

An Phoblacht

REPUBLICAN NEWS



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Second striker named

FRANKIE HUGHES

FEARLESS

FIGHTER

JOINS

HUNGER-STRIKE



■ FRANKIE HUGHES — who joins Bobby Sands on hunger-strike from this Sunday

ONE of the most fearless and active young republicans to emerge out of the armed struggle against British occupation forces in Ireland this decade, twenty-five-year-old Frankie Hughes from Bellaghy in South Derry, is to join the H-Block hunger-strike this Sunday, March 16th.

After a fierce gun battle between an IRA active service unit and an RUC patrol in South Derry on Good Friday 1977, the then RUC chief described Frankie Hughes as 'the most wanted man in the North'.

At this stage Frankie had been three years on the run and despite thousands of wanted posters being pasted up by the RUC all over South Derry he remained in the area, often living out in the fields and hills while British forces scoured

the countryside searching for him.

The incident which led to his capture occurred in an area at the bottom of the Glenshane Pass in South Derry, about a mile from Maghera, on March 16th 1978.

Two IRA Volunteers dressed in military uniform were crossing a field when they were suddenly confronted by five SAS undercover soldiers, who to their cost mistook them for UDR men. The IRA Volunteers, who did not mistake the SAS men,

quickly opened fire and a gun battle ensued.

SHOOT-OUT

In the shoot-out two British soldiers were shot: a lance-corporal in the Parachute Regiment, who was on special duty with the Gloucesters, was shot dead. The two IRA Volunteers then escaped the immediate vicinity, but a full-scale man-hunt was mounted by hundreds of Brits and RUC men.

Thirteen hours later Frankie Hughes was found lying under gorse bushes in a ditch about two hundred yards off the main Belfast to Derry road. He was badly wounded and had lost a lot of blood. On his military uniform the word 'Ireland' was emblazoned across his combat

jacket, and his hair had been dyed ginger.

HOSPITAL

He was trailed out of the gorse, but refused to answer any questions, and was described as 'totally unco-operative' by his captors.

He spent ten months in the military wing of Musgrave Park hospital, and, as a result of his gun-shot wound, his thigh bone was operated on and reduced by one-and-a-half inches, leaving him with a steel pin in his leg and needing a crutch to move around.

In August 1978, he was taken from Musgrave Hospital to Castlereagh RUC interrogation



Armagh rally

— INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY —
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FEARLESS

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centre and for the next six days he refused to answer any questions and refused to eat or drink in case the food or water was drugged. He was charged with organising and taking part in a number of IRA operations.

At his trial, which ended after thirteen days on February 18th, last year, he was given a number of long sentences: life imprisonment for killing a soldier, fourteen years for attempting to kill the other soldier in the same incident in March 1978, twenty years for attempting to kill an RUC inspector in January 1977, twenty years for causing an explosion, and fifteen years for possessing explosives.

When brought to the H-Blocks, Frankie immediately went on the blanket and was in H-5 until being transferred to H-6 two weeks ago.

SANDS

Meanwhile, Belfast republican Bobby Sands, whose twenty-seventh birthday was last Monday, and who will be fourteen days without food when Frankie Hughes goes on hunger-strike next Sunday, has been moved into a cell on his own. He was also recently refused access to his solicitor as part of the isolation tactics used by the prison regime, although so far he remains in H-Block.

Up to last Tuesday, the tenth day of his hunger-strike, Bobby Sands had lost 10 lbs. weight, although he remains in high spirits.

Street protests have been slow to gather momentum, as part of a deliberate strategy by the action committees, which burnt themselves out in frenetic activity during the last hunger-strike by the time it reached a critical stage. The organising of H-Block/Armagh action groups and activity, however continues without respite, with last Sunday several hundred campaigners, including international delegations, travelling to Armagh jail for a militant street rally there.

Frankie Hughes joining Bobby Sands on hunger-strike will doubtless inject even more urgency into the long and arduous campaign which in its output needs to match the courageous self-sacrifice of the republican political prisoners on hunger-strike.

