPEAL FUND wish to acknowledge the generous donation of £150 from the Republican prisoners in Rortilise, a donation of \$20 from A. Woodcock, Canada, and two anonymous donations of £15 each from Holland and from Bedlington, Northumberland, England.

DRAW RESULTS

James Connolly S.F. cumann Ballyfermot, Dublin.

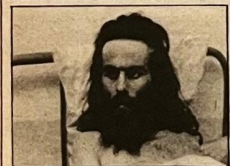
£100: No 275; £30: No 145; £20: No 154; £5: Nos 49, 130, 83, 67, 92, 133, 214, 69, 40 and 17.

An Cumann Cabhrach

Dublin Committee
£100: No 318; £50: no 302; £25: 394; £10: Nos 25 and 297; £5: Nos. 227, 270, 82, 240, 323 and 100.

NUMBER FIVE CLUB

PLEASE note that the Number Five Club, in Blessington street, Dublin, will not be open on Saturday 6th December, but will open on Sunday 7th December.



H-BLOCK APPEAL

THOUSANDS of pounds are needed to finance the massive campaign of leafletting, poster, picketing and sending speakers throughout Ireland and abroad to publicise the plight of the H-Block hunger-strikers. Rush donations to the H-Block Appeal Fund, 51/53 Falls Road, Belfast, or 44 Parnell Square, Dublin.

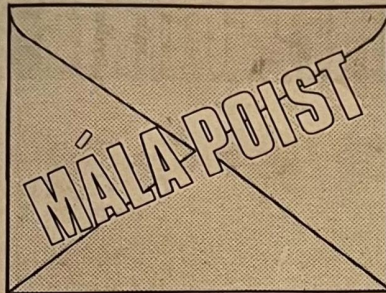
JOIN SINN FEIN

Anyone interested in joining Sinn Fein should contact their local cumann; head office at 44 Parnell Square, Dublin; 51/53 Falls Road, Belfast; or 15, Cable Street, Derby.

I am interested in becoming a member of Sinn Fein

NAME

ADDRESS



All letters should be addressed to the Editor - An Phoblacht/Republican News, 51/53 Falls Road, Belfast or 44 Parnell Square, Dublin.

Joe McGrogan

A chara,

As a young (nineteen-year-old) Republican supporter I feel it is necessary for me to inform *An Phoblacht/Republican News* of the death of Joseph McGrogan, or Joe as he was known to all socialists in Swindon.

I met Joe four months ago knowing nothing of the oppression carried out by the Brits in Ireland, but, after buying a copy of *AP/RN* from Joe and reading about the atrocities carried out by our joint enemy, I decided to become involved.

Unfortunately, up until meeting Joe I believed the Brits were keeping the peace, but Joe gave me the benefit of his extensive knowledge, something many local socialists are reticent to do. From subsequent discussions I also learnt that Joe was a compassionate man.

His death on November 7th came as a huge blow to our limited, but growing, Republican support campaign, here in Swindon, and it is in his name that we shall carry it on. We had discussed the November 15th London demonstration, he telling me of how he was not going to miss it - but he did, tragically!

The wake, which was held on November 13th, and was attended by his fellow workers, friends and family, showed how much he was revered by all that knew him in Swindon.

Finally, Joe, before he died, said of the men 'on the blanket', who were on hunger-strike: 'These men are hard, they can take it, they've been kicked around for years, they're real Irish, bloody good luck to the lads.' A typical statement by Joe. So to Joe, and those all over Ireland of the same philosophy, I say 'Keep fighting, we'll smash the Brits' Justice for the Republicans!

Marc Taylor,
Goosehill,
Swindon, England.

Familiar promises

A chara,

Before we went into the EEC we were given promises which, all down the years, we have become all too familiar with. Let us look at the background of promises like that.

De Valera told us in 1932 and 1933 on his electioneering campaign, that there would be so much work that workers in the Free State couldn't cope with it, and that the Irish who had emigrated to America would be asked to come home. Soon afterwards, the suitcases were being packed and emigration started to everywhere. The youth - nay, the cream of the country - couldn't get work and a decent living, and most of them headed for the

shores of America.

We were told at the start of the First World War that if Irishmen went out and fought against Germany we would get the freedom of our country. The strange point about that was that Britain was giving us what was ours and a god-given right, and what shouldn't have been taken from us, and some stupid Irishmen couldn't see through it!

Regarding the EEC we were told that the border would automatically disappear, as no border existed in the EEC countries. How our people fall for such promises beats me!

As soon as we entered the Common Market - as it is called - we heard no more about the abolition of the border. We have strike after strike as the workers will no longer be slaves to big profit-making businessmen, many of them foreigners, and the profits going to their countries, with Ireland all the poorer because of these cultures.

Sean Shaw,
Cork.

Women in Ireland



A chara,

Is it possible that Sinn Fein have lost all idea of what is important if one wants to be victorious or be defeated? Sadly, this seems to be the case.

Sinn Fein appear to be seeking numbers as never before, regardless of what these people may stand for. Sinn Fein appear to be ignorant of the fact that numbers make very little difference in the long term.

It is the quality and determination of the few dedicated that will eventually win. Christ was a lone individual, yet see how he, and what he stands for, lives on today.

Sinn Fein, instead of being a band of men and women dedicated to the goal of republicanism have, by their own choice, decided to seek the support of trade unions, divorce action groups, contraceptive action groups etc etc.

Do Sinn Fein really believe that these people give a thought, or a damn for that matter, for the plight of republicanism? I think not. These people rarely seek anything but their own selfish aims.

I, for one, have begun to

FITT FOR NOTHING

A chara,

For the past few days I've been thinking about the storm that has been brewing up over the typical words of Mr. Gerry Fitt. I wonder why, after all these years, people are still shocked by any statement Gerry Fitt makes.

