

# An Phoblacht

## REPUBLICAN NEWS



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Armed and riot-garbed RUC men with dogs blockaded the roadway to Armagh jail last Saturday afternoon, preventing hunger-strike campaigners from approaching the jail; and from last Monday all RUC leave was cancelled. Both moves are indicative of the maintenance of British intransigence, and their refusal to resolve the prison crisis.

# CRISIS POINT

THE H-Block/Armagh hunger-strike and the four-year-old 'blanket protest' are now at a crisis point: hunger-striker Sean McKenna being in the worst condition of all the prisoners, with not long to live. Twenty-six-year-old Sean McKenna from Newry, had completely lost his sight by Tuesday, his fifty-first day of fasting, and, on Wednesday, was unable to keep down the drinking water which has barely kept him alive.

## No break

OWING to the grave crisis of the H-Block/Armagh hunger-strike there will not be the usual break in publication of An Phoblacht/Republican News over Christmas and the New Year. Next week's issue will be available before Christmas.

The end that is quickly approaching is torturous and tragic, and it is an end which — although people were always aware of it being the possible outcome of Republicans asserting their rights — is nonetheless shocking. For, as every minute ticks

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SEAN McKENNA

## Don't let them die!

FOUR REGIONAL RALLIES in support of the H-Block/Armagh hunger-strikers have been organised this Saturday afternoon, December 20th, in Cork, Dun Laoghaire, Enniskillen and Sligo. Details of buses to the rallies are available from the local press or action groups.

# CRISIS POINT

(CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE)  
would resolve the prison crisis — had coolly decided, from the very start, that they would go to the brink and even over it.

## MISTAKEN

The Brits have a mistaken view of the forces and sympathies behind the hunger-strikers and the other protesting prisoners. The Brits believe that they are dealing solely with Republicans (and their supporters) and they mistakenly think that they are riding into a storm on a firm saddle.

Some of the hunger-strikers may not emerge safely from that storm; but that will not have been their fault. They will have suffered and made the greatest sacrifices that they can: firstly of their freedom, and lastly of their lives, in their assertion that their fight for the freedom of their country is no criminal act — certainly not by Irish standards. And it is here that the Brits make their greatest mistake.

## DEATH

There is no doubt that many Irish people, particularly in the South, have yet to be aroused over the struggle in the North; but the death of a 'blanket man' — especially someone like Sean McKenna, who has spent most of the last nine years of his life, since he was seventeen, in British jails — will surely jolt even the most apathetic, and will convince those tens of thousands, who have peacefully contributed to the 'Smash H-Block' campaign, that marching has its limits.

The response of British premier Margaret Thatcher, on Wednesday, to the plea from Cardinal O'Fiaich for her to personally intervene in the crisis was answered in a typically conceited English ruling-class fashion. She claimed to have the universal support of the Irish people against the political status demand of the prisoners. She is also, apparently, dismissing the expressions of widespread concern from several continents, especially America, and the broad-based support for the prisoners in Ireland outside of Republican circles.

## MOBILISATION

So the situation is at crisis point and unless the British move soon, one or more hunger-strikers will be dead.

The full mobilisation of the RUC, and reports of the placing on special stand-by of several spearhead British army regiments in England, are an ominous sign that Thatcher has possibly decided to go over the brink with the crazy notion that a confrontation with, and routing of, the IRA is the inevitable consequence of the death of a 'blanket man'.

But this is no military confrontation. For the British, it is a confrontation — not with the Republican Movement — but with tens of thousands of nationalist people, and ultimately a confrontation with the conscience of the Irish people.

Thatcher apparently foolishly believes that the national spirit has gone out of this Brit-abused island. Many have given her grounds for deciding upon this tragic course. But what the Brits are sowing, by killing Sean McKenna and his comrades, they will surely reap at the avenging hands of Irish men, women and youth.

# British guinea pig: Sean McKenna

**H-BLOCK** hunger-striker Sean McKenna, aged 26, of Newry, County Down, was expected on Wednesday — given British intransigence — to have only a short time to live if his already serious condition continued to sharply deteriorate.

His mother, who visited him both on Monday — the fiftieth day of the hunger-strike — and on Wednesday, was deeply shocked at his deterioration in between times. Sean appeared to be close to death; he could not hold down his drinking water, his lucidity had gone, he had gone blind, he had difficulty hearing and was in a terribly emaciated general condition. Consequently his transfer from the Long Kesh prison camp hospital to the military wing of Musgrave Park hospital in Belfast was imminently expected.

As the end of their eighth week of their fast to the death for political status, approaches, the six other long-term H-Block hunger-strikers are also extremely weak, and report finding difficulty in concentrating. In particular, Tommy McKearney, aged 28, of Moy, County Tyrone, is described as being 'on the same road' as Sean McKenna, with his eye-sight and his general condition fading.

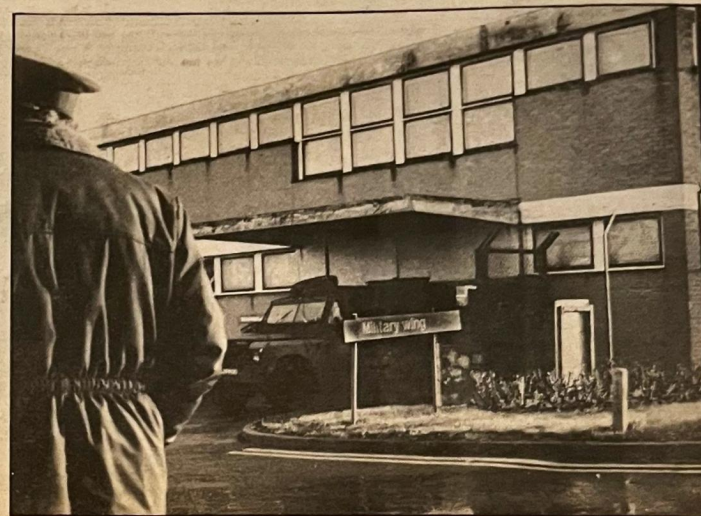
## ARMAGH

Meanwhile in Armagh jail, there was a surprise development, on Tuesday, when the three women — Mary Doyle, Mairead Farrell and Mairead Nugent — in the third week of their hunger-strike, were moved to the prison hospital. However, British officials claimed this move was merely to monitor their health more effectively, and that there was 'no significant deterioration' in, nor 'immediate concern' about, their condition.

After two weeks on hunger-strike each of the women had lost approximately 1 stone in weight each: Mary Doyle was reported to weigh 7 st. 11 lbs., Mairead Farrell 7 st., and Mairead Nugent 8 st. 1 lb.

## FEARS

As far as Sean McKenna is concerned, justifiable fears have



The military wing of Musgrave Park hospital in Belfast — on Wednesday, Sean McKenna, now critically ill, was expected shortly to be moved here from Long Kesh

mounted during the week that the British government are intending to use him as a 'guinea pig' to test the strength of popular reaction to the death of a hunger-striker.

On Monday evening, leading Newry SDLP man Frank Feely, a former school-master of Sean, accused the British government of callousness in its treatment of the hunger-strikers. Feely said: "It appears that Sean McKenna is merely being used as a guinea pig to test the reaction of the Roman Catholic community to his death." He went on to say that this would explain the cancellation of RUC leave, and described the Brits' policy as 'lunatic and dangerous'. He also appealed to Sean to accept treatment for the deterioration of his eye sight, in order to prevent his eyes suffering permanent damage. Sean, however, regards such

treatment as a breach of his hunger-strike and has steadfastly refused to accept it.

## CRITICAL

On Tuesday afternoon, before Sean McKenna's condition had taken its latest turn for the worse, Daibny Morrison, national publicity director of Sinn Féin and editor of *An Phoblacht/Republican News*, visited him, and afterwards stated:

"Sean McKenna is in an extremely critical condition and believes that he has only a matter of days to live. I last saw him a week before he embarked upon hunger-strike and his present state shocked me. He has now completely lost his sight and was unable to tell that the light in his cell was on. He only recognised me by my voice. His gums have receded and his cheeks have shrunk giving him a skeleton-like appearance."

"I explained to him the exact situation, because the hunger-strikers have been refused certain newspapers and received prejudicial reports about what was happening. I explained to Sean that there was absolutely no movement and no signs from the British that they are prepared to solve the crisis. I also explained to him the considerable pressures which the British are resisting."

"I told him that the Northern Ireland Office had successfully given the illusion that there was movement and that they were interested in a settlement, but that all the evidence ran contrary to this."

"He told me that 'that's too bad' and said that although his body is wrecked, though he is blind and that every day is hell, his mind is crystal clear. He said that he would continue his fast and was prepared to die."

# Gun-point threats!

BY PETER HAYES



EILEEN McCONVILLE — former Armagh protestor

**CONCERTED** British attempts to intimidate H-Block/Armagh campaigners took a sinister turn in Belfast last Thursday night, 11th December, when twenty-three-year-old, former Armagh protestor Eileen McConville — released ten weeks ago — was dragged by drunken British soldiers into a deserted entry, yards from her Ballymurphy home, and repeatedly threatened with being shot. A rifle was put to the girl's head and she was told she wouldn't be so lucky as to be sent to prison again.

The assault — by six members of the Royal Anglian regiment, which is due to leave the area shortly — came only three days after Eileen returned from a publicity tour of Spain, Portugal and Italy, which, along with similar tours throughout Europe and north America, has caused massive embarrassment to the British government in exposing internationally the truth of prison conditions in the North.

At about midnight on Thursday, Eileen was returning home when she was accosted by three soldiers who ran after her out of an entry shouting "Come here you Provo b...!" After verbally abusing her she was seized by the wrist and dragged back into the alley where another three Brits

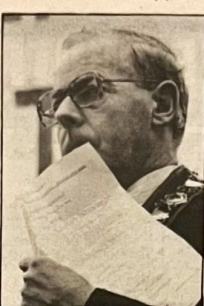
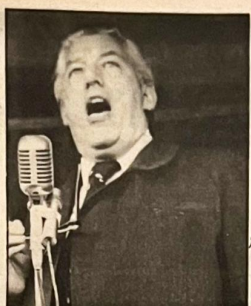
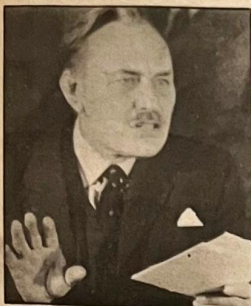
were waiting. An ordeal then began which was to last for almost half-an-hour during which the death threat was made. Eileen was also verbally abused throughout; referring to her having taking part in the 'no wash' protest the Brits said she was 'still a dirty-looking bitch' and went on to say that the same applied to all the people in Ballymurphy. Of her comrades in Armagh, the Brits said they were 'nothing but animals' and that they should be treated as such. The Brits told Eileen that they'd be watching her, and no matter where she went they would get her.

When finally Eileen was released she had to be taken to hospital by her

family for treatment for an asthma attack (a condition aggravated by the lack of medical treatment while in Armagh jail), as well as treatment for a finger cut when she was struck on the hand with a rifle. X-rays also revealed quite severe bruising on her wrist where she was dragged.

For a couple of days prior to the attack Eileen was regularly singled out by passing army patrols asking 'are you back from your propaganda tour, Eileen?', and her sisters, also, are regularly stopped in the street and threats made to them about what will happen to Eileen.

And although this latest in a series of threats and assaults against H-Block campaigners can be viewed simply as another 'prank' by an outgoing regiment, it illustrates too the extremely demoralising effect that the massively successful publicity campaign and continuous peaceful mobilisations on the streets is having on British soldiers occupying Northern streets.



**LOYALIST REACTION TO DUBLIN SUMMIT:** Outraged cries of 'sell-out' came from the loyal trio of (from left to right) arch-Tory Enoch Powell, Orange King Ian Paisley, and Official Unionist leader James Moynaux, after British premier Thatcher refused a Westminster debate on her Dublin summit with Free State premier Charles Haughey, which he described as making 'historic progress'.

# Different versions provoke controversy

BY KEVIN BURKE

WHILST the hunger-strike situation has drastically deteriorated in the H-Blocks and Armagh, the main topic of political concern in Dublin, and in relation to Ireland in London, is the confusion of the Dublin summit meeting between Haughey and Thatcher. Rather than concentrating on the urgency of the hunger-strike issue, attention has been focussed on what, at such a time of crisis, must be currently intangible irrelevancies.

The wave of disagreements over what was agreed at the summit meeting has continued, with each day bringing different versions or guesses as all sides take up generally predictable positions.

The refusal of Margaret Thatcher to debate the meeting, at Westminster last week, put Labour leader Michael Foot and arch-Tory and Unionist Enoch Powell in the same camp voicing suspicions of a 'sell-out' in Powell's words. Powell has later developed this into a scenario in which Thatcher 'has renounced her position that the affairs of Northern Ireland were the responsibility of Britain alone.'

This, he suggested on Monday of this week, was preparatory to a pull-out from the North, a position into which Thatcher has been manipulated by the British Foreign Office just as she was manipulated over Zimbabwe/Rhodesia, and in giving way in the EEC budget talks.

## HAUGHEY

Free State premier Charles Haughey had no problem in allowing a debate in Leinster House on Thursday. He received support from Fine Gael's Garret Fitzgerald (another latterday federalist), easily mopped up Labour leader Frank Cluskey's attempts at statesmanship, and went on to assert that there were no limits to the institutional changes to be examined by the joint study groups proposed at the summit.

But whilst Haughey was assuring Leinster House that relations between North and South were very much on the table, back in Westminster, Thatcher was assuring Ian Paisley, in a letter, that Unionists had nothing to fear and that 'Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom and will remain so unless its people and the Westminster parliament decide otherwise.' She also agreed to meet Paisley on Friday of this week.

Official Unionist leader, James Moynaux, meanwhile had written his own letter to Thatcher in which he set out topics for the proposed London/Dublin study groups to discuss. Not surprisingly these

topics covered such matters as extradition, the dropping of the Free State's constitutional claim to the six counties, the removal of voting rights of Irish people in Britain, and passport controls between South and North as well as Britain.

On Friday last week, Free State Foreign Minister Brian Lenihan, in a BBC radio interview, kept the pot boiling by insisting that in the agreed joint studies on institutional structures 'all options are open' and that 'we regard them as new political ways of resolving the problem that exists between North and South, within Northern Ireland itself and between the two parts of Ireland and Britain.'

The next summit, he said, was to be a special decision-making meeting between Haughey and Thatcher.

## PAISLEY

Paisley reacted immediately, accusing Thatcher of 'U-turns' and cover-ups. Moynaux, following the Powell line, wondered what 'civil servants beavering away without political control were up to.' In reply to a Paisley telegram, Thatcher issued a statement the same evening repeating that nothing had changed and that the loyalist veto was still intact.

It has been Paisley, then, who has been making the most noise and getting the most response both from Thatcher and the media. His grip on the loyalist kingship tightening at every opportunity. On Sunday he was grabbing headlines again by announcing on British television that he would be challenging Margaret Thatcher at their Friday meeting to hold a referendum in England, Scotland and Wales to decide whether people there wanted the North to be part of the 'United Kingdom' or not.

In the event of the referendum ousting the North he promised that loyalists would resist going into a united Ireland. 'It would mean,' he said, 'the very same as the traditional unionists did at the beginning of our state. The Protestants armed themselves then and said: "we will resist to the death."'

Media speculation on what has gone on so far, in London, Belfast and Dublin, has been to suggest that what was 'agreed' in Dublin may very well be nearer the Haughey version than the Thatcher denials.

In fact the reason for the double-talk could, they suggest, rest on the background agreements made before the talks by government officials on both sides, which Thatcher did not fully appreciate had been made. She did not realise therefore all she was agreeing to and has to keep quiet or look foolish.

This version would explain the refusal to accept her assurances by Paisley, who has thrown his 'independent Ulster' quickly in the ring again, by Moynaux and Powell who are concentrating on the civil servants, and by Michael Foot who would obviously have some informed sources in the civil service.

## SINISTER

Some of what Haughey has been offering to get this far, if it is accepted that he has got something, has also been revealed. First of all, he is prepared to consider all structures for a 'solution' apart from re-entry into the British Commonwealth, according to his speech in Leinster House. Legislation to give British residents the vote in the Free State is apparently being prepared.

More sinister, according to a report in the 'Sunday Telegraph', Haughey and Thatcher at the Dublin summit agreed on wider terms of reference for British troops to cross the border into the South. An agreement which would be in keeping with Haughey's maintenance of the border air corridor and his stepped up collaboration with the British army and RUC in all areas.