Flying visit

BY PETER ARNLIS

BRITISH PREMIER Margaret Thatcher flew into the North for a two-day visit, on Thursday 5th and Friday 6th March, her visit being designed to arrest the progress of Paisley's 'Carson Trail' campaign, which is itself designed to force the British government to ditch the terms of last December's Dublin summit communiqué.

Furthermore, Thatcher reiterated that she would not give in to the demands of the H-Block hunger-strike. This statement following her reassurances that partition would remain intact, was calculated to appease those unionists equivocating about the validity of Paisley's 'Carson trail'.

Thatcher's visit was supposedly kept secret 'for security reasons', but was probably deliberately leaked to some of Thursday morning's press. A leak designed to ensure a successful turn-out at a Stormont dinner, that evening, of political and religious leaders and businessmen (the trade unionists boycotted the dinner), for what would have otherwise been interpreted as one of direct-ruler Atkins' mediocre dinner parties.

COMMITTED

Addressing the guests, Thatcher said that she was personally and deeply committed to the 'Northern Ireland Constitution Act of 1973', which states that the North will remain under British rule unless its people and the parliament at Westminster decide otherwise.

Referring to the joint studies set up by her and Free State premier Charles Haughey she said: "There is no plot. There is no self-out." She stressed that there is no threat to the North's constitutional status, particularly emphasising that her discussions with Haughey would lead to the defeat of 'the gunmen', that is, of the IRA.

Indeed, she boasted of the improvement in cross-border collaboration that "increasingly we are getting determined and effective co-operation from the authorities" in the Free State.

POINTS

Two points arise from the fact that Thatcher took the opportunity to reiterate Britain's intransigent attitude to the H-Block hunger-strike, only forty-eight hours after Atkins did so in Westminster, (including him giving a pledge that public references to the hunger-strike would be scaled down).

Firstly, that contrary to suggestions made in Fianna Fail quarters (aimed at exonerating Haughey's entreaties — if any — to Thatcher and laying the blame elsewhere) the decision to scuttle the December 18th settlement of the last hunger strike and the de-escalation of



■ BRIT PREMIER THATCHER wearing the Royal Artillery beret on a 'flying visit' to troops in Fermanagh, during a two-day tour aimed at cutting Paisley down to size and reassuring loyalists of 'No Surrender'

the H-Block protest in January, when the blanket men's genuine efforts to resolve the crisis were rejected, came from the very top of the British administration — at cabinet level — and was not as a result of a difficult or stubborn prison governor or staff.

Secondly, and this is far more serious, Thatcher's Stormont address gratuitously declaring that "we will not compromise on this" and that "there will be no political status" is calculated to appease the non-Paisleyite loyalists with the bodies of republican hunger-strikers.

HUNGER-STRIKE

When Thatcher made this comment during the dinner, Bobby Sands was into the first week of his hunger-strike, and her audience audibly approved of her hard-line stance.

Among the guests, and presumably embarrassed, were two public figures, Cardinal O'Fiaich and SDLP leader John Hume, who

along with Charles Haughey, have privately let it be known to their respective, perturbed flocks, that they are 'working behind the scenes' for an H-Block settlement.

A public expression of concern is worth more than a thousand private pleas, and the political ramifications of O'Fiaich, Haughey or Hume condemning British intransigence is something that Thatcher would find it difficult to contend with.

In her speech there was not one mention of, or reference to, the nationalist people and their aspirations, for which they have paid dearly at the hands of the Orange state, and at the hands of the RUC, UDR and British army as well as loyalist paramilitaries.

PAISLEY

Thatcher had come to take the steam out of Paisley and the Stormont dinner certainly overshadowed and coincided with — Paisley says it was deliberate — the sixth of his rallies, a poorly attended affair at Enniskillen but from which one cannot afford to under-estimate the Paisley threat.

After the Enniskillen rally, Paisley and his followers drove to Hillsborough Castle to where the British premier had retired for the night, and marched on the gates to a chorus of 'No Surrender', where Paisley was allowed to hand in a letter protesting that this request to formally reply to Thatcher's dinner address was refused!