After all, was he not one of the men who spat in the faces of the internees and then let them rot in the cages of Long Kesh?

Was he not one of the men who called for the rent-and-rates strike, and then turned his back on the strikers when he got a few crumbs from his British masters' table?

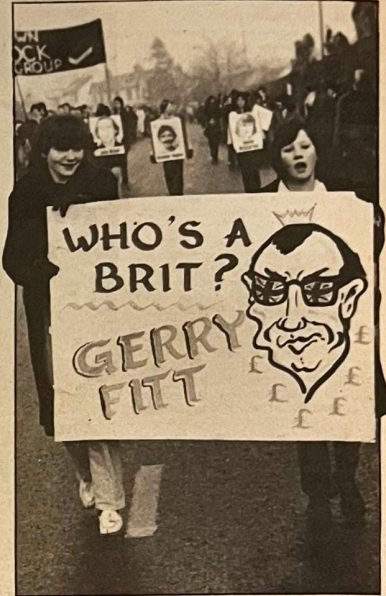
And can we ever forget that while the Price sisters and their comrades were on hunger-strike, and being force-fed, Gerry and his friends were dining with the same British government who were inflicting such barbarities on Irish girls and boys?

I remember all those years ago, when I used to follow the big open-backed lorry with 'our Gerry' on top of it, like the king of Ireland. Do you remember when he used to wrap the tricolour round him and sing rebel and Celtic songs? Wasn't he the greatest?

I wonder what he was thinking as he looked down from the lorry at all his supporters. No doubt it was: 'You fools, it won't be long until I've got what I want from you all, then I can move on to bigger things.'

It seems the time has now come to move on and we can be sure he got more than just thirty pieces of silver for his dirty work. I don't think it will be too long before we hear 'Sir' or even 'Lord' Gerry Fitt - fit for nothing.

Yes, Gerry has put a death



Belfast, last Sunday afternoon

wish on the hunger-strikers. This is, no doubt, his most sickening anti-Irish statement yet. His true - more British than the Brits - attitude is now exposed once and for all.

Gerry Fitt will go down in

Irish and world history as one of the biggest traitors of the Irish wars.

Sam Millar,
Republican POW,
H-Block 5,
Long Kesh.

question what Sinn Fein stand for.

Let me take the National H-Block Committee set up by An t-Ath. Piaras O'Duill. People know exactly what this movement stands for and what it is trying to achieve for it has not weakened through seeking false support. The temptations are always there of course, but they have now benefited by obtaining real support, North and South, support that grows by the day.

I am not going to define republicanism - at this stage it is indefinable. However, my own beliefs are such that republicanism and divorce / abortion / contraception are incompatible to one another.

I was led to believe that republicanism stood for the birth of a nation healthy in soul and mind. Divorce, abortion etc. are the destructive elements of the soul of any nation.

Does the Sinn Fein women's committee claim to speak for the majority of women in Sinn Fein? It certainly appears so if one is to judge by the columns of *An Phoblacht/Republican News*.

Wake up Sinn Fein, before you crack under false support. Nora Ni Chochlain,
Baile Aithi Cliath.

Afghanistan

Dear Comrades,

May I add to the Afghanistan debate, especially the letter by Padraig Malone *An Phoblacht/Republican News*, October 11th? I agree with most of Malone's letter, but must question his view that the Soviet Union today is socialist. Surely it would be more

accurate to analyse the Soviet Union as capitalist, with a state bourgeoisie?

Some forms from the socialist past are retained, but essentially the Soviet Union displays clearly the features of a capitalist society. Such thinking helps to clarify not only the rejection of the contemporary Soviet Union as a model for Irish socialism, but also Soviet imperialism around the world.

Many Third World revolutionaries have come to understand the capitalist nature of the Soviet Union through bitter experience, such as the Kampuchean or the Eritreans. The Zimbabwean people, under the correct leadership of ZANU, have learnt from those experiences and the Russian refusal to support ZANLA's people's war, and are determined to resist Soviet imperialism's divisive role in Africa.

The Irish people should also learn the experience of other oppressed peoples, and resist all imperialisms - whether British, American, Soviet or whatever.

Michael Wilson,
Institute of Social Studies,
251 Badhuiaweg,
2597 JR The Hague,
Holland.

Glasgow Two

Dear Editor,

The Glasgow 2 Defence Campaign, which is demanding the dropping of all charges against Mike Duffield and Kirstin Crosbie who were arrested on August 9th for selling 'Fight racism! Fight imperialism!' (the newspaper of the RCG), has won support from several Westminster MPs, other leading individuals and trade union and civil liberties bodies.

The Glasgow 2 Defence Campaign regards the charges against Mike Duffield and Kirstin Crosbie as a direct attack on the democratic right to free speech on the Irish question, and is determined to resist this attack.

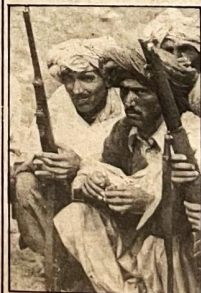
Glasgow 2 Defence Campaign,
c/o RCG Publications Ltd.,
49 Ralston Rd.,
London SE 24.

William Thompson

A chara,

Would anybody who possesses any books by William Thompson and who is prepared to sell them please contact:

Mary O'Keefe,
Avondale estate,
Portlinton,
Offaly.



Peace-keeping by television

TV REVIEW BY UNA O'NEILL

LAST TUESDAY saw the start of a thirteen-part series on the history of Ireland, 'Ireland: A Television History', by British journalist and historian Robert Kee (author of *The Green Flag*), and co-sponsored by BBC and RTE. It never rains but it pours, as in January, ITV will present, every Monday night for five weeks, its own version of the same, entitled *The Troubles* and produced by Thames TV.