But most significant have been the suggestions that Haughey is ready to go into a defence alliance either directly with Britain, or into NATO, or as Lenihan was floating during the week, in the context of an EEC defence pact.

Certainly the strategic importance of Ireland is one that Haughey has been constantly stressing in his blandishments to Britain, and one which London rates very highly.

## FIVE DAY WONDER

AS EXPECTED the six-man loyalist H-Block hunger-strike, for 'special category status' and emigration from republican prisoners, was extremely short-lived. In fact, given the loyalists' normal lack of will to stand up to their political masters — the British — it lasted five days longer than many seasoned observers expected, stretching from Friday 12th December to Wednesday 17th December. Even over the weekend it was suggested by a UDA spokesman that the hunger-strikers would be willing to stop their fast if the British government was merely prepared to talk to a mediator about their demands. After a few more days without food — this hoisted suggestion having been sunk without trace by the British government — following an appeal by Protestant church leaders (particularly Canon William Arlow) to end their strike the UDA men did so.

Through the short duration of the hunger-strike the UDA leadership, including boss-man Andy Tyrrie, had been in a state of confusion and panic, as their imprisoned comrades were accused by unionist politicians of giving a morale boost to republican hunger-strikers and of putting the British government under undue pressure. The six UDA men — claimed to have been fasting to the death — were Robert Adams, Thomas Andrews, Brian Cavanagh, Samuel Courtney, Samuel Cleary and William Mullan — all in their twenties and thirties. Three of them are serving sentences for the sectarian assassination of Catholics, and another for opening fire with a machine-gun on a group of Catholic teenagers.

## RUC man killed

ONE RUC MAN, a constable, was killed and another, a sergeant, was injured when they were knocked down by a car on Tuesday night, December 16th, at a road check-point they were mounting on the Linavady to Derry road near Ballykelly forest.

The previous Friday, December 12th, three members of the UDR were slightly injured in the early hours of the morning, when their land-rover overturned at the Carryduff roundabout, on the outskirts of Belfast.

## Fingers everywhere

THE SONG may insist that 'a policeman's lot is not a happy one', but Garda Special Branch man Michael Egan would hardly agree as he left the High Court in Dublin last week having been awarded £55,000 in damages for an alleged libel by the BBC. The words said to libel Egan were spoken in a BBC dramatisation of the Heremias siege, when an actor portraying Eddie Gallagher, referring to Egan, whose finger he had just shot off, said: 'Egan's the bastard that tortured the boys in Mayo when the RUC man was shot, remember?'

Apart from Egan's plaintiff description of the great upset he had felt at being identified as one of the torturers in question, the interesting part of the case was an account of Egan's wide financial resources. Besides being described by a superior officer as a man always looking for overtime, Egan revealed that he also worked a farm in Roscommon for an aunt and arranged auctions of house contents for the London auctioneers Christies. He certainly seems to have a finger in a lot of pies.

## Totally unrepentant

APPEARING on the RTE 'Today-Tonight' programme on Thursday 11th December, Fianna Fáil's Síle de Valera declared herself totally unrepentant for her Donegal by-election speech in which she slammed Margaret Thatcher for her 'callous unfeeling and self-righteous statements' on the hunger-strike. Nor had she at anytime been asked to withdraw her remarks, she asserted.

Attempts by interviewer Olivia O'Leary to get Síle de Valera to say that the H-Block and Armagh prisoners are guilty of crimes also failed, as did an attempt to get her to disassociate herself from the remarks of Jack Bourke, the Limerick Fianna Fáil councillor who described British soldiers as 'legitimate targets'. The situation in the North was one which had arisen from the history of British occupation, and the existence of Castlereagh interrogation centre and Diplock courts, Síle de Valera insisted. The nationalist feeling in Fianna Fáil is obviously at its highest for years and Síle de Valera for one is confident of its strength.

## Retrial ordered

PHILIP KELLY, the Sinn Féin Alderman on Wexford Corporation, who was jailed for IRA membership last month, has been freed on bail following a retrial ordered by the Court of Criminal Appeal in Dublin. Kelly was charged following a speech he made at a Wexford Corporation meeting in which he described Peter Rogers, the man charged with the shooting of a Wexford Garda, as a friend. The retrial has been ordered because evidence produced at the trial — a photograph said to show Kelly in a colour party at the Frank Stagg memorial ceremony in 1975 — had not been included in the original book of evidence.

Another republican James Cull from Roscommon was recently released from Portlaoise because of a similar point at his trial.

## Solidarity fast

A YOUNG DUBLIN MAN in Brixton jail in London, England — Michael Ward — believed to be from the Ballsbridge area, and who is on remand in connection with a burglary charge, has been fasting in prison in solidarity with the original seven H-Block hunger-strikers.

Ward, who is not a republican, is reported to have refused food since Monday 27th October and liquids since Thursday 4th December. However, some newspapers reported that he broke his fast on Wednesday 10th December. A statement from the British Home Office, issued last Wednesday, December 17th, said that in fact he had gone forty-nine days without food and that he had been moved to the prison hospital where his 'condition continues to deteriorate'.

## Brixton breakout

THE HEALTHY TRADITION of Irish republican escapes from British jails has been upheld by Gerard Tuite, aged 25, who escaped from the top-security wing of Brixton jail in South London in the early hours of last Tuesday morning, December 16th. A major hunt by the English police for Tuite began immediately his cell was found empty by startled warders. He and two other (non-political) prisoners escaped by tunnelling into one cell, where they broke through a wall in the prison wing, into the prison yard, and then scaled the outside wall. This bold escape was the first by an Irish prisoner in England in the last decade.

Tuite was once described by Scotland Yard's 'anti-terrorist squad' as their 'most wanted man'. He was being held on remand in Brixton jail since his arrest just before Christmas last year, and his trial was expected to start at the Bailey in March, mainly on charges in connection with bombings around Christmas two years ago. At that time the IRA bombed a gas works at Greenwich in London and an oil depot on Canvey Island in Essex, and there were two car bombs in central London. Tuite was also awaiting trial for purportedly plotting the jail break of Brian Keenan, currently serving eighteen years imprisonment in Leicester jail. Ironically that jail break was supposed to have been out of Brixton too.

# HUNGER-STRIKE PROTESTS: ARMAGH



Above: Demonstrators stage a sit-down protest on the Armagh ring-road Below: Demonstrators move off from the nationalist Shambles area of Armagh

BY SEAN DELANEY

THE H-Block/Armagh campaign scored a significant victory last Saturday in Armagh city when four thousand demonstrators staged a peaceful march and protest rally despite being prevented from reaching the women's jail, as planned, by a simply enormous force of RUC riot police whose tactic — although unsuccessful — was clearly to provoke a violent confrontation and so deflect increasingly embarrassing publicity (for the British government) at this critical stage.

The prison struggle of the Armagh women, which for so long has played second fiddle, in terms of active support outside the jail, to the H-Block blanket men's struggle, finally achieved just recognition as its equal, as busloads streamed into the city from all parts of Ireland to make it a protest to remember.

From the South there were six busloads from Dublin, as well as contingents from Galway, Drogheda, Clare, Wicklow, Kerry and Cavan. Support came from all over the North, with strong contingents from Belfast, Tyrone, Derry and Fermanagh.

The mood of the demonstrators from the outset, as they assembled in the nationalist Shambles ghetto, was extremely militant, but, as was to be shown, equally disciplined. For their part, the RUC — for whom all leave in Armagh had been cancelled — saturated the whole city, blocking off — with barriers, landrovers and riot police — the Ogle Street route towards the jail.

The marchers moved off along the Armagh ring road in a circular route to the jail, but barely marched half-a-mile before they were again halted by RUC barriers, backed by several hundred riot police positioned in bordering fields and

along several hundred yards of the road.

Despite a request from National H-Block Committee member Bernadette McAliskey, who said that the only threat of a breach of the peace came from the RUC themselves, the route to the jail remained blocked. Then, despite mounting frustration from the crowd, stewards successfully prevented more than an occasional missile being hurled, and the huge crowd staged a sit-down protest in the road to listen peacefully, in the bitter cold and wind, to speakers. The RUC's tactic of provocation had failed!

To a massive burst of cheering, Bernadette McAliskey said (and correctly, as was later discovered): "Though we have been prevented from making a peaceful protest outside the jail, the women there can hear us out here: some of them may actually be able to see us."

She went on: "Time is running out, especially for Sean McKenna but for all of them. Time is running out for the British; but be sure of one thing, Mrs. Thatcher: time is not running out for us. We will empty these jails and we will free this country."

Marie Moore (Sinn Féin) said: "I appeal to you today for discipline, and for you to keep the discipline you have shown, over the next few weeks. We will force the confrontation when we want it, not when the British army and the RUC want it."

Finally, after over an hour, the marchers filed back into the Shambles and dispersed to the buses which would carry them home. The afternoon's restraint finally proved too much for a small number of young people, who responded briefly to RUC provocation with a barrage of missiles at Ogle Street, but it could not detract from the success of a large, militant and peaceful demonstration, and a thwarted and frustrated RUC.



# Apparent movement proves to have been conning exercise

## INTRANSIGENT STANCE RE-INFORCED

BY PETER ARNLIS

THOUGH the visit of a senior official from the British administration's Northern Ireland Office to the original seven H-Block hunger-strikers on Wednesday week, and the considerable Irish and international pressures on the Thatcher government, suggested that there was finally some movement on the H-Block/Armagh crisis, it has now become patently clear that the Brits had engaged in a big conning exercise.

For between Wednesday week and this Wednesday, December 17th, there was no evidence of any movement whatsoever, but of increased intransigence by the British. Their intransigence was expressed by the full mobilisation of the RUC (and the stand-by alert of Brit spearhead regiments in England); and in statements from Stormont Castle, last Thursday, December 11th, that there would be no negotiations, and by Thatcher in Westminster, last Tuesday night December 16th, just hours before an appeal by Cardinal O'Fiaich on behalf of the Northern Catholic bishops for Thatcher to "intervene personally in the prison crisis, which is now worsening every day."

Moreover, the Brits squandered an opportunity for resolving the crisis when loyalist opposition to a settlement was divided and at its lowest during the frivolous five day hunger-strike to the death by six UDA men.

The seven republican hunger-strikers, visited by the senior British civil servant, said they had no intention of abandoning their fast. They said that the official "refused to discuss, or accept, proposals put to him by Brendan Hughes. The official told Brendan to read the Atkins' statement and also stated that the hunger strike should end." (The Atkins' statement is the detailed British position on the hunger-strikers' five demands outlined by him in Westminster on Thursday 4th December.)

The seven prisoners said: "We have no intention, despite our deteriorating condition, of abandoning our hunger-strike. While accepting that the NIO have broken the ice, we feel our position needs clarifying to prevent any misunderstanding by our supporters on the outside. To resolve the hunger-strike without a death the following needs to occur.



RUC mobilisation against Armagh jail picketers last Saturday

"The Northern Ireland Office have got to approach the situation realistically and have to deal with the continuation of the hunger-strike and the blanket protest through our representatives here... Nothing significantly has changed and the people should be made aware of this."

### ASSESSMENT

But while any assessment of the present situation of forty republicans on hunger-strike overwhelmingly points to a Brit policy of brinkmanship (that is, still attempting to break the men's resolve before offering them or confronting them with a raw deal), or, even worse, a stubborn and stupid decision (influenced by an over-emotional response from Thatcher) to allow the prisoners to die, the British have also apparently been just keeping the option of a settlement open, that is, if statements made by a leading Tory back-bencher, Michael Mates, are, presumably, more than just his own personal comments.

Mates is a former British army officer who served in the North, and since his entry into parliamentary politics he has been involved in the Tory committee which draws up their policies for the North.

Interviewed on RTE last Sunday he said that "there is precious little difference between what the hunger-strikers are seeking and what is on offer." If the Brits believe that to be so, they should then be prepared to negotiate with the men.

### OPPORTUNITY

Last weekend the Brits had the ideal opportunity to settle the crisis. The decision of six loyalists to hunger-strike, whilst greeted with ridicule by seasoned observers, severely divided the loyalist community. This division was compounded by Ian Paisley's call for a British referendum on the Union with the North, and by a

proposal from the Rev. Martin Smyth, head of the Orange Order, that all prisoners should be allowed to wear their own clothes.

The UDA's decision had a cold-foot escape clause about their "willingness to postpone their hunger-strike if the Northern Ireland Office would receive Protestant church leaders to present their case."

But the decision was described as 'disgusting' by Official Unionist Harold McKusker, and Church of Ireland bishop, Dr. Robin Eames, appealed to them to end their fast which was causing 'division and bewilderment within the community'. The bewilderment obviously being a reference to the difficult position it was placing the anti-hunger-strike loyalist community.

Paisley immediately could see the advantages for the British if they had been interested in resolving the crisis) and attempted to expose something that was not there, which is a favourite loyalist ploy. He accused Stormont Castle of blocking attempts to have discussions opened on prison reform with loyalist representatives. Naming the official who spoke to the seven republican hunger-strikers as a 'Mr Blullock', he said that Blullock said 'no' to loyalist discussions "because it would make his job easier if there was a Protestant hunger-strike. He would have a better lever."

### REASONING

The Rev. Martin Smyth on Sunday called for all prisoners in jails in the North to be allowed to wear their own clothes. His reasoning was that he believed that the granting of such a 'reform' would expose the republicans as upping the demands after each concession was made.

Smyth also sympathised with the average loyalist who found himself behind bars. "He saw his system being destroyed," said Smyth, "because the authorities did not give proper security, and he sees himself

as defending his country."

Paisley stated on a British television documentary, ITV's 'Weekend World', also on Sunday, that the people of England, Scotland and Wales should be allowed a referendum to decide if they wanted to maintain the Union with the North. If they rejected it, said Paisley, then loyalists should opt for an independent six-counties (an idea proposed by the UDA for some years now).

Paisley's statement shattered all the other shades of unionism who condemned him, most of them not trusting that the British people could make the 'right' decision.

So, during this inter-loyalist verbal feuding the Brits could have easily settled the H-Block/Armagh crisis, before Canon William Arlow's visit to loyalists on Tuesday gave the UDA the immediate excuse they badly needed to abandon their fast.

### O'FIAICH

However, in retrospect, it seems clear now, and is reinforced by Thatcher's dismissive reply last Wednesday to Cardinal O'Fiaich's plea to personally intervene, that by that stage, and probably from the beginning of the hunger-strike, the British government had taken the decision to go to the brink, or over it.

Cardinal O'Fiaich, who for some months attempted to resolve the prison crisis through talks with Atkins, and failed, called upon the men a number of times not to hunger-strike. Last Wednesday evening he sent a similar request to the men via the prison chaplain, Fr. Toner, which had the effect of marginally pre-empting Thatcher's predictable response to his plea.

His telegram to Thatcher read: "Having already appealed to the hunger-strikers to give up their fast, we (the Bishops) appeal to you to intervene personally in the prison crisis which is now worsening every day. All sides here are desperate for a solution and someone must take an initiative immediately to avert tragedy."

### BIGGS-DAVIDSON

On Wednesday, one of Thatcher's cronies, John Biggs-Davidson, chairman of the Tory party's 'Northern Ireland Committee', again called upon the Cardinal to get the men off the fast. (Occasions when he does so are then used by British embassies throughout the world to lambast the prisoners.)

Biggs-Davidson was interviewed on the local BBC in the North, and was asked if the British government could make more concessions on humanitarian grounds. He said: "I don't see what advances could be made on what has been done already."

Thatcher, in her reply to the Cardinal's plea, claimed to have the universal support of the Irish people against the political status demands of the prisoners, and said that prison conditions had already been significantly improved this year, but that these had not ended the protest. She gave no indication of movement and left it up to direct-ruler Humphrey Atkins to elaborate in Westminster on Thursday.

# THIRTY JOIN HUNGER-STRIKE

AT THE beginning of this week — in the face of continued British intransigence and brinkmanship — thirty H-Block 'blanket men' joined their seven comrades in the Blocks, and three women comrades in Armagh jail, on hunger-strike to the death for political status.

### STATEMENT

Those joining issued a statement, the full text of which reads:

"The decision to increase the number of hunger-strikers was taken because of the serious condition of our seven comrades who are now entering the fiftieth day of their fast. Our decision was not taken lightly but given the fact that the British government has not moved, in any way, towards an honest and realistic resolution of this issue, we feel that there is no other course of action left open to us.

"While creating the appearance, indeed the illusion of movement, while issuing transparent statements of concern about the health of our comrades, Margaret Thatcher, Michael Allison, and Humphrey Atkins have remained coldly resolute in their determination to break us. The H-Block/Armagh issue was created by them. Any problems, real or imaginary, which they feel are preventing them from resolving

this issue are self-inflicted.