Earlier in the day his boxing and shoulder-charging match with Dublin city councillors, in the ring of the Europa Hotel, theatrically emphasised his opposition to any 'contact' with the South, with the exception, of course, of his Free Presbyterian church in County Monaghan!

DISQUIET

Thatcher's attempts to soothe the disquiet in loyalist circles will have some success but, according to the 'Belfast Telegraph', "although her audience at Stormont unanimously accepted her word, and we do, too, it has to be admitted that there is a substantial number of people — who can say how many? — who do not."

The refusal of Thatcher and Haughey to elaborate on the subjects under discussion by the joint study groups has not only produced disquiet in the North, but has provoked the increasingly likely suspicion in the twenty-six counties that Haughey is bartering Free State 'neutrality' for what, in the face of Thatcher's reassurances to the loyalists, must be seen as merely the illusion of some progress.

Nevertheless, illusions have resulted in election triumphs for Fianna Fail before, and Haughey has his eye on an election in the early summer, although his prospects will be overshadowed by the outcome of the H-Block hunger-strike.

Before returning to London on Friday, March 6th, Thatcher described the antics of Paisley as "the actions of a rather desperate man" and said, much to the relief of Haughey, that she would not be intimidated from carrying out talks with the Dublin government.

FALSE

But the effects of her guarantees to the loyalists did tend to expose Haughey's jubilation over the 'historic' Dublin summit as being rather false, and so under-pressure was the Fianna Fail hierarchy that on Saturday, March 7th, the political correspondent of the Fianna Fail-oriented 'Irish Press' appropriately assured people that Thatcher's speech has caused Haughey no anxiety and that a federal Ireland of six and twenty-six counties was under discussion with built-in safeguards for the nationalist people under a Northern (loyalist!) government.

Thatcher has certainly temporarily taken the steam out of Paisley's campaign, but the magnitude of loyalist discontent can not just be measured by his rallies so far, nor even by the final rally at the Carson monument at Stormont at the end of the month.

According to Paisley his campaign has various phases to go through, and in the background, building for some sort of work stoppage or other demonstration of the loyalist veto over the future of Ireland is the reformed Ulster Workers Council, with the potential backing of the paramilitary muscle of the UDA.

IRA BLAST

SIMULTANEOUS with British premier Margaret Thatcher's Stormont dinner for Northern dignitaries on Thursday evening, March 5th, a few miles away IRA Volunteers launched another successful commercial bomb attack. Four shops in Glenormley, County Antrim, were the targets.

Bombs started fires in Skyline furniture shop, Beverly boutique, Reflections boutique and Walker and Ramsey's shop. The first two were destroyed and, although the other two were not so seriously damaged, thousands of pounds worth of damage was caused to them.



■ SKYLINE FURNITURE SHOP, GLENORMLEY. Whilst British premier Margaret Thatcher dined Northern dignitaries the IRA blasted away

STANDING UP TO PAISLEYISM

DUBLIN COUNCILLORS on a visit to Belfast on Thursday 5th March experienced Paisleyism at first hand when they were attacked, though not beaten!

Their two-day visit to the city got off to a late start due to a (probably loyalist-inspired) hoax bomb alert on the railway line, and as Belfast Lord Mayor John Carson left the city hall in his car to meet the councillors on their late arrival at Central Station, he had to run a gauntlet of Paisleyites.

Because the train from Dublin was delayed the councillors postponed till the afternoon a special meeting of Belfast city council and went straight to the Europa Hotel for lunch.

However, Paisley and his band of about forty demonstrators followed them there, broke through the security gates around the hotel and ran up to the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Fergus O'Brien, then being interviewed for television, and proceeded to kick and punch him.

SCREAMING

The Paisleyites rushed through the doors of the Europa, screaming "Carson is a republican sympathiser" and "Go home, we do not want you here", and kicked John Carson. However, it was in the lobby that the bellowing Ian Paisley met his match when he physically attacked Dublin independent councillor Brendan Lynch.

Later, Brendan Lynch, who is over six foot tall, told pressmen: "When Mr. Paisley saw my Dublin

tie he gave me one shove on the shoulder, then he gave me another shoulder.