The first part of Kee's version, entitled 'A Nation Once Again', dealing with Ireland until the Flight of the Earls, will probably have been the least controversial, at least from the Irish point of view, and will have made enlightening viewing for those Britons who still thought that the Irish were savages before they came to sort them out.

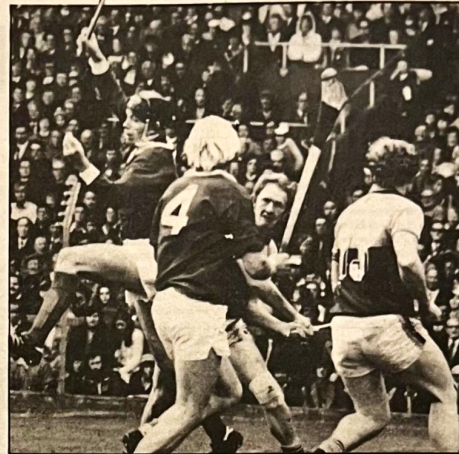
Yet nothing was said of the nature of Gaelic society, and of the important differences between the laws and customs of the Irish and that of the Normans who came to impose the writ of the King of England upon them. The lack of penetration of the Reformation in Ireland was attributed to the lack of communication throughout the country. It could equally have been explained by the

non-centralised, monastic nature of the Irish Catholic Church of the time.

The general theme of the programme appeared to be that the 'violent' Irish never were a nation (and, therefore, never will be).

In his introduction, Robert Kee declared: "The past, and garbled accounts of it, are the root cause of the problem." A very debatable statement indeed, as Britain, while it did use a garbled version of history to justify its presence in Ireland, certainly needed no other reason than its own economic and political interests to continue exploiting and oppressing its neighbouring island, thereby preventing old wounds from healing.

The viewer may well be going to be served with another British version of Irish history, a modern,



Pictures of fighting between players at a hurling match were used in parallel with a sound commentary on various battles — the combined effect presumably being intended to portray the Irish as needlessly 'violent'.

more subtle 'civilising mission', directed towards what some British (and Irish) circles like to call 'the warring factions'.

Peace-keeping by television! It will be interesting to watch the trend developing in the coming episodes.

Green Cross Christmas cards and calendar

'GREEN CROSS' have produced a pack of five Christmas cards (price 60p plus postage) and a calendar (price 60p plus postage), as illustrated. Bulk rates are available on application. All orders and enquiries to Green Cross, 11a Springfield Road, Belfast 12.

	January	April	May	July	August	September
SUNDAY	4 11 18 25	5 12 19 26	31 3 10 17 24	5 12 19 26	30 2 9 16 23	6 13 20 27
MONDAY	6 13 20 27	4 11 18 25	4 11 18 25	6 13 20 27	31 3 10 17 24	7 14 21 28
TUESDAY	7 14 21 28	5 12 19 26	5 12 19 26	7 14 21 28	1 8 15 22 29	8 15 22 29
WEDNESDAY	1 8 15 22 29	6 13 20 27	6 13 20 27	8 15 22 29	2 9 16 23	9 16 23 30
THURSDAY	2 9 16 23 30	7 14 21 28	7 14 21 28	9 16 23 30	3 10 17 24	10 17 24
FRIDAY	3 10 17 24 31	8 15 22 29	8 15 22 29	10 17 24	4 11 18 25	11 18 25
SATURDAY		9 16 23 30	9 16 23 30			

WHAT'S ON

HUNGER-STRIKE PROTESTS

STUDENTS MEETING
1 p.m. Friday 6th December
School of Engineering
University College
DUBLIN

PUBLIC MEETING
ON ARMAGH
8 p.m. Friday 6th December
Mansion House
DUBLIN
Speakers: Rose Dugdale, Bernadette McAliskey and Neil McCafferty.

MARCH & RALLY
8 p.m. Friday 6th December
RAPHOE
Co. Donegal

COBH BUS TO DUBLIN
FOR BRITISH EMBASSY MARCH
Saturday 8th December
Leaves 8 a.m.
GPO
COBH
Fare £3 return

STUDENTS MARCH
2 p.m. Saturday 6th December
Trinity College
DUBLIN
March to join march to British Embassy

PUBLIC MEETING
Sunday 7th December
DUNGARVAN
Co. Waterford

PUBLIC MEETING
Monday 8th December
SLIGO

PUBLIC MEETING
Monday 8th December
TRALEE
Co. Kerry

PUBLIC MEETING
Monday 8th December
WESTPORT
Co. Mayo

CONCERT
Friday 12th December
Rathoath Inn
RATHOATH
Co. Meath
Featuring Dublin City Ramblers and Rufus

MARCH & RALLY
4 p.m. Saturday 13th December
BALLYSHANNON
Co. Donegal

PUBLIC MEETING
8 p.m. Saturday 13th December
AN UAIMH (NAVAN)
Co. Meath
Speaker: Bernadette McAliskey

MARCH & RALLY
12 noon Saturday 13th December
Clapham Common
Nr. Clapham Common Tube
SOUTH LONDON
March to rally at Brixton Oval

MARCH & RALLY
10.30 a.m. Saturday 20th December
GLASGOW
Assemble Blackhill
March to Cowlawas Park

OTHER EVENTS

LIAM MELLOWS COMMEMORATION
2 p.m. Sunday 7th December
Assemble: '98 Monument
GOREY
Co. Wexford
Parade to Castletown cemetery for wreath-laying and oration.

CHRISTMAS PARTY
For the children of prisoners
3 p.m. to 6 p.m. Sunday 14th December
No. 5 Blessington Street
DUBLIN

Sympathy

CONWAY, Kildare Comhairle Ceantair Sinn Féin extends deepest sympathy to the family of Louise Conway, who died on Thursday 13th November.