"They know our demands. They have the means to concede them. In the absence of a resolution, we, having suffered four-and-a-half years of a failed criminalisation policy, will, with our comrades in Armagh and our seven comrades here, continue our hunger-strike until death. Only the British government, which has wasted and cast aside so many opportunities to resolve this issue, can prevent our deaths."

### TWENTY-THREE

The twenty-three who joined the hunger-strike on Monday from H-Blocks 3, 4 and 5, are:

Paul Brennan, 28, of Ballymurphy, Belfast, serving sixteen years; Sean Coleman, 23, of Lurgan, serving five years; Michael Devine, 32, of Creggan, Derry, serving twelve years; Matt Devlin, 30, of Coagh, County Tyrone, serving seven years; Ciaran Doherty, of Andersonstown, Belfast; Anthony Hughes, 23, of Belfast, serving ten years; Frank Hughes, 25, of Bellaghy, South Derry, serving 'life', and once described by the RUC as their 'most wanted man'; Martin Hurson, 25, of Aghashess, County Tyrone, serving twenty years; Kevin Lynch, 23, of Dungiven, serving twenty years; Jim McCann, 24, of Andersonstown, Belfast, serving twenty-five years; Brian McCool, 23, of Derry, serving

fifteen years; Raymond McCreesh, 23, of Camlough; Gerry McDonald, of St. James', Belfast; brothers Benedict and Thomas McElwee, of Bellaghy, South Derry, serving ten and twenty years, respectively; Pierce McMahon, of Loughglade, County Antrim; Joe McNulty, 29, of Dungannon, County Tyrone, serving ten years; Denis Neils, 22, of Creggan, Derry, serving sixteen years, and whose family has several times been featured in the media as exemplifying the plight of the beleaguered nationalist people; Patsy O'Hara, 23, of Derry; John Pickering, 25, of Andersonstown, Belfast, serving twenty-six years; Paddy Quinn, 27, of Camlough, serving fourteen years; Phil Rooney, of Short Strand, Belfast; and Pat Sheehan, 22, of St. James', Belfast, serving fifteen years.

### SEVEN

The seven who joined the hunger-strike on Tuesday (delayed a day owing to understandable difficulties in internal communication in the H-Blocks) are, from H-Block 5, John Coleman of South Derry, and from H-Block 6: Gerry Carville, Killeel, South Down; Robert Kerr, New Lodge Road, Belfast; Jack McGarry, Ardoyne, Belfast; Anthony McIntyre, Twinbrook, Belfast; Lawrence McKee, Randlestown, County Antrim; and Pat Wilson, Andersonstown, Belfast.

## Dublin

ON THE evening of Wednesday 10th December members of the Youth Against H-Block and Armagh group in Donnybrook and Coolock in North Dublin blocked the busy Oscar Traynor Road for more than half-an-hour at rush hour and gave out leaflets. The following evening over one hundred youths sealed off the approach roads to Northside shopping area again at peak shopping hour, to draw attention to the prisoners' demands.

On Wednesday evening in Ballymun about forty young people met at the local shopping centre to form a Youth Against H-Block and Armagh action group. Following a march around the estate a meeting, chaired by Sean O Mearthaile of Ballymun H-Block Action Group, was addressed by Sean Crowe of the National H-Block/Armagh Committee's youth group, local youth group organiser Leonie Marshall and Rose Dugdale.

The following evening Sean O Mearthaile and another member of the local action group were arrested by Special Branch men and were held overnight whilst attempts were made to interrogate them about H-Block/Armagh activities in the area.

On Sunday 14th December, a conference was held in Trinity College Dublin (TCD), organised by Students Against H-Block and Armagh.

The conference was attended by delegates from action groups in Queen's University Belfast, University College Cork, University College Galway, University College Dublin, TCD, Ulster Polytechnic (Jordanstown), Belfast College of Business, Dublin Colleges of Catering and Magee College Derry. Individuals from technical colleges, North and South, also attended. The conference was chaired by Sean Mannion (TCD) and following the passing of a resolution to affiliate to the National H-Block/Armagh Committee, a seven person steering committee for the thirty-two counties was elected.

On Tuesday 16th December, the Ballyfermot H-Block Committee held a torchlight vigil in the local shopping centre which was attended by twenty or thirty people.

On Wednesday 17th December, twelve H-Block protestors, including Margaret McKearney, sister of hunger-striker Tommy, climbed the railings of Leinster House and inside the building, making their way into the chamber of the house where a debate was in session.

Margaret McKearney handed in a copy of a telegram from the National H-Block/Armagh Committee urging Charles Haughey to demand the immediate return to the twenty-six counties of hunger-striker Sean McKenna, who was abducted from County Louth by SAS men in March 1976. The protestors were eventually removed by Leinster House porters and security staff, who are reported to have used unnecessary force.

Also on Wednesday, members of Students Against H-Block and Armagh entered the RTE studios at Donnybrook and went around the building distributing leaflets condemning RTE's biased reporting of the hunger-strike. The students then sat down in the reception area until an RTE official came to meet them and accept an official letter of protest.

Later in the afternoon protestors occupied the British Airways office in Dublin's busy Grafton Street.

### TUNE IN!

**TUNE IN to Radio H-Block and Armagh broadcasting on 298 metres (1008 megahertz) in the medium wave band for the Dublin area.**

Every day 10 a. m. to 2 p. m. and 5 p. m. to 9 p. m.

## Cavan

ON Friday 12th December, five hundred people attended a meeting in Ballyconnell which followed a torchlight march from the border. The meeting was addressed by John Joe McGirl, chairman of Leitrim County Council; Margaret McKearney; Fermanagh teacher Bernard O'Connor; and Brian McKeown of Dungannon H-Block/Armagh Action Committee.

## Cork

AT a recent meeting of Cork Corporation protestors held pictures of the hunger-strikers in the public gallery and thwarted attempts by councillors to leave the

# HUNGER-STRIKE PROTESTS: SOUTH



Thirty protestors occupied the news room of the 'Irish Independent' in Dublin, on Wednesday evening, in protest at the paper's refusal to cover the hunger-strike campaign. One hundred people at a hunger-strike meeting in the city's Mansion House marched to the 'Independent's' offices in support of the occupation. Work in the news room was disrupted for one hour, after which the protestors left peacefully.

chamber by chaining the doors closed. The efforts to force the councillors to discuss the hunger-strike were made following weeks of canvassing individual councillors without success. Gardai eventually removed the chains from the doors and the protestors left peacefully.

A march and meeting in Skibbereen was attended by over three hundred people and addressed by former 'blanket man' Tommy McGinn; Joseph Nixon, brother of hunger-striker John; former Armagh protest prisoner Liz Lagura; and Mrs. Campbell, mother of a 'blanket man'.

## Donegal

ON Saturday 13th December, a parade and meeting was held in Ballyshannon. The parade, led by the Letterkenny Girls' Band, marched around the town before the meeting in the Diamond which was chaired by Aodh MacAoidh, chairperson of County Donegal Central H-Block/Armagh Action Committee.

Speakers included Fr. Piaras O Duill, chairperson of the National H-Block/Armagh Committee; Euro-MP and Leinster House member Neil Blaney; Westminster MP Frank Maguire, Sinn Féin president Ruairi O Bradaigh; Margaret McKearney; Eddie McCartney, brother of hunger-striker Raymond; Anthony O'Malley-Daly and Patrick O'Malley of Ballyshannon Town Commission, which had voted to be officially represented; and John Joe McCusker, one of the Fermanagh councillors in the recent walk-out from that council chamber in support of the prisoners.

On Sunday afternoon, another parade marched through the twin towns of Stranorlar and Ballybofey to a meeting in the latter town, which was again chaired by Aodh MacAoidh, and addressed by county councillors Eddie Fullerton and Harry Blaney, Ruairi O Bradaigh, and the father and brother of hunger-striker Tom McFeeley.

## Kerry

HUNDREDS of Christmas shoppers attended a public meeting in Killarney town centre on Saturday 13th December which was chaired by Dermot O'Sullivan of the local action group. Speakers included Kathleen Greene, who has two sons 'on the blanket', Liam Cotter and

Tim Garvey of Kerry Sinn Féin, and Richard Behal of the Sinn Féin Ard Comhairle.

On Saturday night a large and enthusiastic crowd attended a torchlight procession and meeting which was addressed by Kathleen Greene, Liam Cotter, Richard Behal and Sarah O'Hara of the Armagh Solidarity Committee. The meeting was chaired by Tim Garvey.

On Sunday an after-mass meeting was held at Scartaglen church which was addressed by Sarah O'Hara and Richard Behal. In Killoggin leaflets were handed out at the Kerry versus Down GAA football match and there was a display of hunger-strike posters.

## Kilkenny

AT a meeting in Kilkenny on Friday 12th December, organised by the local action group, a Youth Against H-Block group was formed. The meeting was addressed by Terry Hughes, brother of hunger-striker Brendan; Paddy Bolger of the National H-Block/Armagh Committee's trade union group, and Ruth Tallion of the committee's Armagh women's sub-committee.

On Sunday churches in the town were leafleted.

## Leitrim

MANORHAMILTON was the venue for a march and meeting on Saturday 13th December. The parade through the town was led by piper Larry O'Dowd (the lone piper who led the funeral of Michael Gaughan from the Isle of Wight to Ballina). The enthusiastic crowd at the meeting, which was chaired by Michael McGowan, chairperson of the North Leitrim action group, were addressed by Sligo county councillor Declan Bree; Larry McGowan and Joseph M. Mooney, who are both Fianna Fáil members of Leitrim county council; the council's chairperson John Joe McGirl, of Sinn Féin; Ruairi O Bradaigh; P. J. Kearney of the Sligo action group; and Margaret McKearney.

## Meath

THE county board of the National Athletics and Cycling Association in Meath has passed a resolution calling on

the British government to restore political status. Workers in three Navan furniture factories, Crannocks, George Foster's and Foster Furniture, have sent telegrams to the British prime minister, Margaret Thatcher, urging her to concede the prisoners' demands.

A local H-Block/Armagh action group has been formed at Hill of Down; chairperson is Des Gilsenan, secretary Pat Quinn, and PRO Thomas Darby.

Four after-mass meetings were held by North Meath H-Block/Armagh action committee on Sunday 14th December. The meetings were addressed by Tom Marry and Maureen Shiels of the action committee and Terry Hughes.

## Monaghan

ABOUT six hundred people took part in a torchlight procession through Carrickmacross on Saturday 13th December led by four men and women in blankets, the Cullyhanna children's accordion band.

A meeting in Main Street was chaired by Tom Hughes, chairperson of the local action group; and addressed by Dymna Higgins, sister of hunger-striker Sean McKenna; Tom Greene, brother of hunger-striker Leo; Bernadette O'Hagan, who has a son 'on the blanket'; Caoimhin O Caoilain of Monaghan action committee; Tony Fields of Armagh action committee; Sinn Féin vice-president Dairí O Conaill; and Neil Blaney.

## Offaly

ON Saturday 13th December, a march through Tullamore ended with a meeting in O'Connell Square which was addressed by Eithne Carlisle of Belfast R.A.C., Anne Conway of the Armagh Solidarity Committee and members of the local action group.

## Roscommon

ON Friday 12th December, about two hundred people attending a social evening in Strokestown, organised by the local action group, were addressed by Ruairi O Bradaigh and Rose Dugdale. The speakers were introduced by Eithne Quinn, secretary of Roscommon H-Block (Armagh Committee).

## Tipperary

ON Saturday 13th December, a march and meeting in Thurles, organised by the North Tipperary action committee, was supported by several hundred people. The march from Sempel GAA stadium made its way through the town to the Market Square, where the meeting was chaired by Finbar Kissane, Sinn Féin councillor on Tipperary UDC, and addressed by Paddy Bolger, Ruth Tallion, Gordon Hayes of the Limerick action committee, and Terry Hughes. Following the meeting a local action group was formed.

## Waterford

AN after-mass meeting in Dungarvan on Sunday 14th December was addressed by Liz Lagura, former 'blanket man' Tommy McGinn; Joseph Nixon, brother of hunger-striker John; and local speakers.

## Westmeath

A LOCAL action group has been formed in Raharney. The chairperson is Seamus Mullen, secretary Joseph Mullen and PRO Sean Greville.

On Sunday 14th December after-mass meetings were held in Raharney and Rathwade.

## Wexford

ON Saturday 13th December a public meeting in Gorey's main street was addressed by former Fianna Fáil minister Kevin Boland, local author Diarmuid O'Suilleabhain, Minsey Higgins, whose son is 'on the blanket' and Mairéad Callaghan, whose sister Rosemary is on the protest in Armagh. The meeting was chaired by Joe Gillen of the local action committee.

On Sunday, masses in Arklow and Castletown were leafleted.

The previous Sunday, after-mass meetings in Ballyvaughan, Ballygarret and Kilmuckridge were addressed by Diarmuid O'Suilleabhain; Joe Cullen, chairperson of Gorey action committee; and local GAA personalities Oliver Murray and Willie O'Neill.

## Belfast

AS THE condition of the original seven H-Block hunger-strikers becomes ever more critical, and as Sean McKenna in particular comes so close to death, Belfast braces itself for the mass march on Musgrave Park military hospital that will come within twenty-four hours of the first hunger-striker being moved there. Nevertheless, while feelings and emotions heighten, the behaviour of those taking part in protests remains disciplined and restrained.

About five hundred people took part in a torchlight procession in Ardoyne on Thursday night. The march was addressed by former Armagh protestor Rose McAllister, Desi Breen (Sinn Féin) and Kevin Meehan (youth committee).

Friday, about one hundred protesters blocked roads by the Black Man statue in the city centre for about one hour. However, the RUC presence in the area was very heavy and three people were arrested and taken to Queen Street barracks. And in Short Strand in the evening, one hundred people picketed Mountpottinger Road barracks for an hour.

The following day, a large contingent turned out from Belfast for the march in Armagh from literally almost every nationalist district in the city; and on Sunday afternoon there were two demonstrations: a rally of several hundred at Crosses Square in the Markets, and a march of around three hundred from upper Andersonstown to the shops at Riverdale.

On Monday afternoon, one hundred people blocked all four routes at Kennedy Way roundabout for one hour, and in the evening over five hundred people marched from the Lower Falls and Springfield Road areas to a rally at Dunville Park.

And in Short Strand, three hundred packed a local hall for an emergency meeting after the announcement that afternoon of an additional twenty-three men joining the hunger-strike, including local man Philip Rooney.

In Turf Lodge, also that evening, the local hunger-strike and youth committees staged a half-hour picket outside Fort Jericho, and horns were sounded by passing motorists, before a Rosary was recited at the local H-Block hut.

On Tuesday, one hundred and fifty people again picketed Short Strand RUC barracks and blocked the Mountpottinger Road for an hour in the afternoon; and in the evening several hundred took part in a torchlight procession through the Short Strand area.

## Antrim

IN County Antrim, on Wednesday 10th December, as part of the day of action, several hundred people closed down the town of Toomebridge and blocked the main road through the town for twelve hours. At one stage a large force of RUC moved in, and arrested twenty-three demonstrators and attacked others, but they failed to move the demonstrators, who in fact swelled to five hundred in number.

The following day, roads were again blocked in Toomebridge for an hour in the afternoon.

On Sunday afternoon, three thousand people took part in a march from Turnpike to the Diamond in Rasharkin, which was led by two bands. Speakers at the rally were Johnny Heffernan, a Ballymena councillor; Pat Fahy, Omagh solicitor; Johnny Johnston, Derry Sinn Féin; and Francis O'Loan, North Antrim hunger-strike committee.

## Armagh

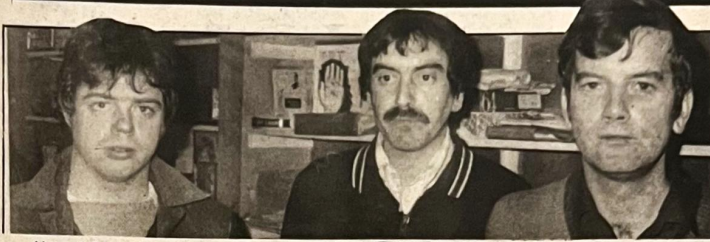
THE obvious highlight of the Armagh week of action was the mass march last Saturday (reported separately). However, the obvious sense of frustration being experienced by the RUC both in Armagh city and in Lurgan, elsewhere in the county, came to the fore on Friday (as well as on the march the next day) in both places.