"Well, it's only a fool who waits for the third shoulder, so I hit him with my shoulder back, and he went over a settee and fell over on his back. He didn't come back to me: that put the fight out of him...."

"I'm a man, and no-one is going to push me around... He may have a big mouth, but I am a big man, and I have plenty of stamina. I tested his strength instead of his mouth," he said.

SECOND

A second Dublin councillor, former Lord Mayor Michael Collins, has also claimed responsibility for flooring Paisley.

He says that he saw Paisley attacking Councillor Brendan Lynch who was making no attempt to defend himself.

"Paisley appeared again," he said, "and accused me of being a Dublin murderer. I said: 'Go away, you bigot', and gave him a dig with the fist on the side of the face. He came at me again, and I took off my coat and ran at him. At that stage the RUC jumped in."

Paisley pointed out Michael Collins to the RUC and wanted him charged on three counts: calling him a bigot, striking him, and taking off his coat to him! Asked if he thought there would be a summons, Michael Collins said: "I'm not going back in any case."



■ MICHAEL COLLINS
Dublin Councillor shadow-boxing with Paisley/iam

When Paisley clashed with Councillor Lynch he called upon the RUC to arrest Lynch and they took his name and details of the incident, but did not interfere with the Paisleyites who tried to forcibly remove the Dublin Lord Mayor's chain of office (the motif of which is, incidentally, King William of Orange).

On Friday, RUC chief Jack Hermon apologised for the lack of action from the RUC, weakly explaining that he had been out of the country and that while he was chief constable it would never happen again.



■ The re-formation of the UWC poses the threat of a repeat of the loyalist workers' stoppage of 1974

Stoppage threat

SINCE the re-formation of the Ulster Workers Council last month — with three of its former leaders, Harry Murray, Bob Pagels, and Harry Patterson, at its head — its main objective has become clearer: the threat of another loyalist stoppage.

According to joint-chairman Bob Pagels, quoted in the *'Irish Press'*, Friday 6th March, the UWC would attempt to bring the six counties to a standstill if there was a London/Dublin agreement which would affect the union with Britain.

Their suspicion is, he said, that some morning "we will wake up and discover that agreement has been reached over our heads, and it is now the objective of the UWC to have Ulster workers ready to bring the country to a standstill."

Meetings with more than thirty shop stewards, representing power

station workers, petrol tanker drivers and shipyard men, have taken place recently on successive Wednesday evenings in Belfast.

As in 1974, when the UWC orchestrated the loyalist stoppage which brought down the power-sharing Stormont assembly, the seven-man Belfast executive will have the ultimate discretion in taking decisions, and will have more power than the twenty-one-strong steering committee, which, it is now understood, has not yet been fully re-formed.

Pagels claims that the UWC

would be 'ninety per cent sure of support' from power station workers and petrol tanker drivers, and he commented: "We are aware that certain changes have taken place in power station procedures, but we know we can still put the lights out."

The *'Irish Press'*, and also last weekend's *'Sunday Tribune'*, have suggested that the loyalist paramilitary UDA are backing the UWC. The *'Tribune'* quoted 'one UDA source' as stating: "Paisley is going to take Ulster Protestants down the Carson trail until the fighting starts, and then he's going to back out. That's why we support the UWC."

TWO OF A KIND

BRITISH PROPAGANDIST Dr. Conor Cruise O'Brien would favour an alliance between the Sticky 'Sinn Féin the Workers Party' and the Free State Labour Party, if he could be satisfied that the former have broken their links with the remnants of the Official IRA, he stated last Friday, March 6th, to *'The Irish Times'*. Such a guarantee would, of course, be somewhat difficult to obtain!

O'Brien is still a member of the Labour Party, but stated that he will not be running for office again with the party. He arrogantly claimed that his influence is perhaps greater amongst Sticks than in the Labour Party at the moment, because the Sticks have moved to the position where they accept much of his ('two nations') analysis of the North. Their present Northern policy of accepting majority (loyalist) rule and putting a united Ireland 'on a very long finger' has required quite a change on their part, he said. He is proud of the influence he has in their circles and proud that they have changed from 'the militarism' of the earlier years. "I debated Republicanism with Tomas MacGiolla in 1972 and I think I have won the debate," he said, in an accurate pro-British characterisation of the Sticks.