MULLALLY, Kildare Comhairle Ceantair, Sinn Féin, extends deepest sympathy to the family of Robert Mullally, who died on Thursday 20th November.

BIRTHDAY GREETINGS

GALLAGHER, Denis. McCARTNEY, Raymond. (H-Block). Happy birthday, Denis, and also to my cousin Raymond, on hunger-strike. Victory to the blanket men, from James, Isa and family.

GALLAGHER, Denis. McCARTNEY, Raymond. (H-Block). Birthday greetings to Denis on November 29th. Also birthday wishes to my cousin Raymond, who is on hunger-strike. Victory to the hunger-strikers. Victory to the blanket men. From sister Helen, Tommy and family.

GALLAGHER, Denis. McCARTNEY, Raymond. (H-Block). Birthday greetings to my son Denis and also to my nephew Raymond, on hunger-strike. Those who think of them today, a little prayer to Jesus say. From, mother father and sisters Geraldine, Jacqueline and Ann.

GALLAGHER, Denis. McCARTNEY, Raymond. (H-Block). Birthday greetings Denis, and also to my cousin Raymond who is on hunger-strike. Thinking of you always. Victory to the blanket men. From Majella, Noel and baby Denis.

LENNON, Damien. (H-Block). Birthday greetings to our dear son Damien on his 20th birthday. "No-one could be prouder than we are of you today and this is just to tell you we're behind you all the way." God bless. From mum, dad, Flanníola. Also from brothers Sean and Claran (H-Block).

LENNON, Damien. (H-Block). Birthday greetings to my dear grandson Damien on his 20th birthday. "They took you to a prison cell cold and damp inside, they handed you a blanket which you wear with endless pride." Lots of love from granny.

LENNON, Damien. (H-Block). Birthday greetings to our dear nephew on his 20th birthday. Your courage is an inspiration to us all. Victory to the blanket men! From aunt Kate. Also from aunt Peggy. Lots of love. From aunt Maureen, uncle Tommy and cousin Danny.

LENNON, Damien. (H-Block). Birthday greetings to my dear brother Damien on his 20th birthday. You are always in our thoughts and prayers. Victory to the blanket men! From sister Maureen, brother-in-law Brendan and nephews Danny and Brendan.

LENNON, Damien. (H-Block). Birthday greetings Damien (Jack) on your 20th birthday. The courage of you and your comrades is an inspiration to us all. Victory to you and all your comrades in the H-Blocks and Armagh. From your mate Marty.

MASTERTON, Oliver. (H-Block). Birthday greetings, Oliver. "They took you to a prison cell cold and damp inside, they handed you a blanket which you have worn with pride." From mum, dad, brothers Jim, Patrick, Michael, Paul and your sister Collette.

McCANN, Danny. (H-Block). Greetings on your 22nd birthday Danny. God bless you and all your brave comrades, especially the seven men and three women on hunger-strike. Lots of love. From the McAlister family.

O'LEARY, Declan. (Portlaoise). Happy 21st birthday to you son, from mum and dad.

O'LEARY, Declan. (Portlaoise). Best wishes on your 21st birthday, from Martin, Terence and Fionola.

O'LEARY, Declan. (Portlaoise). Happy 21st birthday, Declan. Thinking of you always. Love from Noreen and Gans.

ROONEY, Gerard. (Portlaoise). Happy birthday Gerard, thinking of you today and everyday. All my love Teresa and wee Sam.

ROONEY, Gerard. (Portlaoise). Happy birthday Gerard. I had a wish the wish would be that you and Ireland would soon be free. Love and solidarity from Eilish and family.

ROONEY, Gerard. (Portlaoise). Birthday greetings to our brother Gerard. We will think of you good and fast and those yet to come. Love and solidarity Hughie and Philip (H3).

ROONEY, Gerard. (Portlaoise). Happy birthday to our son Gerard. You are always in our thoughts and prayers. Love and solidarity from mother, father and all the family.

ROONEY, Gerard. (Portlaoise). Happy birthday "Sporty". Not too long now until you'll be in your forties. From all your friends from the Short Strand. Keep up the Gaelic. Venceremos!

ROONEY, Gerard. (Portlaoise). Birthday greetings to Gerry Rooney, political prisoner of war, Portlaoise. "We may have had great men but we'll never have latter." From Pot Belly, Jimmy and Blue Boy. Fernanagh.

ROONEY, Gerard. (Portlaoise). Greetings Gerard on your birthday. Hoping not to see you soon. You could mucker, Kilroy.

The Philippine people's liberation struggle

BY CIARAN DOWD



EARLY last month at the University of Antwerp in Belgium a five-day hearing was held by the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal on the martial-law dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines. Detailed appeals were presented to the tribunal on behalf of the Philippine people by the National Democratic Front (NDF), and on behalf of the Bangsa Moro people on the island of Mindanao, by the Moro National Liberation Front.

A Sinn Féin representative, invited to the hearing, read a statement of support and solidarity with the two peoples struggling against Marcos, and the international representative of the NDF, Louis Jallancomi, made a public statement of his organisation's solidarity with the H-Block hunger-strikers.

The Permanent Peoples' Tribunal was established in June 1979, growing out of the experience of past international tribunals, in particular the Bertrand Russell

Tribunals on Vietnam and Latin America. The tribunal is composed of international lawyers, jurists, scholars, writers and church men from many countries. It bases its principles far outside the limits of formal national or international law, basing its judgements on more universally accepted documents such as the Nuremberg trial archives, United Nations documents on human and economic rights, and in particular the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Peoples promulgated in Algiers in July 1976.