On Thursday 11th December, about twenty protesters occupied a bingo session attended by several hundred people in Ballynacab, receiving a good response when Cathleen Nixon addressed them on behalf of her brother, hunger-striker John.

On Friday, in Armagh city, the RUC moved in heavily-handedly against a number of people blocking the road at the Irish Street/Ogle Street/Navan Street junction, and they took twenty-two names of people taking part with a view to further prosecutions.

In Lurgan, six people were arrested

# HUNGER-STRIKE PROTESTS: NORTH



Above, left to right: Lurgan and Craigavon Sinn Féin activists, Pat Morgan, Jim Byrne and Liam Haddock — arrested by RUC; below left: Janet Weir — arrested by RUC; below: Kathleen Kerr and Dara O'Hagan — kicked and beaten by RUC



after the RUC moved in with dogs against people blocking the road at Church Place, close to the town centre.

Protestors were knocked to the ground as the RUC, intent on arresting the well-known organisers, charged through the crowd. Lurgan Sinn Féin activists Peter Corey, Liam Haddock and Jim Byrne, Pat Morgan of Craigavon Sinn Féin, and hunger-strike supporter Roy Gasley, were the five men arrested.

All were left with bruising, dog bites, and torn clothing, and were variously charged with obstructing traffic and breach of the peace. One of them, Peter Corey, was threatened in Lurgan barracks by an RUC man: "You needn't worry about political status, when it's achieved, it'll be no use to you in St. Coleman's cemetery."

Janet Weir, aged 19, from Craigavon, was violently kicked in the stomach and knocked backwards before being dragged towards, and bundled into, an RUC land-rover.

Two schoolgirls — Kathleen Kerr, aged 14, and Dara O'Hagan, aged 16 — were kicked and beaten by the RUC.

Kathleen recalls two RUC men rushing towards her: "They started kicking me on the legs and threatening me with arrest. All this time their dog was tugging at my skirt while they were punching me. Dara came over to help me but they just pulled her away. Then I was hit in the side with a rifle and pulled by the hair. I saw Dara out on the road with four of them punching her in the back. Both girls had to be helped away from the scene in a state of shock."

Prior to Saturday's march in Armagh, the Tullygally shopping centre in Craigavon was picketed by the local action committee for three-and-a-half hours in the morning, while in Lurgan, North Armagh ex-PoWs were holding a forty-eight-hour fast.

On Sunday, about forty people travelled from Lurgan to join others from Clady, Blackwaterstown and Armagh city in a half-time protest at the GAA match between Armagh and Roscommon, which was attended by eight thousand people. Cathleen Nixon addressed the crowd for ten minutes.

Cathleen — who plays camogie for St. Brigid's in Armagh — also spoke, and urged support, at the County Armagh convention of camogie clubs, held in the Madden Community Centre on Sunday.

On Monday, the six Lurgan demonstrators charged on Friday appeared in court, but the cases against them were adjourned until the New Year.

On Tuesday, action in Lurgan was geared towards distributing leaflets and posters for a march on Thursday evening.

## Derry

ROAD-BLOCKING, occupations, and sporadic rioting have continued over the past week in Derry city, with a number of marches and torchlight processions in the county.

Wednesday: The day of action saw thousands of Derry workers laying down

tools and on the streets for a mass rally at Guildhall Square. Local schools and colleges also took part. Workers were there from Peter England, Courtaulds, Dupont, VF Denim, Viking, Molins, Springtown, Armtz Building Co., British Shoe Corporation and Graham's.

Youth and unemployed banners were at the rally and Cearta Gael and other gaelic banners were prominent. Included on the platform at the Guildhall Square rally were Derry IIP councillors who pledged to withdraw from Derry Council at the next meeting, which they later did on December 16th. At the front of the platform were ten members of Bogside Youth Against Oppression, dressed in blankets, who had been on forty-eight-hour hunger-strike since Monday.

Thursday: One hundred people blocked traffic at Guildhall Square for one hour.

Friday: A flying picket of one hundred people blocked traffic outside Strand Road RUC barracks before marching via Waterloo Place, Strand Road and the quay to Craigavon Bridge which they also blocked. From there they marched to Guildhall Square, interrupting unionist Lord Mayor Marlene Jefferson who was in the course of officially lighting up the city's Christmas tree. A microphone was seized and H-Block slogans shouted through it.

On both Thursday and Friday nights, members of Derry Felons' Association visited all pubs and clubs in the city reading out the names of blanket men appealing for support.

Monday: One hundred and fifty people blocked roads in the Diamond for an hour and occupied Scott's the Jewellers there. (Scott's is owned by the chairman of the Derry Chamber of Trade, which is seeking a meeting with direct-ruler Atkins, complaining that H-Block protests have reduced Derry trade by forty percent. The Ulsterbus Company has been particularly effected with an estimated four hundred and forty thousand and fares lost in the Derry area alone since the hunger-strike began.)

Tuesday: Leafletting took place of vehicles driving through the city, advertising Derry's march on December 21st. A promised 'development' came to fruition in the evening when four IIP councillors, as well as SDLP councillor Billy McCartney (a relative of hunger-striker Raymond), walked out of the council meeting and announced that in future they would only attend to debate business related to the hunger-strike. Later in the meeting, the issue of Pauline McLaughlin's health came up, and after the two Official Unionists (including Lord Mayor Marlene Jefferson) had staged a walk-out, the remaining councillors (mostly SDLP) agreed to accept an offer from Michael Alison, the obnoxious Brit responsible for prisons, to receive a small council deputation on Pauline's behalf.

Given the continual stream of walk-outs from Derry council in recent weeks it is highly unlikely, anyway, that they could muster anything other than a

'small' deputation!

During the previous week there were a number of riots on Friday and Saturday nights by youths angry at British attitudes towards the hunger-strike issue. However, on Saturday, well-known local hoods used the rioting as a cover to loot and burn shops in Rossville Flats and William Street, endangering the lives of residents.

On Sunday night, Derry Brigade of the IRA issued a statement, condemning the hoods, who, they point out, "had infiltrated the ranks of young people engaged in anti-British and anti-RUC stone-throwing". They called on responsible young people "to act with discipline at this very critical stage".

On Sunday night, a group of ex-prisoners and supporters stewarded the area, explaining to local youths that while they understood their feelings, what was needed at the moment was mass mobilisations and not riots, appealing to them to get involved in organised committees. Consequently there were no incidents on Sunday or on the nights following, despite marked British army harassment of people out on the street after dark.

A sequel to the Saturday morning riots occurred that morning at 2 a.m. when Derry H-Block activist and mother-of-five, twenty-eight-year-old Rose Hogan (who has a brother on the blanket) was brutally attacked by British soldiers who rushed past her firing plastic bullets as she stood at Chamberlain Street waiting for a taxi.

As she turned to turn, Rose was struck in the back by a plastic bullet, falling face down into the gutter. There she was kicked in the face, back, legs and arms before being carried off unconscious down William Street by Brits who pulled up her coat, jumper and bra as they carried her. Rose spent all night standing in a cell in Strand Road barracks (two bruised to lie down) before being charged with riotous behaviour (I) as well as three charges in connection with the blocking of Craigavon bridge the previous Friday. Rose, plans to counter-charge the British soldiers involved.

Elsewhere in county Derry there were a number of demonstrations.

On Wednesday 10th December, a torchlight procession of one thousand people marched from the Castle grounds in Dungiven to Upper Main Street, via the home of hunger-striker Thomas McFeely. Four GAA banners were included on the march.

Speakers were Patricia McFeely (wife of hunger-striker Tom); former 'blanket man' Eunan Brolly, released two weeks ago; veteran republican Sean Keenan (Derry); Mary Nelis (mother of two 'blanket men', one of them on hunger-strike); and Michael McCloskey (brother of a 'blanket man'). During the march a support banner was erected in the town centre to replace an earlier one stolen by the RUC.

There were also torchlight process-

ions, in Swatragh on Friday; on the Ballinderry bridge bordering Tyrone and Derry, on Tuesday; and in Maghara on Wednesday evening.

## Down

REPEATED lobbying by H-Block activists of Newry and Mourne Council paid partial dividends on Monday night, when, after a further lobbying of council chambers three members of the council withdrew until the hunger-strike is resolved. The three were: Jim Murphy and Eugene Markey (IIP), and Sean McCrath (Independent).

SDLP member and council chairman John McEvoy, who supports the five demands, was urged to follow suit, but replied that it was not party policy. SDLP councillors, however, did boycott the council's Christmas dinner that night, which was also picketed by hunger-strike supporters.

Previously, on Wednesday 10th December, three hundred people took part in a protest in Hilltown, while over the weekend six men undertook a twenty-four-hour fast in Castlewailan, followed by a one-hundred-strong march and meeting.

On Tuesday, there was a torchlight procession in Millaghbanua, and on Wednesday, in Rostrevor.

## Fermanagh

SIX more local action committees have been formed in Fermanagh over the past week, at Three Crosses, Belleek, Ederny, Irvinestown and Connaught.

Local H-Block organisers were taken completely by surprise by the response last Wednesday to the day of action. Given the chronic state of industry and unemployment in Fermanagh, organisers had anticipated a very poor turnout, feeling that workers would hardly further jeopardise employment prospects.

However, about seven hundred workers turned out to a rally held in Enniskillen, from Unipork; Kemp Plastics; Fermanagh Meats; Clarke's Quarries; Watts added Stones; DOE Roads, forestry and Drainages divisions; Enterprise Ulster; and J&I, Connaught. A number of school students also attended despite the tactics employed in the town's Catholic Schools and technical college of locking all school doors. A student from St. Joseph's addressed the crowd, and said he was one of thirty who had 'escaped' before the doors were locked. In addition to the firms named above, Belleek Pottery closed for the entire day on Wednesday.

On Friday night, December 12th, an outdoor meeting was held in the Hillview estate in Enniskillen, followed by a Rosary. On Saturday, sizable Fermanagh contingents supported the marches in both Armagh and Ballyshannon, and in the evening outdoor public meetings were held in Garrison and Belleek.

On Tuesday, a public meeting was held in Tempo, Tullymore in Ederny; and on Wednesday in Connaught.

In addition to such local activities, members of the local Kinawley and Derrilyn action committees, accompanied by the Mountain Road pipe band, attended a march across the border to Ballyconnell, County Cavan, last Friday.

## Tyrone

IN DUNGANNON on Friday 12th December, forty demonstrators blocked the junction of Donaghmore Road / Quarry Lane, while thirty blocked the Ballygawley Road.

Also that day, the Tyrone H-Block Committee issued a statement categorically denying any involvement in the cutting down of a Christmas tree in the village centre of Pomeroy some time previously, for which two young local men — both H-Block supporters — had been fined that morning. The statement stressed that the men acted independently without any authorisation from the local committees.

On Saturday, a sizable Tyrone contingent supported the march in Armagh, and on Monday hour-long road-blockings took place in Dungannon and Omagh, with the Dungannon post office being occupied briefly.

On Tuesday, fifty people blocked the road at Omagh, at a Strabane, the RUC were called in to remove twelve H-Block demonstrators who staged a sit-in during a meeting of Strabane district council.

## Portrait of a hunger striker



# JOHN

# Jovial, intelligent and ve

BY SEAMUS BOYLE

**JOHN NIXON**, up until more republican prisoners joined in the hunger-strike last Monday and Tuesday, was the Irish Republican Socialist Party's representative out of their thirty-four 'blanket men' in the H-Blocks, on the original seven-man fast now almost through its eighth week.

He is a notably jovial and intelligent person, and remains a very determined republican in the face of much personal adversity.

John Nixon was born at home in Callan Street, Armagh, in 1955. His mother, Josephine, a native of Portadown, worked in a weaving factory in her teenage years before meeting Leo Nixon, who has worked as a farm labourer in Fruitfield (an apple farm and factory) since he was fourteen years of age, though he now faces the threat of redundancy before Christmas.

In 1955, Leo Nixon's parents had moved out of their Callan Street home, leaving behind his sister Mary, who, coincidentally, had married his wife Josephine's brother, Patrick Marlowe. Leo and Josephine, after they were married, moved in with Patrick and Mary for several months.

But five days after John was born the Nixons moved to another house in Callan Street, and they lived here for six years before moving in 1961 to their present home, a three-bedroomed house in Drumarg Park.

John was the eldest out of a family of ten children. Leroy (a political prisoner in Long Kesh for the past five years) was born in 1956; Cathleen in 1958; Nora in 1959; Joseph in 1960; Michael in 1962; Maureen in 1963; Martin in 1964; Mary in 1966; and Frances, the youngest child, was born in 1968.

### SCHOOL

John and Leroy attended St. Malachy's primary school, and after John passed his 'eleven-plus' he went to Armagh technical college. As the eldest child, John had the loyalty of



Life-long friends John O'Neill (IRSP) a blanket man in H-5, and John Nixon (right) — the photo was taken in Callan Street in 1959

all the other children and Leroy and Cathleen were particularly attached to him. Everywhere that the two boys went Cathleen wanted to go too, and John would trail her along.

When John was about eleven he was almost killed in a gas explosion under a bridge in Callan Street. There had been a gas leak and explosion the previous day in which three

children were badly burnt.

The next day the RUC came in to investigate and never took the precaution of evacuating the immediate area which was crowded with curious children, John among them.

An RUC man went under the bridge to trace the leak, could not see where he was going, and struck a match which set off another explosion. John received extensive burns to the back of the legs and was in hospital for about ten weeks.

### SMOKING

John's mother recalls him as being extremely intelligent, and as someone who took a keen interest in everything that he worked at. He was a dedicated athlete and got his younger brother Joseph involved in cross-country running. In fact, the Nixons have an admirable collection of medals (over seventy) from John, Leroy, Cathleen and Joseph, who won in various events.

Joseph recalls his big brother: "He was a good crack, and other times he would have knocked my head off if we did wrong. He didn't like to see you smoke or lie in bed late in the mornings!"

Cathleen takes John's opposition to cigarettes even further: "John and Niele (Leroy) didn't smoke and used to take me fruit-picking. With the money they got they used to buy ten cigarettes and they'd sit and work for an hour before the picture house would open and take out the tobacco and fill the cigarettes up with match heads."

"Then we'd go to the pictures, about twenty of us, and all the wee ones would be there sitting puffing merrily away. John and Niele would offer them cigarettes and would sit at the back of the picture house in fits as the cigarettes began exploding ... We nearly got thrown out of the pictures for it."

### STREETS

John was continually torn between study and the increasing conflict on his very streets. Only once during 'the troubles' did he get away from it all and

that was when he went to London in the early seventies to live with his aunt Annie, his father's sister. He scraped a living by working at maintaining washing-machines but the pull of home and the struggle in Ireland had him back within months.

At school he had learnt Irish and won a gold faine (and later in Long Kesh he won two certificates for his command of the language).

Though neither of John's parents come from a republican background, the civil rights agitation of the late sixties, which attracted thousands of ordinary nationalist working-class people, was to have a profound effect on their young son who was only thirteen years of age when in 1968 Paisley took over the centre of Armagh and refused to let the civil rights march through.

### STATE

In August 1969, John was to experience the violence of the Orange state at first hand, an experience which he went through again and again over the next eleven years.

In a personal account he has written:

"That night (August 14th) I stood at the Shambles area. A meeting was in progress in the city hall. 'B' Specials, RUC and Paisleyites gathered in the town. I remember the tension. Trouble was inevitable. I talked to John Gallagher as we all sat at the fire station."

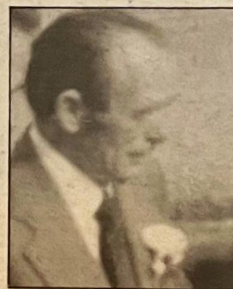
"After the meeting the Paisleyites and the RUC attacked. I managed to stay about for an hour or so and then the shooting started and the older men chased us home. That night I didn't sleep. The gunfire continued until early morning. I watched the glow of the burning buildings from my bedroom window. Next day I attended John Gallagher's wake."

John Gallagher was the first victim of the 'B' Specials that night, and hours later they attacked and burnt down the homes of hundreds of Catholics in Belfast.

John worked for a while in the Balmeswar Factory (which makes children's clothes) as a presser and also did some work on building sites.

### STICKS

When internment came in August 1971, armoured cars rumbled into Drumarg and took away many local men. John



Above, from left: John's father, Leo; nephew, Leroy and mother, Josephine; and below from left: John's sister, Maureen; brother, Martin; sister, Mary; and sister, Frances. Above and Nora either side of a friend. Above far right: brother, Joseph.



took part in the building of barricades and the street resistance but it wasn't until 1972 that he joined the Sticky Fianna. (The Sticks at this time enjoyed considerable support in the Armagh city area and there wasn't the same degree of mutual hostility between them and the Republican Movement that existed, for example, in a place like Belfast).