RUC recognition

RECOGNITION of the RUC will be a key issue at the Sticks' and theis in Dublin this weekend. A resolution for debate, from the Belfast executive, asks for recognition "that policing is necessary in every society and that to be successful in carrying out their duties the police must enjoy the full support of the community." It also asks that the RUC be 'better trained', presumably so that this sectarian force is better able to combat republicans. And, as part of a bid to make the party acceptable to establishment and unionist minds, moves will be made once again to drop 'Republican Clubs' from its name in the North, and 'Sinn Féin' in the South, leaving it still misnamed as 'The Workers Party'.

Sign of disapproval

AMERICAN PRESIDENT Ronald Reagan has confirmed in a letter to congressmen that the ban on the sale of American-made handguns to the RUC, which was imposed during the Carter administration, is to remain in force. The president, in his first move connected with the war in the North, has made his opposition to the sale of guns clear in a written reply to fifty congressmen. They had written to him, at the behest of the Irish National Caucus, before the recent visit of British premier Margaret Thatcher, urging him to resist any attempt by Thatcher to get him to lift the controversial ban.

Whilst the continuation of the ban is politically important, as an indication of the strength of the Irish-American lobby, and as an international sign of disapproval for the sectarian activities of the RUC, its effectiveness with regard to restricting RUC fire-power can be regarded as nil.

Missing arms

A BRITISH ARMY showpiece battalion of 650 men has been confined to quarters in England after weapons were found to have disappeared from an armoury, a week last Tuesday, March 3rd. Soldiers in the Infantry Demonstration Battalion (which is made up of men from all infantry units and is used for training officers) and civilians working at Battlesbury barracks at Westminister, Wiltshire, are being questioned about the theft of two nine millimetre Sterling sub-machine-guns, an FN self-loading rifle and two nine millimetre Browning pistols. The fact that security at the barracks is supposed to have been tightened since IRA bombing in England in 1974, has raised suggestions that it was an 'inside job' and that the weapons have been taken by soldiers, either for their own private use in armed robberies or right-wing acts of terrorism, or for sale.

Clandestine dealings

AN EXTRAORDINARY ATTACK on the British government, by one of its own Westminster MPs, has been publicly quoted several times by loyalist leader Ian Paisley to back up his claim that the constitutional position of the North is up for grabs following the December Dublin summit.

The attack was by leading right-wing Tory Nicholas Winterton, who has long supported the unionist cause, and who has declared that his government is lying about the Dublin summit and that the North's constitutional position is being 'surreptitiously' discussed by the Thatcher government in its 'clandestine dealings with Dublin.' The MP made his attack, which was obviously acutely embarrassing to his leader Margaret Thatcher, at a meeting of the so-called Wales, Scotland, Ireland and England Association in the British House of Commons a fortnight ago, on Friday 27th February.

Leitrim harassment

TWO RECENT CASES of brutality and harassment involving the Free State Garda's special 'task force' in Leitrim have come to light.

On Friday 27th February, Barney Reilly of Gortieragh, Mohill was arrested at his home by members of the force and taken to Sligo Garda station. There he was questioned continuously and physically assaulted, and finally released without charge the following evening. At the same time on Friday, three other Leitrim men, and a Monaghan man, on their way to a hunt with a carload of dogs, were arrested by 'task force' members, taken to Monaghan barracks and again were continuously questioned and verbally abused. They too were released without charge.

The Sinn Féin chairman of Leitrim county council, John Joe McGirl, has condemned these intimidatory tactics as 'evidently the Haughey/Collins expression of collaboration with the Thatcher forces of occupation in Ireland.'

RUC man quits

THE RUC SERGEANT who was demoted to the rank of constable for his part in Paisleyite protests has resigned from the RUC, presumably in order to concentrate on his Democratic Unionist Party candidature for the May local council elections.