Other cases which have been heard so far this year are Western Sahara, Argentina and Eritrea, whilst scheduled for hearing are Korea, East Timor, Palestine, Equatorial Guinea and central Africa. In hearing these cases the tribunal aims to compensate to some extent for the failure of governments and international organisations to uphold the rights of helpless and oppressed peoples.

AT THE END of the nineteenth century an independence movement grew in the Philippines and overthrew the Spanish regime which had been in colonial occupation for almost four hundred years. This appeared to be the first successful anti-colonial movement in Asia, but the withdrawing Spanish, in 1899, sold the interest in the Philippines to the United States government, which immediately set out to crush the national movement.

After a long and bloody war, costing one million Philippine lives, the United States established itself as a colonial power in Asia and the Philippines remains a stronghold of American interests to the present day.

In 1946 the Philippines was granted formal independence, but the United States government insisted on retaining special privileges for American business, including trade concessions and the ownership of banks and industries. In addition over twenty military bases are maintained by the United States in the country.

OPPOSITION

Opposition to the present regime of Ferdinand Marcos began in March 1969, when a group of guerrillas, sixty men and women with thirty-five weapons between them, met in secret to form the New People's Army (NPA). Within a decade this tiny nucleus has grown to a membership of thousands with guerrilla activity spread throughout the country.

A broad front has also been formed, the National Democratic Front (NDF), which is composed of the New People's Army, the Bukluran (a workers' underground organisation), the Kabataang Makabayan (a youth underground organisation), the Communist Party of the Philippines, Christians for National Liberation, and a range of other mass organisations, and individuals, from the workers, peasants, students, teachers, churchmen and nationalist business men.

The New People's Army is mainly armed with weapons captured from the Marcos army, predominantly American M16s and M14s. Its territorial growth has been phenomenal. From its foundation in 1969 to the imposition of martial law by Marcos in 1972, five guerrilla fronts were opened, and in the next seven years twenty-one more guerrilla fronts were established.

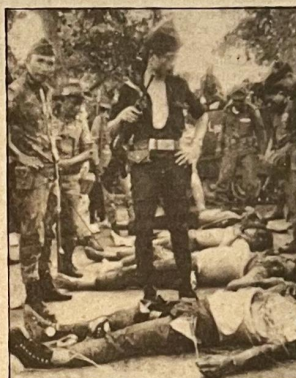
These fronts now cover four thousand villages in forty provinces, with a population of ten million, of which half are effectively reached by the revolutionary movement and constitute the guerrilla army's mass base.

EXPANDING

In addition, the National Democratic Front is expanding its political activities both covertly and openly. The Philippines is undergoing an economic crisis of increasing magnitude, coupled with an intensification of political and military repression by the Marcos dictatorship.

In response, resistance by the Philippine people has become more widespread and organised. Workers have staged strikes and other industrial action, students in more than fifty colleges and universities in Manila, the capital, have become increasingly militant, and an agrarian revolution is already in its initial stages.

This latter struggle has reduction of rent as



MILITARY REPRESSION



TORTURE VICTIM



WOMEN GUERRILLAS



OPPRESSED SUGAR CANE WORKER

its minimal goal and the confiscation of land as its maximum aim. Already in many areas rents have been forced down from 50% of the harvest to 10%. In one area of central Luzon, the peasants and the people's army confiscated one hundred and seventy-five hectares of land and distributed these to sixty-five of the poorer peasants. In another area, while the land has not been confiscated, the peasants no longer pay rent.

IMPORTANCE

But despite such progress the people's struggle in the Philippines faces major opposition. US troops from the military bases have increasingly changed their role from 'military advisers' to participate in direct military operations against the Philippine people. Many of Marcos' top intelligence agents and torturers have been sent for intensified special training in the United States.

The Marcos army now comprises two hundred and sixty thousand men, with Marcos as commander-in-chief personally controlling all officers from captain upwards by promotion, salary increases and licences to indulge in extortion, gambling and land-grabbing.

The strategic importance of the Philippines

to the United States also underpin the Marcos regime. Its military bases there provide naval, air and military facilities for its Asian Pacific, and Middle East activities. Nuclear weapons are stored at the bases and the massive American fleet in the Indian Ocean is mainly supplied from its Philippine bases.

A one hundred million dollar aid package for the Marcos regime has recently been approved by the United States sub-committee on Asian and Pacific affairs. The Carter administration, despite its human rights protestations, has promised a further five hundred million dollars in military aid over a five-year period. Reagan's presidential victory only strengthens this promise.

But faced with this superior might, the New People's Army has survived and strengthened. Intensive 'search and destroy' operations launched against it have been almost totally ineffective. At the same time popular resistance to the Marcos regime continues to increase. The struggle of the Philippine people against a powerful enemy is a protracted one, but on its side is the determination and courage of its own people and the solidarity of anti-imperialist people throughout the world.

Óúchas

LE DEASÚN BREATNACH

NAMES

THE SURNAME of the first man on the blanket to be released is Nugent. We got to know each other and one day I asked him how he preferred his first (Christian, or given) name, to be written.

"Ciarán", he said. Nevertheless, more often than not, and even in the pages of this paper, the name is written as Kieron.

Behind this spelling lurks a British empire dirty tricks department. Or maybe a better and more apt title would be a Psychops department though that is a very modern title.

Though the title be new the thinking behind it is as old as the British presence in Ireland for the Irish language (and everything connected with it) was the first target after the Irish armed forces had been defeated and Irish land grabbed by the robber barons.

The thinking behind spelling Ciarán as 'Kieron' was simple. It was to place the official first name as far away from the native thing - dúchas - as possible.

If the Irish could not be persuaded to use decent British first names at least their choices should be made as English looking as possible.