John came more and more into conflict with the state and he continued to take part in the street protests. Early in 1973, he was arrested by Brits in the Shambles area and was charged with riotous behaviour during an anti-internment protest a month earlier. In court the following September he was given a £30 fine and a six months' suspended sentence.

Also in early 1973, he was arrested and taken to Gough barracks and at the age of seventeen was put through a terrifying ordeal.

At Gough he was dragged out of a jeep, frogmarched across to a helicopter and handcuffed to the seat. The helicopter took off, landed at Castle Dillon for fuel and then headed for Ballykelly, notorious torture centre. During the journey John was threatened with getting

thrown out. When brought to Ballykelly he was interrogated in a tiny room where the lights blazed for three days.

But it was in April that John's worst experience came.

### SHOT

He and his life-long friend, seventeen-year-old James ('Jake') McGerrigan had heard that the Brits were making over-routine inquiries about them, and so they were both avoiding the soldiers. But late on the night of April 7th, as John and James came out of an entry at Windmill Avenue, a British paratrooper using a night-scope fired without warning at them. The fatal round killed James, passed through him, then tore through John's stomach.

The Brits claimed that they had been fired on earlier at Navan Street. But at John's subsequent trial, on the charge of allegedly possessing a weapon, a male nurse and a young married couple who were first on the scene said that neither of them were armed. James, who would have been eighteen on the day he was buried, was given a military funeral.

John was taken to Craigavon hospital where he lay for two weeks before being

moved to Musgrave hospital, to where he will again be as his condition strike rapidly deteriorated.

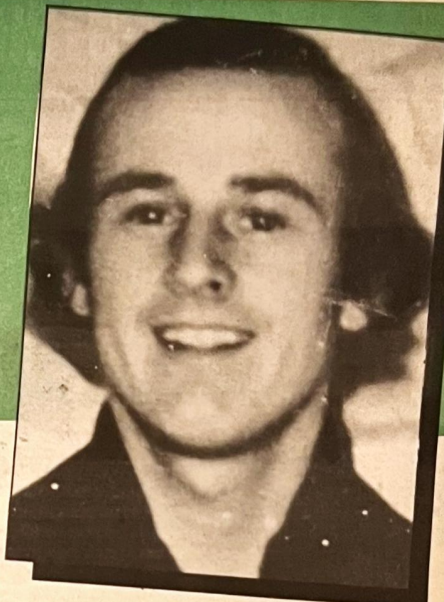
After six weeks court was held in and he was possession of arms were extremely intestines were his bowels were months he had to which carried on and had to be regurgitated. He was transferred to Road jail but shot was granted bail on

However, John kept down and bail continued to protest. Within the soldier was at the internment Cassan, a mother whose husband jail.

During the protest attempted to 'kill' girl and John was The soldier struck his rifle butt, with a nasty gash which stitches. Another off John's 'bag' across the road

# NIXON

## very determined



and brother, Leroy. Below, Above right: sisters Cathleen



Mugrave military where it is expected to be moved shortly on condition on hunger-strike deteriorates.

six weeks a special held in the hospital was charged with of arms. His injuries were serious. His were damaged and were removed. For had to wear a 'bag' tied off body waste be regularly changed. transferred to Crumlin but shortly afterwards a bail of £2,500.

### STRUCK

John was hard to and whilst out on used to march and thin days of being was out protesting of Brenda which gave him in which needed two other soldier ripped 'bag' and flung it road. Though a



Above, from left to right: IRA Volunteer Peadar McIlvenna (Armagh city) shot dead by the Brits in Keady in June 1979; James McGerrigan, shot dead by the Brits in 1973; two friends; and, far right, John Nixon

charge of disorderly behaviour was dismissed, he was fined £30 for assaulting a Scots Guardsman.

John's popularity is well attested to by the posters of his smiling face which adorn windows in his local Drumarg Park. He is normally an extremely happy person and was never one for complaining, inside or outside of prison.

"After he was shot", recalls Cathleen, "and came out of hospital, he joined the youth club. He could never live and used to watch me and this other girl and used to say, 'Kate,

will you teach me to live?' So we used to teach him upstairs and charged him twenty pence for the dancing lessons! And when he went back to the youth club he used to pick up the girls, while all the other fellows stood in a corner."

### SPLIT

At John's trial, in February 1974, three civilians gave evidence that he was not armed. But the perjuring by an unidentified army sergeant was accepted instead and he was given a five year sentence which he served as a political

prisoner in Long Kesh. Whilst in the Kesh, John took part in the burning of the camp in October 1974.

A few weeks later he went through a political crisis as the Sticks, which had been an extremely tenuous amalgamation since the split from the Republican Movement in 1969, again split, giving birth to the more republican Irish Republican Socialist Party. On the outside the Sticks ruthlessly attempted to suppress dissenters and sparked off a feud by murdering Hugh Ferguson in Ballymurphy, Belfast. Inside the jail, John and

several others in cage 13 who were in opposition to the reformists within the organisation led a breakaway group. At first the prison administration refused to recognise them but after a thirteen day hunger-strike they got segregation and set up an IRSP cage for sentenced political prisoners.

### STATEMENT

In September 1975 John's brother Leroy was charged with the attempted killing of a UDR man, and is presently serving eighteen years as a political prisoner in cage 10 of Long Kesh.

With remission on his sentence, John was released in July 1976, just two months before Kieran Nugent began the 'blanket protest'. However, by the time the 'blanket protest' was only eight weeks old John was again back in jail, this time on the incredible evidence of an RUC man who claimed that he made a verbal statement of involvement in armed robbery.

During his short period of freedom John was continually harassed by the Brits. His mother recalls: "Coming out of the dale, because he could get no work, the army would stop him. Then the next week they would stop him before he signed on and hold him up on the street for hours so that he would lose his money."

He was arrested out of the house one evening and taken to Armagh barracks, where he was held for seven days. According to the RUC, John refused to cooperate until minutes before being released when he made a verbal admission of being involved in armed robbery of an undisclosed sum of money from Kells Supermarket and a post office.

At his trial, in September 1977, workers from the supermarket and post office could not identify him, but Judge McGrath accepted the RUC's account and sentenced John to fourteen years' imprisonment. Two days later John was in the H-Blocks, and for him the 'blanket protest' and the road to political status and possibly death had begun.

### SMUGGLE

In January and December of 1978 John received two particularly bad beatings.

On the first occasion, when

attempting to smuggle out news of the H-Block conditions he was taken to the punishment block and stripped naked. Four prison warders beat him until he was almost unconscious, though the outcome was that he was charged with assaulting two of them, found guilty and spent twenty-five days in solitary confinement 'on the boards'.

In December 1978, when returning from a visit with his family he refused, as is the practice of 'blanket men', to state his prison number. He was set upon by two warders one of whom had eventually to be physically restrained by others.

"I had a good idea", says his mother, "that if there was to be a hunger-strike John would have been on it. I and the family are behind him one hundred per cent."

"The last eight weeks have been very hard. The family have been under a lot of stress. Young Frances, who is twelve, doesn't completely understand it. She knows he's in Long Kesh okay and visited him once, but it upset her so much that she hasn't wanted to go back."

"She comes in from school and asks are we not putting up Christmas decorations, and then realises something is wrong. She knows that John is on hunger-strike but just doesn't understand what it means or why."

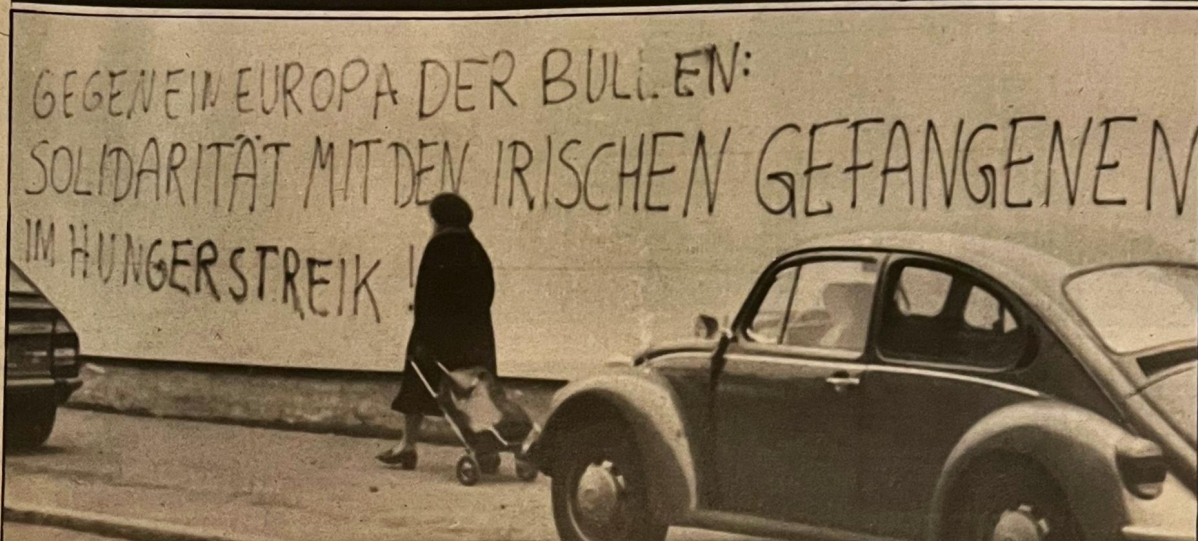
### SLOGANS

John's father says that the family took John's decision to hunger-strike 'very badly'. But, he says, "we didn't object, as he knows what he's doing. He was always dropping a hint over the last lot of months, and I knew by the look on his face he was marking himself for to take part."

In a letter smuggled from the Blocks, John wrote about a wall slogan written in 1971 when he was manning the barricades:

"Slogans covered the walls everywhere and one declared, 'DARE TO WIN!' I didn't quite understand it at the time ... But I now know why I am here and what I am doing. I am prepared to do much more — even to die. I believe that my death will do something for others. 'DARE TO STRUGGLE — DARE TO WIN!'"

# HUNGER-STRIKE PROTESTS: ABROAD



FRANKFURT, GERMANY: Solidarity with the Irish Prisoners on hunger-strike!

## America

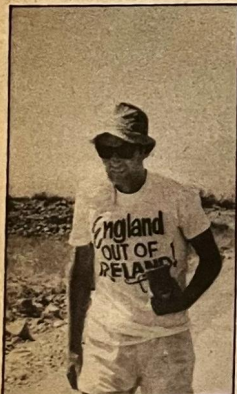
LAST week the state legislature of New Jersey became the sixth state congress to endorse the five demands of the prisoners. More trade union support has also been pledged.

The New York City Central Labour Council, which represents one million members, and the North-East States Conference of Operating Engineers, which has one and a half million members, have adopted resolutions supporting the hunger-strikers. Both bodies, and all local unions affiliated to them, are to send letters of protest to Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan and the British Consulate in New York.

The Los Angeles Branch of the National Alliance against Racism and Political Repression, of which revolutionary Angela Davis is a member, has expressed 'deep feelings of solidarity with the hunger strikers'.

Also in Los Angeles, John Kelly, who was a member of the 1968 Irish Olympic Team and is still a world class walker, has publicly condemned Britain's callous treatment of the hunger-strikers. In 1973, John Kelly walked one hundred and twenty miles across the scorching Death Valley desert as a protest against Britain's presence in Ireland.

Demonstrations in more than twenty cities are planned for this weekend. The daily picket of the British consulate in Chicago continues.



Olympic athlete John Kelly - condemned Britain's treatment of the hunger strikers.

## Australia

A MOTION in support of the hunger-strikers is being placed before the Australian Trade Union Congress this week. Its proposers are fairly confident that this will be passed as many trade union bodies have already come out in support, the latest being the Brisbane branch of the Australasian Meat Industries Employees Union.

There have been weekly forty-eight hour hunger-strikes in most of the major Australian cities including Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne. To date almost forty thousand signatures have been collected for the international petition, which will be put before the Australian government. National H-Block organiser Bill Moreland, has appeared on two national network television channels and on radio.

## Belgium

A BELGIAN senator, Jean Humblet, has raised the issue of the hunger-strikers in the Belgian senate. Asking the government to intervene he called for the banning of arms exports from Belgium to Britain. Replying, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, stated that the British government had been made aware of the strength of public opinion, in Belgium, on Britain's role in Ireland.

A Belgian peer, Baron Cardon de Lichtbuer, in a letter to the Werkgroep Ireland solidarity group has stated his close interest in the situation.

H-Block action groups in Belgium and Flanders have been constantly picketing the British embassy in Brussels and the British consulate in Ghent and Antwerp. Police attempts to ban the pickets have resulted in arrests but have not stopped the actions.

Taken fasts have also been held in Leuven and Antwerp and Wednesday 10th December was a national telephone call day to the British embassy in Brussels. Permanent hunger-strike displays are being maintained in the centre of Antwerp and Alost.

## Canada

AMONG those who have come out in support of the hunger-strikers are the Quebec Teachers Union, the East Indian Farmworkers Union in British Columbia, the Quebec Nationalists, the Central Committee of the Canadian Party of Labour, the shop stewards committee of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, the Law Union of Osgoode Hall Law School, Toronto, and the Confederation

of National Trade Unions.

An Irish prisoners of war committee has been set up in South Ontario and has produced leaflets and posters as well as a pamphlet aimed at trade unionists. Committee members have also picketed the British Airways office in Toronto. The British Airways office in Montreal has also been picketed, this time by members of the Wolfe Tone Association.

The Ontario Federation of Labour's annual convention was lobbied on the weekend of November 19th by several trade union branches and representatives of trade unions which have come out in support of the hunger-strikers.

'Former blanket man' Raymond Crane, who is completing his tour of French Canada, spoke at a solidarity meeting for the Palestinian people. Those attending the meeting pledged support for the hunger-strikers. Raymond also met a representative of the Revolutionary Democratic Front of El Salvador who also expressed his support.

On December 10th, two hundred people demonstrated in front of the British consulate in Montreal. A delegation was admitted but the consul (ironically named Michael Collins) refused to accept any statement or document.

## Corsica

SEVERAL hundred people attended a showing of the film 'The Patriot Game' in Bastia on Friday 8th December. A variety of political, human rights and women's groups as well as trade unionists were in attendance. The discussion after the film centred on the hunger strike, letters of protest were sent to British representatives in France and Corsica, and a Corsica-Ireland solidarity committee was formed.

## Denmark

THE women's liberation movement in Denmark has issued a statement in support of the five demands. The statement compares the prison conditions to those in Latin America and calls for a British withdrawal from Ireland. An H-Block/Armagh Committee has been set up in Denmark and the political organisation Ventre Socialiste has issued a pamphlet and a poster on the hunger-strike.

## France

ON Friday 28th November, over six hundred people attended a concert in Paris organised by Comité Irlande to raise



Picket of British Airways office in Montreal

money for the hunger-strike fund.

On Thursday 11th December, members of the Committee for the Defence of Irish Political Prisoners picketed the Free State embassy in Paris. Two members of the committee met an embassy secretary who expressed his astonishment that French people knew so much about what is happening in Ireland.

The International Committee Against Repression has received a letter from 'blanket man' Gerard Jackson. The committee has reproduced twenty thousand copies of the letter for distribution in France, Switzerland, Belgium and Quebec. The committee has also produced ten thousand leaflets explaining the hunger-strike.

## Germany

FORMER 'blanket man' Martin Lawlor is at present touring West Germany. He has been speaking in the cities of Hanover, Bielefeld, Karlsruhe and Stuttgart. In Bochum the local 'Ireland Committee' picketed the British Airways office forcing it to close. Hundreds of leaflets were distributed.

On Saturday 13th December, a demonstration of four hundred people was held in Hamburg in support of the hunger-strikers.

## Netherlands

THE H-Block Committee in Amsterdam are publishing a bulletin each week on the hunger-strike situation. Stalls have been organised for a variety of venues including a school complex and a cultural centre in Utrecht.

On Tuesday 9th December, a group of protestors occupied the British consulate in Amsterdam for one hour. All were arrested and released six hours later.

On Saturday 13th December, Amnesty International organised a demonstration in the Hague, which was

attended by H-Block protestors. Almost all the Amnesty members signed the International H-Block petition.

## New Zealand

ON Tuesday 16th December, a number of people held a token fast for thirty-six hours in the centre of Auckland, organised by the newly-formed Auckland H-Block/Armagh Action Committee.