Fifty-five-year-old Sergeant Robert Dodds, of Craigavon, had previously faced numerous disciplinary boards in his twenty-nine-year RUC career, without any great mishap. Then, last December, his participation in a loyalist vigilante patrol in Portadown's Parkmore estate was highlighted by the media, leading to his suspension from the RUC. He was not accused, however, of being a vigilante (which is not against the RUC's disciplinary code), but faced charges of taking part in a Paisleyite picket of Portadown town hall last May, when Dublin county councillors were entertained by Craigavon council, and of talking to the media without authorisation. A week last Wednesday, March 4th, he was demoted in rank and, after being told of the decision, was escorted away from RUC headquarters in Belfast by two inspectors. This was to ensure, he said later, "that I didn't speak to two newspaper reporters who were waiting. If that is not intimidation," he claimed, "I don't know what is." And, on an opportunistically different note from that usually struck by Paisleyites, stated "the press is the last bastion of freedom and fairness." The following day, Dodds, who was shortly due to retire anyway, resigned from the RUC. He is still appealing against his demotion, thus ensuring further media coverage of his, so far highly successful, pre-election personal publicity campaign.

International spotlight

AN important development in the 'internationalising' of the Irish struggle in general and the H-Block/Armagh crisis in particular, took place in Geneva, last Tuesday, March 10th.

For the first time ever the veil of censorship imposed by the London and Dublin governments, in the important area of discussing Ireland in any of the international forums sponsored by the United Nations, was drawn back.

The forum was the United Nations Human Rights Commission, which is made up of representatives of forty-three governments, observers for most other governments, and international delegates from regional bodies, non-governmental organisations, and liberation movements.

The occasion was a joint address by Richard Behal and Maura McCrory to the commission on behalf of the International Peace Bureau and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, respectively.

In the two ten-minute addresses the commission heard details of the H-Block conveyor belt, and more importantly the denial of self-determination to the Irish people, which has created the society of which the H-Blocks and Armagh jail are but a symptom.

The importance of this development is clearly seen in the reaction by the British and Free State government observers to the commission. The Brit observer mouthed the routine Atkins reply as the Westminster government's position.

More astute was the carefully considered retort from J. Carrol, the Free Stater, aimed at scuttling not just the request for an investigation by the commission into prison conditions in the six counties, but more importantly at returning UN discussions on Ireland to their 'status quo', that is, to the sole, safe, silent preserves of Westminster and Leinster House.

"We would hope that redress for any difficulties, relating to human rights, still remaining, can be resolved by discussion between the two sovereign governments," said Mr. Carrol.

The message is clear. The Brit position on the H-Blocks is fully supported by the Free State, and the addresses to the UN commission have touched a raw nerve. 'Internationalising' the struggle in Ireland, on any of its many unjust facets, causes big problems for Maggie and Charlie.

Canada

PADRAIG MALONE of Limerick Sinn Féin is at present touring Quebec and Canada on behalf of the Sinn Féin Foreign Affairs Bureau to publicise the H-Block hunger-strike.

The tour is a follow-up to the successful tour by former blanket man Raymond Crane during the last hunger-strike and by Sinn Féin president Ruairi O'Bradaigh in January, after which several Irish support groups were established.

Since arriving there on Monday 2nd March, Padraig Malone has spoken at meetings in Quebec, Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, all of which were well-attended and he received an enthusiastic reception. Telegrams have been sent by several groups to the British government condemning its treatment of the H-Block and Armagh prisoners.

On Monday 9th March, Padraig Malone addressed a meeting at Charlottetown, on Prince Edward Island and is due to visit Vancouver, Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal over the next few weeks.

Philadelphia

THE end of the first week of the H-Block hunger-strike by Bobby Sands was marked in the American city of Philadelphia by a Noraid demonstration at the Federal Building, last Saturday, March 7th.

Several hundred, led by Philadelphia journalist Jack McKinney, attended the protest, which was covered on two local television news programmes.

DEFENCE PACT POT KEPT BOILING

BY KEVIN BURKE

THE WEEK leading up to the Leinster House debate on Free State defence policy last Wednesday, had plenty in it to keep the pot boiling on a possible defence pact with Britain in return for some federal deal on the North.