The list was long at one time and the clergy was encouraged to have those English spellings put down instead of the correct Irish spellings when registering births, often unknown to the unfortunate parents, who were illiterate. It was a tremendous confidence trick.

TRICK

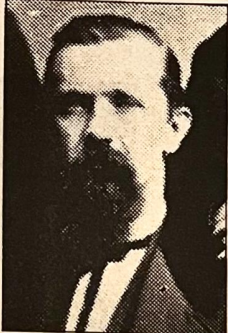
I was reminded of that confidence trick the other day in the Olympia Theatre, Dublin, where I saw Brian Friel's 'Translations', and which was reviewed so splendidly in this paper recently by Mairéad Ní Ghráda.

The patriot, Ó Donabháin Ross, preferred his first name to be written and pronounced Diarmuid; but the English had fixed upon a version from the Old Testament, no less: Jeremiah! Thus, in newspapers and documents in reference to him during his lifetime we were treated to the absurdity, Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa.

Part - and an important part - of the conquest, thus, was giving virtually everything an English sound so as to speed the assimilation. Therefore, if we wish to undo the conquest, we must work in the opposite direction to the Brits. We must return to our roots.

PAGAN

Christianity came to Ireland, we are told, mainly through the efforts of an



O'DONOVAN ROSSA

escapee slave, Padraig Naofa. Because it came that way, many of the Irish customs persisted from paganism into Christianity. One of them was concerned with the names we give our children.

Up to the time of the Norman intrusion in the twelfth century, 'pagan' names persisted; and Christians argued that such names were by Christianisation, in fact, by their use.

Thus we find 'pagan' names on all of our early saints; and Ciarán of Cluain Mhic Nóis, perhaps the forerunner of the modern European university, and the ruins of which may be seen near Athlone, on the banks of the Shannon, was one of those early Irish saints. Ciarán means the little jet-black headed one.

It was only after the Synod of Cashel called into being by Henry II in 1172 and illegally (the Treaty of Windsor came in 1175), that, under the influence of the English church, the naming custom was changed gradually. It is from this time that such now common names as Mary, John, Tom, Maurice, Michael, Denis and the like were introduced, and also Padraig, Brigid, Colm Cille and,

likely as not, Ciarán.

But we are a very conservative people and have a great, at times immoderate, respect for tradition. Thus the 'pagan' names have lingered on, such as Diarmuid, Ogar, Caoilte, Oisín, Cormac, Niamh, Mór (name of a Celtic goddess and also that of the sister of Lorcán Ua Tuathail, patron of Dublin).

RESISTED

At times the clergy resisted such names. On one occasion a priest began to refuse to accept such a name for one of my children but when I threatened to baptise him myself he pulled in his horns.

The Brits used every possible device at hand to divide and conquer. One of them was snobbery and at one time, not so very long ago, it was customary for the boss class, or part of it, that of the Castle Catholic, to refer to the ordinary common or garden Catholic masses as Teagues (or Micks and Bids). The label was favoured also by the other half of the boss class, the Castle Protestants (or Horse Protestants, as Brendan Behan called them).

A little of that lingers on in the north-east where Papists often are referred to as Teagues. Oddly enough, one of those once oppressed by Teagues is called McKague, which, properly spelled, is Mac Thaidhg or the Son of Teague.

RETURN

Over the past fifty years or so there has been a very noticeable, if slow, increase in the use of the real Irish given names, such as Deirdre, Seamus, Siobhán, Oisín, Eoghan, 'Forgas, Aongus. It is a sure indication that with an independent Irish government the restoration of the language could be achieved within a generation.

The imperial trouble-makers in our midst did not, however, stop at first names or (as illustrated by Brian Friel in 'Translations') place names. They spread their mischievous nets farther afield, inventing special spellings for 'Catholic' and 'Protestant' versions of surnames.

Thus, for example, Dunne for the Catholic, and Dunn for the Protestant, as the English language was used as a vehicle for rampant sectarianism. In the non-sectarian Irish language it was O Duinn for all - Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter. Why not return to it?

REMEMORIAM

BRADY, Terry. (5th Anniversary). The Republican Movement in North Armagh remembers with pride Volunteer Terry Brady who died December 5th 1975.

BRADY, Terry. (5th Anniversary). In proud and loving memory of my good friend Volunteer Terry Brady who died December 5th 1975, remembered always by Liam, Dorothy and family.

BRADY, Terry. (5th Anniversary). In proud and loving memory of our good friend Volunteer Terry Brady, who died December 5th 1975, always remembered by Malachy, Dorothy and family.

CAMPBELL, Sean LOUGHREY, James. (5th Anniversary). In proud and loving memory of Vol. Sean Campbell and James Loughrey, Óglaigh na hÉireann, South Armagh, who died while on active service on December 5th 1975. They laid a brave and noble sacrifice. Always remembered by their friends and comrades in the Republican Movement in South Armagh.

CRAWFORD, Laura FOX, Paul. (5th Anniversary). In proud and loving memory of Vol. Laura Crawford, Belfast Brigade, Óglaigh na hÉireann, and Vol. Paul Fox, Belfast Brigade, Óglaigh na hÉireann, who were killed while on active service on December 5th 1975. I measc Laochra na nGael go raibh a n-amacha. Always remembered by their friends and comrades in the Belfast Brigade.

CRAWFORD, Laura FOX, Paul. (5th Anniversary). In proud and loving memory of Vol. Laura Crawford, Cumann na mBan, and Vol. Paul Fox, 2nd Battalion, Belfast Brigade, Óglaigh na hÉireann, who died on active service December 5th 1975. "Never had man or woman a grander cause, never was a cause more grandly served." (Connolly). Always remembered by the officers and members of the Crawford/fox Sinn Féin cumann, Sydney, Australia.