## Norway

FORMER 'blanket man' Kieran Nugent and former Armagh protest prisoner Maureen Gibson have been touring Norway.

In Oslo on Wednesday 10th December the delegation met a representative of the Norwegian Foreign Ministry. On the same day they met the Common Council of Churches, who have expressed deep concern over the situation and support for the five demands.

The delegation had earlier met representatives of various political and trade union organisations including the Labour Youth Movement, the Labour Party, the Iron and Metal Workers Union, the Socialist Left Party and a representative of the International Bureau of the Norwegian Trade Union Congress. All have expressed support for the five demands.

The delegation also addressed a number of public meetings in both Oslo and Trondheim.

## Portugal

THE National Committee of Support and Solidarity for Struggling Peoples throughout the World has come out in support of the prisoners' five demands.

A number of prominent people including professors, writers, civil servants, folk musicians and political leaders, have signed the international petition. The Portuguese Peace Committee and the Democratic Attorneys' Union declared their support for the hunger-strikers and the five demands on Tuesday 16th December. Captain Calvino a leading member of the Armed Forces Movement has also publicly voiced his support for the hunger-strikers.

## West Indies

THE Revolutionary Communist League on the island of Grenada have expressed solidarity and full support for the prisoners' five demands.

# HUNGER-STRIKE PROTESTS: BRITAIN

## London

THIS week saw the publication of the booklet: *'H-Blocks — the truth: a reply to H.M. Government'*. It carries a foreword by Westminister Labour MP Ernie Roberts, in which he states, *'Throughout the centuries, patriots and martyrs have been the political prisoners of their oppressors. They have been castigated as terrorists, and after the settlement of the conflict have become respected statesmen.'*

*'H-Blocks — the truth'* looks exactly like the British government's earlier (and wholly misnamed) publication *'H-Blocks — the facts'*, but presents a point-by-point refutation of the government's claims. It concludes that the prisoners' five demands *'represent the only way to a reasonable, humane and just solution to the present conflict.'* It includes brief pen portraits of the first ten hunger-strikers.

The booklet was sent to Labour MPs last week, and Don Connamon, Labour's new spokesperson on the North (previously responsible for prisons in the six counties under super-chief Mason), lost no time in denouncing it as *'IRA propaganda'* — the standard ploy for anything at all critical of the British government's Irish policy.

*'(H-Blocks — the truth'* is available from Information on Ireland, 1 North End Road, London W14, price 30p plus 15p postage.)

Last week, Labour MP Jack Stallard, speaking in a Westminster debate called for the government to compromise on the basis of the prisoners' demands. Also last week, the Labour Party's backbench *'Northern Ireland Committee'* asked to meet Thatcher, Humphrey Atkins and Labour leader Michael Foot. According to the *'Irish Times'* the committee particularly wants to see movement on the prisoners being allowed to wear their own clothes, and free association.

On Tuesday night, December 16th, a group of prominent political figures in Britain issued an appeal calling for *'a serious move from the government to negotiate an agreement with the hunger-strikers on the basis of an humanitarian approach to the prisoners' five demands.'* The group included eight Labour MPs — Ernie Roberts, Stan Thorne, Derek Thurst, Joan Maynard, Ernie Ross, Syd Sidwell, Ken Eastham and Ron Brown — as well as trade unionists George Giv and Borg Ronkley; Canon John Baker, sub-dean of Westminster Cathedral; Lord Gifford; Gordon McLennan, general secretary of the British Communist Party; Pat Arrowsmith and Peter Hain.

The past week has also seen a series of pickets and demonstrations. Last Wednesday, International Human Rights Day, fifty people held a torchlight vigil

on King Charles Island at the top of Whitehall — the closest an Irish demo is allowed to Trafalgar Square.

On Thursday, students staged an occupation in support of the hunger-strike at the Central London Polytechnic; this was shown on local television news.

The same day, actress Frances de la Tour and two members of the London Amagh Women's Committee were interviewed on LBC radio after handing in one thousand names on a petition at Downing Street, in support of Pauline McLaughlin.

That evening, one hundred people assembled at Sloane Square and held a torchlight procession to Margaret Thatcher's house in Flood Street, Chelsea.

And on Saturday afternoon, South London hunger-strike committee held a one-hundred-and-fifty-strong march from Clapham Common to Brixton Oval, supported by Sinn Féin, IRSP, Troops Out Movement and other socialist groups. Over thirty people going on to picket Brixton jail.

Organisations who have recently pledged support for the five demands include Brent Trades Council and the Kilburn branch of NATFHE (the further and higher education teachers' union).

Last week, *Labour Weekly*, the official paper of the Labour Party carried a centrespread on Ireland, which included a sympathetic article on the hunger-strikers' aims and the widespread support they have won.

And last Thursday night, speaking in the House of Lords, Lord Longford spoke of the 'nobility' of the hunger-strikers. Although no friend, either of the hunger-strikers or of Irish freedom, Lord Longford did say: *'They are dying for a cause and I don't think one should despise them for that. If they died, it would be a tragedy, and would perhaps not be forgotten for centuries.'*

Finally, in a strongly-worded statement released on Tuesday, and entitled *'A British Archipelago'* the Young Liberals responded to a smuggled communication they had received from Long Kesh by asserting: *'We are issuing this statement in support of the demands of these prisoners.'*

The statement continues: *'We do not accept that the people subjected to special interrogation procedures, convicted under special legislation in special courts, are ordinary prisoners. We believe that the demands of the prisoners should be granted and then that the Emergency Provisions Act and Prevention of Terrorism Act should be repealed. We call for the opening of a debate on the major division in Ireland, partition, as the most effective response to politically-motivated violence.'*

## Birmingham

ON Tuesday 9th December, the Sparkbrook Constituency Labour Party passed

a resolution in support of the hunger-strikers, and the local action group. Despite a number of such declarations of support there is an almost total local media black-out on acknowledging this support.

On Wednesday 10th December a token hunger-strike took place in Chamberlain Street, in Birmingham's city centre. Although the police prevented the protest staying all day in the city centre, one hundred and twenty people signed a pledge to fast for twenty-four hours.

Last Saturday three local street meetings were held in different areas of Birmingham, and churches were again leafleted on Sunday.

## Coventry

A SYMPATHETIC article in the *'Coventry Evening Telegraph'* about local councillors and fifty other labour movement representatives supporting the five demands is being used to gain further support. A regular blanket protest, leafletting and circulating the petition is taking place every Saturday morning. And on Sundays, Catholic churches are being leafleted.

On Wednesday 10th December — International Human Rights Day — the Coventry Women's Group staged a twenty-four-hour fast, and the shopping centre was leafleted concerning Pauline McLaughlin and the Amagh hunger-strikers. One hundred signatures were gathered and publicity was received from the local radio station.

In nearby Leamington, last Saturday, the local hunger-strike action committee staged a blanket protest for three hours outside the Pump Rooms.

A local man, Eddie Maddock, has written and recorded songs about H-Block, Amagh, the SAS etc. A tape is being released, and profits are going to Green Cross.

## Edinburgh

A SUCCESSFUL meeting was held in Edinburgh on December 3rd, organised by the RCG. Forty people turned up to set up a hunger-strike action committee, with a view to possibly holding a local march soon.

Twenty loyalists also turned up briefly outside the meeting but, getting bored with the serious business of political debate, went off instead for a drink!

## Glasgow

IN PROTEST against Thatcher's visit to Dublin last week to talk to Haughey, Glasgow supporters of the Charter '80 campaign occupied the offices of Aer

Lingus and Bord Fáilte on Tuesday 9th December, and distributed leaflets. A number of union branches in the Glasgow area have expressed support for the prisoners' demands.

## Leeds

SUPPORTERS of the RCG staged a street meeting in support of the hunger-strikers in Leeds on Saturday December 6th but, as at previous such meetings, were asked to move on by local police. The reason first given by police for their moving on was, ludicrously, that they were *'causing an obstruction'*, but when this was challenged by the demonstrators the police alleged, even more ludicrously, that there could be a breach of the peace since there were *'a lot of Irish people here'*!

## Nottingham

THREE Nottingham trade unionists, members of ASTMS, supported the day of action called in Ireland on Wednesday 10th December, by donating that day's wages to the National H-Block Committee.

In addition an interview was broadcast at peak time on the local commercial station, Radio Trent, which explained the background to the hunger-strike and asked other trade unionists to donate a day's wages to the campaign.

A similar interview recorded by the local BBC station, Radio Nottingham, was in the event not broadcast, allegedly because it wasn't newsworthy enough! That day however, Radio Nottingham broadcast an RSPCA appeal for tins of pet food so that stray cats and dogs could have a *'Christmas dinner'*.

In a statement the three trade unionists released, they said: *'The hunger-strikers have appealed to their fellow workers to act to save their lives — our action is the least we can do, and in comparison to the supreme sacrifice that the hunger-strikers are prepared to make in the pursuance of the freedom of their country, it is little enough.'*

## Oxford

THE prisoners' demands to date, in Oxford, have been supported by: Oxford Trades Council; two branches of the TGWU; one Labour Party ward; Oxford Labour Party Young Socialists; Oxford University Labour Club; the President of the Oxford University Students' Union (in a personal capacity); and a number of academics, including Balliol don, Stephen Lukes. One thousand signatures, altogether, have been collected locally for the H-Block petition.

## WHAT'S ON

### HUNGER-STRIKE PROTESTS

#### PICKET

8 p.m. Friday 19th December  
Andersonstown barracks  
BELFAST

#### DANCE

8 p.m. Friday 19th December  
Conroy's Lounge  
CLONALEE  
Co. Laois  
Music by The Gallagher Brothers

#### MARCH AND RALLY

2.30 p.m. Saturday 20th December  
Gall Square  
ENNISKILLEN  
Co. Fermanagh

#### PUBLIC MEETING

7.30 p.m. Saturday 20th December  
ENNISCORTHY  
Co. Wexford

#### PUBLIC MEETING

2.30 p.m. Saturday 20th December  
CLONMEL  
Co. Tipperary

#### PUBLIC MEETING

8 p.m. Saturday 20th December  
CASTLEISLAND  
Co. Kerry

#### MARCH & RALLY

2.30 p.m. Sunday 21st December  
Assemble: bottom, Camlough Rd.,  
NEWRY

#### TORCHLIGHT MARCH

7.30 p.m. Sunday 21st December  
Clones Road  
BELTUBBET  
Co. Cavan.

#### MARCH

3.30 p.m. Christmas Day  
Assemble Donnybrook Church  
Coolock  
DUBLIN  
March to Northside Shopping Centre

#### CEILI

Tuesday 30th December  
Community Centre  
BALLINAMORE  
Co. Leitrim  
Featuring Eamonn Kelly's Ceili Band

### OTHER EVENTS

#### SHERIDAN, LEE, BATESON COMMEMORATION

1.30 p.m. Sunday 21st December  
New Bridge cemetery  
BALLYMAGUIHAN  
Co. Derry

#### SEAN SOUTH COMMEMORATION

3 p.m. Sunday 4th January  
Assemble: Bedford Row  
LIMERICK

### THANKS

THE H-BLOCK APPEAL FUND wish to thank the transport section of the Prisoners' Welfare for their donation of £70, money which was originally for their annual Christmas dinner which has been cancelled.

## JOIN SINN FEIN

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

I am interested in becoming a member of Sinn Féin

NAME

ADDRESS



South London demonstration, Brixton, Saturday 13th December

# PLANNING AN END TO THE MONSTER OF UNEMPLOYMENT

BY KATHLEEN DWYER

IT WAS ANNOUNCED last week that a further four thousand men and women in the twenty-six counties hit the 'scrap heap' of the unemployed in November, bringing official totals of those out of work to 115,000 with a further eight thousand on short time (an increase of almost two thousand in the month). Add on monster unemployment statistics for the six-counties and the official overall figures for Ireland total over two hundred thousand.

But official figures in the Free State are always understated, ignoring as they do many school leavers, teenage girls and married women who are not eligible to register. The National Economic and Social Council figures for the Free State estimate the work force as one million, with around eight hundred thousand at work, thus giving an unemployment figure of 85,000 more than official statistics. The magnitude of the problem is underlined by the fact that only 250,000 workers are employed in broadly manufacturing jobs.

Whatever the real totals, there is not much prospect of them vanishing or even declining overnight, or perhaps ever for that matter. British unemployment is now galloping towards three million, a rate well in excess of the twenties and thirties depression. With Britain still the Free State's major supplier, its major market and its main investor, there is no chance of the twenty-six counties being left behind.

## FIGURES

Figures for the twenty-six counties show that the burden has so far fallen particularly heavily on building and agricultural workers. (In May, 43% of unemployment was in these two areas alone).

Young people are also major

victims with a report issued this week estimating that between thirty and forty thousand unemployed are between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five — an employment rate of up to 16%. One in six categorised as useless, condemned to aimless existence, poverty and despair, a life on the dole.

But the burden falls on all those in employment too. Wages can be more easily kept down with the threat of unemployment and at the same time those in work must support those out of work.

## NEED

Unemployment certainly does not make sense. In a world which has millions under-fed, in need of more goods, of houses, of the most basic necessities of life, there are also millions looking for the chance to produce these things. What force is it that makes the one group go without whilst the others stay idle?

Capitalist theorists like to talk about 'natural wastage'. They place the blame for unemployment on anything from sunspot cycles to technological breakthroughs. Men are too lazy, they are ill-trained or incapable, they are too greedy and demand too high wages. These theorists say that society, for smooth functioning, needs

a pool of unemployed, or that unemployment is an accident of the late twentieth century and it is time that the working class was educated to use its leisure time decently and quietly.

Tell that to the man on the Falls Road or to the people of Ballymun.

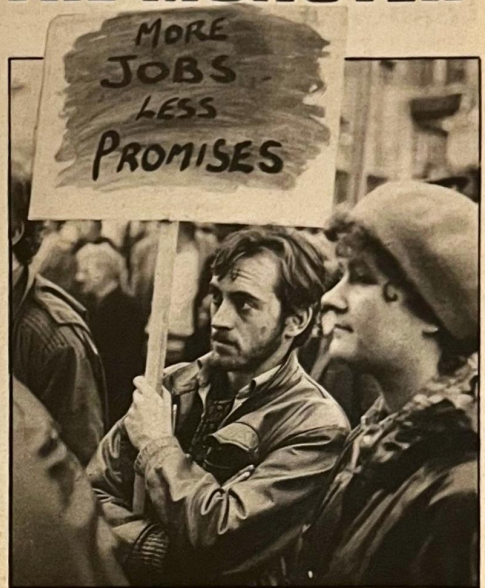
## BONUS

On the other hand there are those who claim to be socialists, who would put the cause of unemployment down to a deliberate policy of the scheming capitalist to keep the worker in his place — happy to work for low wages under bad conditions. That is, without doubt, a bonus — to the capitalist — of high unemployment, but he would infinitely prefer to set all the unemployed to work. His problem is that he cannot make an adequate profit from employing more workers.

The only cure for unemployment, under capitalism, is higher profits by means of lower wages. The capitalists want to be out of their recession but can only succeed in this by cutting the share of what workers produce which is returned in wages or state services. Inflation, the arms race, control of the money supply, are all policies to achieve just this.

## PLAN

And yet all this, and the attendant misery of unemployment and poverty, is only necessary where capitalists control the means of production. Where they do not, the achievement of full employment becomes a simple problem. An economic plan provides the



Unemployment does not make sense in a world in need of the basic necessities of life

fraction of production to be put to building up machinery and what fraction to be used for consumer goods and services, and the people get paid wages to the value of these goods and services. In this case nothing prevents people working to earn this wage and the skills of all the people are employed and not relegated to the scrap heap of 'natural wastage'.

Where the country is a highly developed economy, or where the people opt for a large fraction of the year's production to be used for the production of machinery, then these workers

may work with a tractor rather than a spade as capital equipment. Where the country is very poor, the worker may work with bare hands. But each has his share of the meagre supply of consumer goods, and each plays a role, however small in producing more of these goods.

As Nyerere said of the economy in Tanzania: "What makes our economy preferable to that of the capitalist economy, is that if we are poor we agree to share our poverty equally". The capitalist economy maintains itself on the basis of sharing its poverty unequally, to the impoverishment of all.

## Cúrsaí na h-Éireann

LE BRIAN O RIORDAIN

# Dí-fhostaíocht ag meidiu

TÁ LÍON na ndaoige atá fostaíte ag Gaeltarra Éireann ag titim le dhá bhliain anois. Ní hamháin sin ach tá go leor des na monarchain i mbaol ndúnta. Fágnán sin go bhfuil fadhb na dí-fhostaíochta ag meidíu sa Ghlaeltacht arís.