DUFFY, Patsy. (2nd Anniversary). In proud and loving memory of Volunteer Patsy Duffy, brutally murdered by the SAS whilst on active service. Gone but never forgotten. Fuair sé bás ar son saoirse na hÉireann. Tommy, Dolores and family.

DUFFY, Patsy. (2nd Anniversary). In proud and loving memory of Volunteer Patsy Duffy, killed in action on November 24th 1978. Always remembered by the Barrett family.

FOX, Paul. (5th Anniversary). In proud and loving memory of my brother Paul who died on December 5th 1975. We cannot bring the one day together but those we love don't go away for us with every day. Memories kept of a brother I loved and will never forget. Always in our prayers. From his loving sister Carmel, Gerry and family. Also from his sister Gabrielle and George. St. Martin pray for him.

FOX, Paul. (5th Anniversary). In proud and loving memory of my dear brother, Vol. Paul Fox, 'A' Coy, 2nd Battalion, Belfast Brigade. Always remembered and loved by his family and friends. Padre Pio pray for him. Also his brother Peter, sister-in-law Mary, and Justin and Peter. "Silent thoughts of times together hold memories that last forever."

FOX, Paul. (5th Anniversary). In proud and loving memory of my dear brother Vol. Paul Fox, 'A' Coy, 2nd Battalion, Belfast Brigade. "No saint nor king could be as proud as he whose flag becomes his shroud." St. Anthony pray for him. Always remembered by his family.

FOX, Paul. (5th Anniversary). In proud and loving memory of our son Vol. Paul Fox, 'A' Coy, 2nd Battalion, Belfast Brigade, who died on December 5th 1975. "We waited for a sign of his soul as he lay in his grave. Two hard to see each day there. When winter with its cold and rain and everything was bare. One night when our constant tears were falling with the dew. We heard a voice and to our son stood by weeping too. His shroud was damp, his face was white, he said 'I cannot sleep, your tears have made my shroud so wet. Oh, parents, do not weep. Oh love is strong the parents' hearts were filled with tender fears. Oh love is strong and for our son our grief is real and his tears. One night when I thought of you and there we saw him stand. Our son in his shroud and a taper in his hand. Oh parents, see my shroud is dry and I can sleep once more. And beautiful his parting smile as he lay down within his silent grave he laid his weary head. And from the early snow drops grew over his grassy head." Always remembered by his mum, dad and family. Matt Talbot pray for him.

FOX, Paul. (5th Anniversary). In proud and loving memory of our son Vol. Paul Fox, 'A' Coy, 2nd Battalion, Belfast Brigade, who died on December 5th 1975. Always remembered by his family and friends. Padre Pio pray for him. Also his brother Peter, sister-in-law Mary, and Justin and Peter. "Silent thoughts of times together hold memories that last forever."

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Solidarity Greetings



AGNEW, Paddy. (H-Block). Congratulations on completing three years on the blanket. From Mrs. E Burns, Dundalk.

BOYLE, Dermot. (H-Block). Congratulations on completing three years on the blanket. Victory to the hunger-striking men! Victory to the hunger-striking men! From all the family and friends at home.

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CUNNINGHAM, Peter. (H-Block). Congratulations on completing three years on the blanket. We are all very proud of you. Congratulations also to all your comrades, especially Mario, 'Zack' and 'Doc'. God bless you all. Love from mother and brothers. Victory to the blanket men!

CUNNINGHAM, Peter. (H-Block). Congratulations on completing three years on the blanket. We are all proud of you and your comrades. From brother Harry, Geraldine and family, and brother John (Cages, Long Kesh) sister-in-law Bridie and family.

CUNNINGHAM, Peter. (H-Block). Congratulations on completing three years on the blanket. God give you and your comrades strength to victory. From much, from your loving family and sister Mary.

CUNNINGHAM, Peter. (H-Block). Congratulations on completing three years on the blanket. Victory to the hunger-striking men! Victory to the hunger-striking men! From your sister Ann, brother-in-law Tommy and children.

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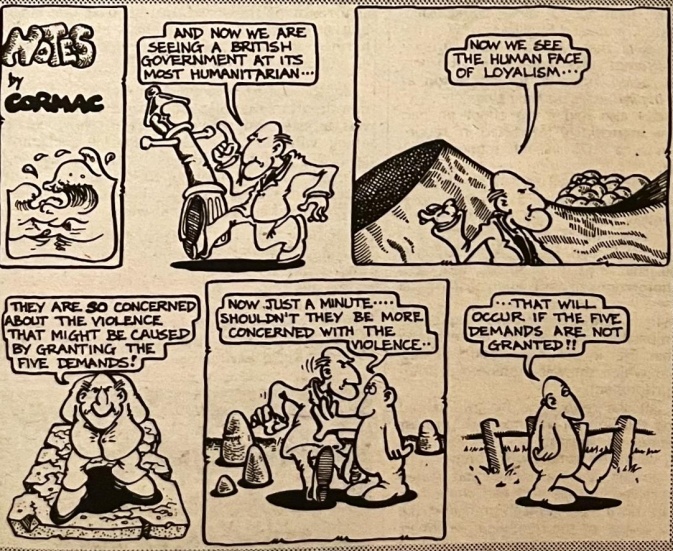
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THEY ARE SO CONCERNED ABOUT THE VIOLENCE THAT MIGHT BE CAUSED BY GRANTING THE FIVE DEMANDS!

NOW JUST A MINUTE... SHOULDN'T THEY BE MORE CONCERNED WITH THE VIOLENCE...

...THAT WILL OCCUR IF THE FIVE DEMANDS ARE NOT GRANTED!!

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...THAT WILL OCCUR IF THE FIVE DEMANDS ARE NOT GRANTED!!

Don't let them die!

ON MONDAY, December 1st, 1980, we, the undersigned, began a hunger-strike as a critical part of our four year protest for political status. We have reached this decision after suffering years of cruel and inhuman treatment and after having exhausted all other means of protest.

In August of this year, Cardinal O'Fiaich, who had met Humphrey Atkins, was able to say that he was 'cautiously optimistic' about a breakthrough, but, alas, his many efforts came to nothing, so intransigent and inflexible was the British government.

The full responsibility for the Armagh jail and H-Block situation lies with the British government, who for four years have treated the issue with the utmost contempt, have ignored all protests and widespread expressions of concern, and have allowed the problem to drift to this final stage.

We women in Armagh wear our own clothes, but we refuse to do prison work, or to co-operate with the prison regime, which is under orders from the British government to criminalise us in an attempt to criminalise what we believe in and have struggled for — Irish freedom. The cause of Irish freedom

is not a criminal cause, but a political cause, and in order to assert this we are going on hunger-strike.

Our demands are: the right not to do prison work; the right to organise educational and recreational facilities, and the right to one weekly visit, parcel and letter; the right to association with other political prisoners; and restoration of remission lost as a result of the protest. We also fully support the demand of our H-Block comrades: the right not to wear prison uniform.

We call upon the Irish people to support us in our stand, and we especially call upon our sisters in Ireland and throughout the world to stand and be counted with us in the grave days ahead.

We are prepared to fast to the death, if necessary, but our love for justice and our country will live forever.

Signed,
Mary Doyle;
Mairead Farrell,
Mairead Nugent,
'A' Wing, Armagh jail.



MARY DOYLE
aged 24, Belfast

MARY DOYLE, who was born in Belfast on January 28th, 1956, is the eldest of three children, and has two brothers. She was brought up in Greencastle, North Belfast.

Mary was attracted to republicanism from an early age, when she wanted to join the Republican Movement, but was turned down on several occasions because of her age. She was first arrested in March 1974 and charged with causing an explosion on the M2 motorway. She was sentenced to five years' imprisonment.

While Mary was in Armagh jail, her mother was killed in a loyalist bomb attack on Conways Bar, on the Shore Road on March 13th 1975. Mary served her sentence as a political prisoner and with remission was released in September 1976, just as the blanket protest began.

One year later, in September 1977, Mary was arrested in Carrickfergus, along with two other young Belfast women, Theresa McEvoy and Janet Murphy, and, after being questioned for three days, they were charged with possession of bombs.

Mary spent fifteen months on remand and was sentenced to eight years' imprisonment in December 1978, but this time, instead of having political status, the prison regime attempted to criminalise her. With remission, which she has lost as a result of the political status protest, Mary would have been due for release in ten months time.

Her friend, and comrade, Shirley Devlin, who was released from Armagh jail on November 24th, after serving four years, states: "Mary is a very staunch republican. She would not have undertaken this hunger-strike lightly. She knows what she is doing and is prepared to pay the supreme price."



MAIREAD FARRELL
aged 23, Belfast

MAIREAD FARRELL, who was born in Belfast on March 3rd 1957, was brought up in Andersonstown. The only girl in the Farrell family, she has five brothers. Her maternal grandfather, John Gaffney, was born and reared in Ballinamore, County Leitrim. He fought in the Tan War and was interned in 1920 for a year.

Mairead attended Rathmore primary and grammar school at Dunmurry, where she passed her 'eleven plus', then her 'O' levels, doing especially well in Irish, French and English.

Her mother says that Mairead "was strongly affected by different girls' fathers and brothers being arrested, being interned, for no reason at all. That had a big influence on her I think."

Bloody Sunday also had a big effect on her. Mairead became increasingly interested in republicanism and in June 1975 she left school at the age of eighteen.

Ten months later, on April 5th 1976, she was arrested on active service after a bombing operation at the Conway Hotel in the Finaghy area. Her comrade, IRA Volunteer Sean McDermott, was shot dead by an RUC man. During her interrogation, at which she refused to speak, the RUC showed her photographs of Sean lying dead on the ground.

She was charged with possession of explosives and IRA membership and refused to recognise the court at her trial in a non-jury court in December 1976, at which she was sentenced to fourteen years' imprisonment.

In Armagh jail she refused to be criminalised and was among the first on the 'no work' protest for political status in Armagh jail. On February 7th, this year, when the women were forced on to the 'no wash' protest, she was kicked and beaten by warders, received bruises and had some hair pulled out. Up until the Armagh hunger-strike Mairead was in charge of the republican prisoners there.



MAIREAD NUGENT
aged 21, Belfast

MAIREAD NUGENT, who was born in Belfast on June 28th 1959, is the eldest of five children, and has three brothers and one sister. The family lived in the Iveagh area, off the Falls Road, before moving to Andersonstown in 1965.

Mairead was ten years of age when the British army came on to the streets in August 1969, and two years later she became drawn into the struggle as a result of the street protests over internment. She attended all the marches, along with her mother, and witnessed many friends being arrested and being put in jail.

At the age of seventeen, in October 1976 — a month after the blanket protest started — she was arrested on active service in Newtownards, along with former internee Patrick McDonnell, aged 25, also from Andersonstown. They were charged with attempting to bomb the Millisle house of the then Armagh jail governor, and with possession of arms and explosives.

On June 29th 1977, the day after her eighteenth birthday, Mairead was sentenced to twelve years' imprisonment, and from that day she has resisted criminalisation.

Her boyfriend, Gerard McDaid, from the New Lodge Road in Belfast has been imprisoned since 1976, and is 'on the blanket' protest in H3-Block of Long Kesh, serving twelve years.

Rally & Picket
Armagh Jail
Saturday 13th December