Cúis imní is ea é go bhfuil cúrsaí mar atá. Beidh ar dhaoine óga na Gaeltachta aghaidh a thabhairt ar Bhaile Átha Cliath agus bailte móra eile na tíre chun fostaíocht dháil. Fágnán sin go bhfuil an Ghlaeltacht á lagú an t-am ar fad.

Tá Gaeltarra Éireann mar chuid d'Údarás na Gaeltachta anois. Tá ar a laghad, roinnt den Údarás tofa ag muintir na Gaeltachta agus bhfuil brú a chur orthu. Se an leithscéal atá á úsáid ná go bhfuil airgead ganmáireach. Ach ní airgead ganmáireach atá £100 milliún sa bhreis ag teastáil chun an teorainn a dhainginiú.

## Doctúirí ag eileamh

IN 1979 thug Roinn Sláinte na Sé Chontae Fíchead £27 milliún thar n-ais don Rialtas toise náir chaith siad é. San am céanna bhí óspidéal síciatrach na Sé Chontae Fíchead ag titim as a chéile, bhí ionadh orainn ar fad nuair a léiríodh an fhirinne i Magill.

Labhair doctúirí i St. Brendans agus St. Ita's Portlaoine amach le déanaí mar gheall ar an scannal. Tá siad ag éileamh go gcuirfí airgead ar fáil chun go bhféadfaí seirbhís cheart a chur ar fáil.

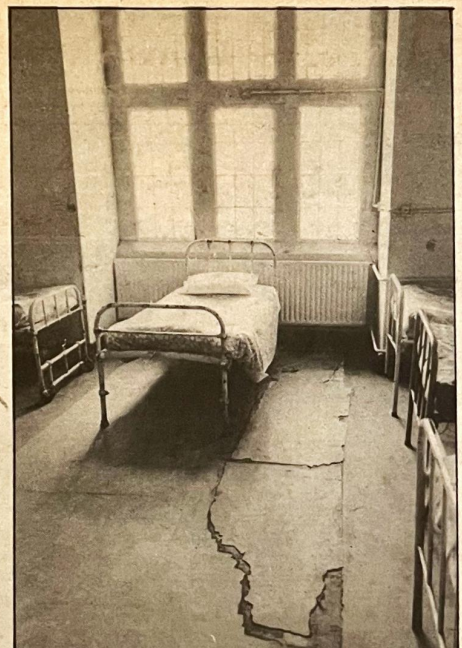
Deir siad gur cuireadh airgead ar fáil dhá bhliain ó shin i St. Brendans agus níor deindeadh ach athraithe maisiúla gan tabhairt don áit. Níl aon iarracht á dhéanamh na bunfhadhbanna a reiteach.

## Picéad ar Theach Laighean

CUIREADH picéad ar Teach Laighean an tseachtain seo caite ag gearán mar gheall ar an praiséach atá á dhéanamh ag Rialtas na Sé Chontae Fíchead maidir le dílóidóirí a chur ar fáil dóibh siúd nach achmhainn dóibh dílóidóirí dháil iad féin.

Tá an scéim a chuir an Rialtas ar fáil anuraidh ag titim as a cheile cheana féin. Ní feidir leo seirbhís a thabhairt dos na sluaite atá ag lorg cabhrach. De réir FLAC a deagraigh an picéad bhí sé soiléir an tús go dteipfeadh ar scéim an Rialtais.

Tá FLAC ag lorg scéim go mbeadh painéal dílóidóirí ar fáil agus go mbeadh lár-ionaid dí sna ceanntracha éagsúla. Tá siad ag lorg dothain airgid chun gur féidir ag lár ionaid dí sa Chúig i mBaile Átha Cliath a choimead ar oscailt.



Tá na hothair sna hóispidéal síciatrach ag cónaí i gcoinníollacha atá scanallach

# December memories

THE FIRST DAYS of December always bring to my mind the days of advent, the execution of Charlie Kerins in Mountjoy jail in 1944, the treaty of surrender signed in London on December 6th by Collins, Griffith, Duggan, Barton and Gavin Duffy, and the murder of Rory, Liam, Dick and Joe of the Four Courts garrison on December 8th, the feast of the Immaculate Conception.

I remember one day, many years ago, as I was buying a few second-hand books on Ormond Quay, the old man in the bookshop told me that he had seen Rory O'Connor go by the Four Courts gate on his way to Mountjoy jail and the firing squad.

"Rory was a fine man", he said, "he was dressed in a black leather coat. He was followed by Liam Mellows, but I didn't know the other two men, Barrett and McKelvey. I think McKelvey was a Northern chap," the old man said. "Rory was a fine man", he said again, "but Mellows was a man of the poor."

Almost ten years ago I was given a copy of Liam Mellows' 'Social Plan', which was smuggled out of Mountjoy jail a few days before December 8th. I sent it to the printers to be included in the pages of *An Phoblacht*. The article never appeared in the paper because the printer was raided, the article stolen and, on the same day, the printer told us that he could not print the paper any more.

I am sorry now that I did not copy the article before I sent it to the printer. I do however remember a few points from Liam Mellows' 'Social Plan' — free houses for all people; free gas and light for every home; free transport to and from work; and free education, including books from primary to university level. There were many more points in the plan which ran into three pages of foolscap paper.

Just thinking for a moment what those four points would mean to the people of Ireland if they were put into operation tomorrow. Liam Mellows was another James Connolly, or as the old man called him, 'a man of the poor'.

Very often people seem to forget the great social principle which is part and parcel of the great political principle of the Republican Movement. In his last letter to his old mother Mellows said: "The Republic lives, our deaths make that

certain".

The Republic for which he died lives in the hearts and minds of the men in H-Block, the women in Armagh jail, the men in Portlaoise jail, the women in Limerick prison and republican prisoners in English dungeons across the water.

## HENRY

Since December in the year 1170, when King Henry II of England arrived at Dublin and gave the city of Dublin to the men of Bristol, and since the days of December 1204 when Henry's son John built Dublin Castle as a torture chamber (or Castlereagh of medieval days) and a store house for all the robbed treasures of Ireland, the Republic has lived in the minds of the separatist Irish people who refused to accept the English lordship of Ireland.

Eight hundred and ten Decembers have passed since the British first put foot on Irish soil and many men, women and children have paid the supreme sacrifice with their lives in an attempt to drive the English invader from our island.

Names in every generation flash across my mind like long litanies in books of prayer, all the names united in one spirit, despite the passage of time, year or century. The name Napper Tandy of '98, or Felix O'Rourke of 1803, or Davis of



By Eamonn  
Mac Thomais

1843, or Duffy of 1867, or Joe Brady of 1882, is just as sacred and just as near as Rory, Liam, Dick, and Joe, Martin Savage, or Charlie Kerins.

## FRIENDS

I know an old lady who believes that when you die your friends will be all there waiting to welcome you into the next life. If that be so then surely Sean Hughes of Na Fianna Eireann was welcomed by Mellows and Colbert, as were Martin Lee, Jack McCabe, Tony Nolan, Sean Campbell, James Loughrey, James McDaid, Paul Fox, Bernard Fox, and Eugene Devlin welcomed by Joe McKelvey.

And not only across the passage of time but across the whole of Ireland, the spirit was one, united against England and England's army of occupation.

December 19th 1922, in Kildare: Patrick Mangan and Patrick Bagnel, Fairgreen; Patrick Nolan and Brian Moore, Rathbride; Stephen White, Abbey Street; Joseph Johnston, Station Road. All were executed by Free State forces.

In Tipperary, it was at Bansha, where James O'Connor was executed. In Kilkenny John Phelan, Thomastown, and John Murphy, Bishopscloagh, were executed. Twenty years later John Hinchy of Louth died in Mountjoy jail and Barney Casey of Longford was shot dead in the Curragh concentration camp.

## THREATS

December 6th 1922, the day



Liam Mellows: 'a man of the poor'

which started at 10, Downing Street, London, with threats of immediate and terrible war. "Sign or else. The gunboats are waiting to blast Dublin and Waterford off the face of the earth".

Two years before, the same English guns had blasted away the lives of the Loughnane brothers in Galway and James Lawlor in Lismore, County Waterford. 'Sign or else'. No telephone call to the cabinet in Dublin, no telegrams, no messages, no clear thinking. 'Sign or else'.

And so they signed, on their own behalf, not for the cabinet, not for the Dail, not for the people of Ireland, but for themselves.

"There can be no surrender to the crown," deValera said. "We must not leave our Northern comrades to the mercy of the 'B' Specials and Orange mobs". Empty words, no clear thinking, mess after mess, while the homes blazed in Belfast and the pogroms took over.

The demobbed Brits joined the new Free State army and police. The Republican forces, divided among themselves, were soon outnumbered, out-equipped (by British guns to Free State forces), and out-financed by paid Free State soldiers against volunteer republicans. And so they laid down their arms in 1923, to be taken up again. As Frank Aiken said, "Dump the guns boys for another day."

# An unwilling part of the Irish nation

TV REVIEW BY  
UNA O'NEILL

TWO NATIONS', the third episode of British historian Robert Kee's history of Ireland, shown on BBC and RTE, last Tuesday, December 16th, has brought the bemused viewer deeper into the mists of Britain's Irish history. A history in which two 'nations' — this episode demoted to the ranks of 'warring factions', or 'hostile communities' — living on the same island fail to find a common cause.

But was the Protestant Ascendancy a 'nation'?

Socially, culturally and economically different from the so-called 'Catholic nation', they proclaimed their Irishness in the same fashion as Ian Smith's separatists claimed their roots in 'Rhodesia'. And, indeed, as the opposition to Britain's imperial hold on Ireland's wealth brought in agrarian revolt and fuelled on the grievances of the dispossessed the Protestant 'nation' shied away. Much safer to bask in the comfort of Britain's imperial protection.

A ruling elite by itself does not constitute a nation, especially since its national aspirations follow its economic interests. Today's unionists, political inheritors of that Ascendancy, defend their Britishness as forcefully as Tone and Henry Joy McCracken fought for Ireland's independence. Today's unionists remain an unwilling part of the Irish nation.

Kee's shallow ramblings, and posturings on hills, shores, bridges where it all happened, are leading

us further away from clarity and understanding of the past, and closer to forgetting that Ireland was and still is a British colony. What happened is important, why it happened is even more important.

While it is certain that the yearning for power and independence which moved the Protestant ascendancy to rebellion, stirred the native Irish out of their despair, it is also certain that the class differences prevented both groups from uniting on long-term aspirations.

The explosive mixture was not so much the alliance of the rich and the poor, but that joining together of two aspirations, for national rights and political and economic equality.

Irish history, from then on, is



Protestant Irish Volunteers — the first nationalists — in Dublin, in the 1770s

the history of the convergence of these two causes. From Mitchell and Lalor to Connolly, to today's Republicans, the thread was never severed, a thread whose origin Kee has failed to detect.



## Bolivian coup

DETAILS emerged this week of last summer's coup in Bolivia, when a clique of convicted drug smugglers took power with the aid of units in the army and right-wing political groups.

In the first few days of the coup, at least five hundred people were killed and two thousand wounded. Victims were herded into a football stadium and held for two days without room to sit down whilst groups were taken out and shot.

Groups of miners, the centre of militancy, were bombed and raped. Since then, in the characteristic fashion of Latin American regimes, many people have been arrested and then disappeared. Sometimes their mutilated bodies have been found days later.

The drug traffic of Bolivia, mostly with the United States, is worth six hundred million dollars each year, and the survival of the regime clearly indicates that America has found a new friend in Latin America. In fact the coup has been dubbed 'the first of the Reagan era' by exultant and jubilant writers in the military-controlled Argentine press.

## Amerikans acquitted

SIX Ku Klux Klan and Nazi Party members, who had been charged with murdering anti-racist demonstrators in Greensboro, North Carolina, USA, were acquitted last month by an all-white jury, despite video tape evidence which showed them taking rifles from the boot of a car and firing indiscriminately at the demonstrators. (News film of the murders were shown world-wide on television).

"Some innocents were shot," was only shooting at niggers," said one of the six in his defence. Two government agents helped plan and execute the attack.

Such happenings are not rare in America. In Salt Lake City a former Nazi and Klan member called Franklin is on trial for shooting two youths out jogging in City Park. In Miami a black insurance agent was beaten to death by police, whose later acquittal led to the widely reported riots. In Atlanta, Georgia, fifteen black youths have been killed, or are missing in the last sixteen months.

## Oil exploitation

A GROUP of United States and Japanese politicians called last week for a US-led force to be urgently set up in the Middle East to deter the Soviet Union from 'jeopardising oil supplies' there. In the very same week it was reported that the largest oil find ever has been made in Siberia.

Exploitation of oil reserves does not necessarily guarantee wealth and happiness. Britain is a case in point. Mexico is another.

The world's fifth largest oil exporter, Mexico has an unemployment rate of 40%, and illiteracy rate of 65% (both figures certainly understatements), and next year is estimated to require over £2 billion in loans. A classic example of how the more a country is 'developed' by capitalism, the greater its contribution must be to the capitalist developers and the poorer its people become.

## Polisario success

THE Polisario, the freedom movement fighting Morocco for its country the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic, has won a major victory last week, killing one hundred and thirty Moroccan troops in a battle near Alceh.

After Spain withdrew from the Western Sahara, Morocco laid claim to the area which is rich in phosphates — an essential raw material in fertilizer production. Mauritania, southern neighbour of Morocco, eager to share this valuable asset, was defeated by the Polisario, and withdrew from the war.



"The State in Northern Ireland 1921-72 — Political forces and social classes", by P. Bew, P. Gibbon and H. Patterson. Manchester University Press, 1979.

# A sophisticated version of the 'two nations' theory

BOOK REVIEW BY CIARAN DOWD

"FROM its creation in 1921 until its destruction in 1972 the Northern Ireland State was ruled by a single party, the Ulster Unionists" This is the first sentence in the book 'The State in Northern Ireland 1921-72 — Political forces and social classes'. Well, it's news to me that the six-county state has already been destroyed. This is just one of many examples of the patently ridiculous and reformist positions of these supposedly revolutionary (Marxist) authors, P. Bew, P. Gibbon and H. Patterson.

They claim to have written the definitive history of the Orange State (not that they would use such an undignified term) because they were the first to have access to the state documents released in 1977 by the Public Records Office. Well, the wee bureaucrats at the Northern Ireland Office need not fear that these three 'radicals' have let the cat out of the bag.

As a history this book is boring and difficult to read. Its focus is explicitly on the conflicts within the Protestant classes of the North; nationalist resistance hardly gets a mention until the last few pages. Even then the authors look at 1969 and say it did not really have much to do with the struggle for civil rights by the Catholics. Apparently this was really a fight between 'populist' and 'anti-populist' sections of the Unionists, whatever that means.

The authors' blatant prejudice comes out when they refer to Catholics as 'that most conservative of communities,' whilst around

1968 loyalist workers were about to be won over to a secular socialism, until things got messed up when Croppy decided not to lie down any longer.

### DISGUISED

A long introduction and conclusion brings out explicitly the political position of the authors, which is somewhat disguised in the text itself. Their politics are basically a sophisticated version of the 'two-nations' theory, and here their past with the notorious BICO provocateurs comes across.

Connolly is said to have been totally 'uninterested' in producing an analysis of the North. His famous discussion of how the partition of Ireland would lead to a 'carnival of reaction' North and South apparently does not count. Connolly's polemic with the reformist William Walker on the need for workers to take up the national question is also not mentioned.

As to Marx, according to the authors, he only supported the

Irish right to national self-determination because it would promote revolution in Britain. Any general principle of the right to national self-determination would have been 'moralistic' — a favourite insult from our 'oh! so scientific' authors.

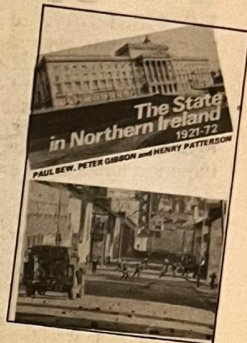
On the Easter Rising they also indulge in distortion of the historical record. Lenin, in fact, came out in enthusiastic support of the men and women of 1916, which he saw as the beginning of the Irish national and social revolution. But, according to the authors this support was only given because of the international period it took place in (World War 1) and that Lenin really couldn't have cared less about Ireland itself.

### GIVEN AWAY

On the present day, the authors are not so forthcoming, and after criticising everyone around they conclude miserably that "this is not the place to develop an alternative perspective."

Their position is given away when they say however that "there is nothing inherently reactionary about the Protestant working class or, for that matter, a national frontier which puts Protestants in a numerical majority." So, effectively it's 'Partition and the Loyalist Ascendancy rule ok!'

The struggle apparently has nothing to do with imperialism



(a term the authors obviously don't like). It's all a problem of romantic outdated nationalists fighting a war that cannot be won.

So, why review this miserable apologetic drivel? Quite simply because it will inevitably attract an enthusiastic audience amongst those 'leftists' who want a justification for sitting on the fence.

This book shows quite clearly the absolutely reactionary position that follows from a refusal to support the struggle for national and social liberation in Ireland today.

"Ireland: Divided Nation, Divided Class", edited by A. Morgan and B. Purdie, Ink Links, 1980.

# DIVIDED NATION, DIVIDED CLASS

BOOK REVIEW BY CIARAN DOWD

WITH 'TENTH ANNIVERSARIES' and all the rest of it, books on Ireland are good business lately. One offering, 'Ireland: Divided Nation, Divided Class', edited by Austen Morgan and Bob Purdie, is a collection of essays which look at a number of issues related to nationalism and socialism in Ireland. The articles were selected from papers presented at a seminar on Ireland held at the English University of Warwick in July 1978.

There are several relatively non-political articles. Peoples Democracy members Raymer Lysaght and Mike Farrell look at British imperialism in Ireland and the establishment of the Ulster Special Constabulary, respectively. Together with Margaret Ward's look at Cumann na mBan between 1914 and 1936, these articles are interesting if not particularly novel.

A couple of other articles on the economy of North and South are also quite relevant though again they are nothing new. More interesting, and more controversial, are the articles by the two editors which occupy the bulk of the book and set its political tone.

### RECONSIDERATIONS

Bob Purdie writes his 'Reconsiderations on Republicanism and Socialism'. The man who once wrote that there was no socialism in Ireland possible which was not Republican, has now changed his mind. His calls in recent years

for the IRA to dump arms now have their theoretical 'justification'. Wolfe Tone apparently did not support the 'men of no property' as we had thought, but just used them as a threat to get finance out of the 'higher orders'.

Pearse is also dismissed as not radical — he only supported the unions in the 1913 Dublin lock-out because the struggle was disrupting national unity. As to the Republican Movement today, Purdie repeats all the usual journalistic drivel — the Socialist Republic objective is just a foil, support for the Third World liberation movements is not sincere, etc.

Purdie grandiosely concludes that they (who?) must 'develop a strategic alternative to republicanism'. It is said that ten years has taught Purdie so little, in fact he is more behind the reality today than in 1969.

### ARROGANCE

But it is Austen Morgan's

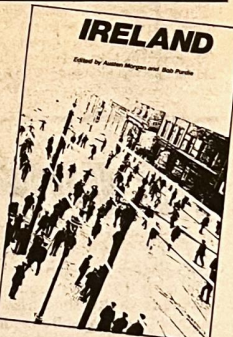
contribution, entitled 'Socialism in Ireland — Red, Green and Orange,' that really takes the prize for sheer arrogance.

'Orange Socialists' are apparently the mad BICO group which sees the loyalist shock troops as the vanguard of the Irish revolution; but whilst they're certainly Orange, their right to be called 'socialists' is much more dubious.

As for the 'Green socialists', that's mainly anyone in the socialist-republican tradition. Here there are some interesting tales: apparently there were two Connollys, a red one and a green one — "Connolly lived as a socialist and died as a nationalist" — in 1916, "Connolly tumbled headlong into green cotton wool, apparently remaining ignorant of his fall".

More seriously, we must see what lies behind these clever, but empty turns of phrase. At one point Morgan says that "the crisis of the Northern State has wrought havoc in left-wing politics". How true, for those who live in a world of make-believe and do not recognise the struggle for the Socialist Republic being waged here and now in front of their eyes.

At the end of the day, these people say they want 'red' socialism



(being unhappy with the orange and green varieties) but what does this mean in practice?

All is revealed on the last page — the 'solution' to the war in the North is "the eradication of structural sectarianism, not by retribution or denial, but through a serious trade union commitment to abolish discrimination". This tired repeating of the old reformist clichés is just not good enough: not only are the Northern trade unions tame and insipid but there is also the quite obvious unreformability of the six-county sectarian statelet.

# Dúchas

## LE DEASÚN BREATNACH

# Céalacácan

**THE HUNGER-STRIKE** — or 'céalacácan' as it is more commonly known in the annals — is a very ancient Irish institution. In fact, it pre-dates Ireland as a nation or the arrival of the first people of a Celtic civilization in this country.

It is part of a much more ancient way of life, only remnants of which survive today on the fringes of what was once the Indo-European civilization which fathered or mothered most of the languages spoken in Europe and India today.

About forty years ago the Irish scholar, Máelmuire Ó Dónaill, gave a lecture in Paris explaining why the fringes of a civilization remain faithful to that ethos long after the centre has given way and he showed how customs once common to a huge area extending from India to Ireland now remain only in Ireland and India.

The 'céalacácan' is such an institution to this extent, that the tradition is strongest in India and Ireland, even though it has never died elsewhere.

### RULES

Very strict rules govern the 'céalacácan' in India and, if I understand them correctly, a person if insulted, and if no other method of obtaining justice is open to him, is obliged to fast on the offender until the offender repents and makes amends or until such time as the faster dies.

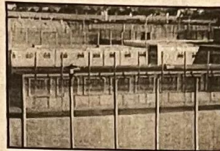
There is evidence of a similar culture in ancient Ireland. In both countries, also, cursing was an obligation in certain circumstances and was attended by its own peculiar ceremonies. It was a job for the poets who had very special powers.

Fasting on an offender to obtain justice was so common an institution and so taken for granted by contemporaries that it was only in very special circumstances that it was recorded in the annals.

### TEAMHAIR

One of the more famous fastings was that of Ruadhán on the Ard-Rí outside the royal house on the hill of Teamhair in the county of Meath.

The Ard-Rí had misbehaved himself



**LONG KESH** — the hunger-strike (céalacácan) is a very ancient Irish institution

very badly according to both Irish and Christian tradition, both of which respected 'teamhair', or the right of sanctuary in certain places. Usually, in Christian times, such 'teamhair' consisted of church land the boundaries of which were marked by small crosses shaped like a T, for 'teamhair' (The word occurs in place-names).

If somebody fleeing from the law were to take refuge within the 'teamhair' area, he or she might not be pursued further; the law officers would have to abandon the pursuit or wait for the wanted person to leave.

This custom was not confined to Ireland. It extended throughout Christianity. The generally recognised right of asylum, particularly in political cases, may be traced back to this 'teamhair', particularly the taking of refuge by people on the run in embassies or legations of foreign powers, as is very common in South America.

### RUADHÁN

What happened to force Ruadhán

into action was that a man wanted for some crime took refuge in a 'teamhair'. Instead of respecting his right of asylum, however, the Ard-Rí and his men followed him in, captured and executed him. Ruadhán, the saint, was scandalized by this and considered that the only way open to him to mark the enormity of the Ard-Rí's transgression was to punish the entire institution of Teamhair forever.

Thus he fasted on the Ard-Rí and threatened to take to the death unless the Ard-Rí and the royal household abandoned Teamhair which, henceforth, never again would become the seat of administration in Ireland.

Naomh Ruadhán succeeded. The Ard-Rí stuck it out for a few weeks but the scandal caused by the publicity given to Ruadhán's fast was such that he was forced to surrender.

He and his entourage abandoned Teamhair and never again after that was it occupied by an ard-rí. That was the main reason why it was recorded in the annals.

### VICTORY

Traditionally, in both Ireland and India, the 'céalacácan' has been the act of one person who, once he begins, is obliged to continue to death or victory. The demand must be a very simple one, reasonable, easily understood by the people in general, and all other methods to gain justice must have been tried.

There are some ill-informed people in every age to try to pretend that the 'céalacácan' is a mortal sin and that, if it kills the faster, it is akin to suicide.

However, at all times when such ill-informed persons try to denigrate the fast there have been informed Church spokesmen to point out that such a death is not equivalent to suicide. The Irish people always have had a very clear idea of the moral aspect and always have paid very reverent respects to those who have died in this way.

Pádraig Mac Piarais forecast that holy men would free Ireland; that may not be the exact 'quote' but the idea is translated. Only holy men have died on hunger-strike in Ireland, the holiest of the holy, more holy than priest, bishop, cardinal.

God knows, we have had our sorrowful fill of them in almost every generation this century. They are the very essence of our Fenian dead and as long as Ireland holds these graves ... But, with God's will, our heroines and heroes in the concentration camps of the enemy, hungering after justice, will survive this victory.

Guf ar son — pray for them.

## IN MEMORIAM

**BATESON, John LEE, Martin** (9th Anniversary). In proud and loving memory of Vol. John Bateson, Martin Lee and James Sheridan, Oglagh na hEiríann, South Derry and S. W. Martin, who died while on active service on December 18th 1971. Thus died a raibh ar son saoirse na hEiríann. Always remembered by their friends and comrades in the Republican Movement. South Derry and South West. Antrim and by the Republican POW's in Long Kesh, Armagh and Portlaoise.

**FOX, Brian** (6th Anniversary). In proud and loving memory of my friend and comrade Vol. Brian Fox, Belfast Brigade, Oglagh na hEiríann, who died on active service in England on December 21st 1974. Always remembered with pride by Chrissie, Mary Queen of Ireland grand him peace.

**FOX, Brian** (6th Anniversary). In proud and loving memory of Vol. Brian Fox, Belfast Brigade, Oglagh na hEiríann, who died as the result of an accidental shooting, while on active service duty in England on December 21st 1974. I miss Lachra na nGael raibh anam. Never forgotten by his friends and comrades in the Belfast Brigade.

**MCCABE, Jack** (9th Anniversary). The Republican Movement remembers with

loving pride Vol. Jack McCabe, GHQ staff, Oglagh na hEiríann, who died while on active service duty on December 27th 1971. Chrissie ar son saoirse ar son na Poblachta.

**MCDADD, Gerard** (9th Anniversary). In proud and loving memory of Vol. Gerard McDadd, Belfast Brigade, Oglagh na hEiríann, who died while on active service on December 21st 1971. Fuir se bás ar son saoirse. Never forgotten by his friends and comrades in the Belfast Brigade.

**MCDADD, Gerard** (9th Anniversary). In proud and loving memory of Volunteer Gerard McDadd, killed by British forces in Belfast, December 21st 1971. Sadly missed by brother Thomas, Carmel and family; brother Francis, sister Mary, Ann, Jimmy and family; sister Mary, Raymond and family; and relatives and friends in Belfast and Shannon.

**MCGINN, Jim** (7th Anniversary). In loving memory of Vol. Jim McGinn, Strabane, Oglagh na hEiríann, who died on December 15th 1973. "Lay him away on the hillside along with the brave and the bold inscribe his name on the roll of fame in letters of purest gold." Always remembered by his sister Teresa, brother-in-law Jim and nieces Dairde and Fiona.

**MCGINN, Jim** (7th Anniversary). In loving memory of Vol. Jim McGinn, Strabane, Oglagh na hEiríann, who died on December 15th 1973. Never forgotten by the Gallagher family and his comrade Sean Gallagher.

## BIRTHDAY GREETINGS

**HARKIN, Eddie T.** (H4-Block). Happy birthday, Eddie. God bless you and all your comrades. Victory to the blanketmen. Victory to the hunger-strikers. Love 'n' cuddles. Eileen.

**MARDLE, Chris** (H4-Block). Birthdays greetings to our dear son Chris. "A strong will and a happy heart will see you through the worst of times. Remember who you are and smile." All our love. From mother, father and family.

**MARDLE, Chris** (H4-Block). Best wishes on your 23rd birthday, Chris. "Though prison walls divide us and we are far apart, they have you in their keeping but I have you in my heart." All my love, Sheila.

**MARDLE, Chris** (H4-Block). Birthdays greetings to our brother Chris. "It is not they who can inflict the most, but those who can endure the most, who will ultimately be victorious." Love from Carol, Margaret, Brenda, Mary, Isabella and brother Paul.

**MCDONNELL, Gerry** (H4-Block). Birthdays greetings Gerry. "No one could be prouder than we are of you today, and this is just to tell you we are behind you all the way." Thinking of you always. Love Sheila.

**MCDONNELL, Gerry** (H4-Block). Birthdays greetings Gerry. "They have you in their keeping, we have you in our hearts." Love Marie, Thomas, Clara, Sinead and Louise.

**MCDONNELL, Gerry** (H4-Block). Best wishes on your birthday, Gerry. Love Rosie.

**MCDONNELL, Gerry** (H4-Block). Happy birthday, dear brother. Hope to see you soon all going well. Love and all you would wish yourself. From Anne, Linda, Paul, Connor and Lisa.

**MCDONNELL, Gerry** (H4-Block). Many happy returns. God bless and keep you until we meet again. All our love. From mum, dad and Jack.

**O'BRIEN, Seamus** (H5-Block). Happy birthday, Seamus. God bless you and all your comrades. From your mother and father.

**O'BRIEN, Seamus** (H5-Block). Happy birthday, Seamus. From your brother Sean.

**O'BRIEN, Seamus** (H5-Block). Happy birthday, Seamus. From Dermot, Lucy, and family and from Kevin and family.

**O'BRIEN, Seamus** (H5-Block). Happy birthday, Seamus. From Frances.

**O'BRIEN, Seamus** (H5-Block). Happy birthday, Seamus. God bless you and all your comrades. From the Markets/Ormeau Road hunger-strike committee, the Markets/Ormeau Road RUC, and all your friends from the Markets and Ormeau Road.

## Solidarity Greetings

**LYNCH, Kevin; McCLOSKEY, Liam** (H4-Block). Congratulations to our son and brother Kevin and to his comrade Liam on completing three years 'on the blanket' on December 15th. Your strength is an inspiration to us all. Victory to the 'blanket men' and to the women in Armagh. Victory to the brave hunger-strikers! God bless you all. From the Lynch family.

**MCCRYSTAL, Marcus** (H4-Block). Solidarity greetings and love to our son and brother Marcus on completing three years 'on the blanket'. Love from mum, dad and brother.

**MCGRANDES, Paddy** (H4-Block). Greetings to you, Paddy, on completing four years 'on the blanket', and to all your courageous comrades, especially the hunger-strikers. You will never be forgotten. God bless. From Eibhlín (Dublin), Rose Marie (London), and Françoise (Paris).

**MCVEIGH, Sean** (H5-Block). Congratulations to our son Sean on completing four years 'on the blanket'. You are always in our thoughts and prayers. We love and miss you. Victory to the 'blanket men' and to the Armagh women. God

bless you all. Love mammy, daddy, Jim, Catherine and Michael.

**MCVEIGH, Sean** (H5-Block). Congratulations to my brother Sean on completing four years 'on the blanket'. Bless are those who hunger and thirst for justice. Victory to the 'blanket men' and Armagh women. From your sister Ann.

**MCVEIGH, Sean** (H5-Block). Congratulations to my brother Sean on completing four years 'on the blanket'. A blanket is the noblest gown an Irishman can wear. We salute you and your brave comrades. From your sister Rosemarie, and brother-in-law Gerry.

**MCVEIGH, Sean** (H5-Block). Congratulations to our nephew Sean on completing four years 'on the blanket'. "I'll wear no prison uniform, nor meekly serve my time." Victory to the 'blanket men' and to the women in Armagh. From aunt Kathleen and uncle Willie.

**MCVEIGH, Sean** (H5-Block). The Martin-Tracey Sinn Féin cumann, Short Strand, sends solidarity greetings to Sean. McVeigh on completing four years 'on the blanket'. Go mbealaí, bua saigh go luath, Bua don fáil plúid!

## Christmas party



A CHRISTMAS PARTY for the children of republican prisoners was held on Sunday 14th December at No 5, Blessington Street, Dublin. Pictured here are some of the children who attended, with members of the Prisoners Welfare Action Committee which organised the event.

## Welcome home



A 'WELCOME HOME' dinner for Bobby McNamara was recently held in Limerick following his release from Portlaoise prison. Pictured with Bobby, on the left, his parents, and on the right the parents of Eddie Butler, a republican prisoner in England.

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# HUNGER-STRIKE PROTESTS: ABROAD



HOLLAND: Amsterdam H-Block Committee stall in Utrecht



HOLLAND: Amsterdam H-Block supporters present on an Amnesty International demonstration last Saturday



FRANCE: Picket outside Free State embassy, Paris



AMERICA: Picket outside British consulate in Washington



BRITTANY: Picket of British Airways office in Brittany



FRANCE: Comité Irlande concert, held in Paris