In addition, the Free State was unusually faced with a number of foreign policy decisions, out of which its so-called 'neutrality' emerged even tatter than before.

The Thatcher visit to the North and her firm reassurances to the unionists, that no 'sell-out' was being discussed or even contemplated, may have seemed to the simple-minded to have put the question of an offer of a defence pact into the realms of irrelevant hypothesis. But far from seeing this (or admitting it) as a setback, Fianna Fail took the whole thing in its stride.

The word from Haughey's men in Dublin was that Thatcher's reassurances, styled as always in the familiar ritualistic phrases, were expected and in keeping with the overall strategy supposedly agreed at the Dublin summit.

Thatcher's visit was not aimed at Haughey, but necessary to defuse the growing Paisley election campaign. If Thatcher can achieve a set-back for Paisley in the May local elections in the North, then, the Dublin line goes, the loyalist King will be more amenable to Haughey's flattering attentions, and the whole show — defence pact and all — will be on the road again.

EL SALVADOR

It was an interesting week too on the international front, with the nonsense which is Free State 'neutrality' brought sharply into focus.

The growing pressure from many groups in the twenty-six counties, including many churchmen, for the Free State government to make the strongest protests possible to the United States on the Reagan administration's step-up of military aid to the El Salvador military junta, culminated in a demand from Bishop Casey of Galway to break off diplomatic relations with the United States.

In answer to this challenge the Fianna Fail government were only able to splutter about such a step against a 'friendly government' (apparently a 'friendly government' can do whatever it likes). And significantly the Free State Department for Foreign Affairs said that it was 'following the situation and that the government was studying the question 'with our European partners'.

This inability to take a 'neutral' or 'non-aligned' or 'independent' line is highlighted by the fact that the 'European partners' of the Free State in the EEC are continuing to delay the supply of desperately needed relief, in the form of medical and food aid to the people of El Salvador, in response to a request from Reagan — a horrific foreign policy to be aligned with.

The European angle was significant too in exposing Fine Gael hypocrisy on the whole question. As part of the Christian Democratic alliance, in which it sits in the EEC parliament, it has affirmed solidarity with President Duarte, the El Salvador dictator.

NAMIBIA

But more was to come. On Friday 6th March, the Free State government, in alliance with the Western bloc countries such as Britain, the United States, West Germany and France, abstained in a vote at the United Nations on a resolution calling for further sanctions against South Africa to force Namibian independence — yet another desertion of an oppressed people in the hope of carrying favour with the imperialist powers.

And last Monday, the Fianna Fail government was thrown into panic by the receipt of a unique message from the Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev seeking Haughey's support for the Russian initiative which has been launched to reduce international tension and resume discussions on arms limitations.



■ NATO plans, in the event of a war between the super-powers, are believed to include the use of Irish ports and airports as staging posts for American troops going into Europe, and the extension of mobile radar bases into the twenty-six counties

Obviously afraid to support the Soviet move for fear of American displeasure Haughey played the thing down and remained non-committal.

It is reminiscent of the response to the Soviet offer to build, free of capital investment, a state-owned oil refinery in Ireland — there has not been a reply to date. The advantages of 'neutrality', or 'independence', are apparently not seriously considered outside of selling it out to Britain.

NATO

Further revelations of NATO plans for Ireland, meanwhile, continued to be 'kited' in the press.

Last week's 'New Statesman' in London claimed that NATO might seize bases in Ireland if it was necessary to replace bomb-hit British targets. Donegal is apparently pinpointed as providing the safest air-space in the Northern hemisphere for the escape aircraft of the British prime minister and monarch during a nuclear war.

The article also says that NATO plans include the use of Shannon and west coast sites to boost anti-submarine and shipping operations, the use of ports and airports throughout Ireland as staging posts for American troops going into Europe, and the extension of mobile radar bases into the twenty-six counties.

The overall implication being that if the Free State government does not agree formally with NATO plans, then they will be ignored anyway, if necessary to the West's war plans.

TRIBUNE

Last weekend the 'Sunday Tribune' continued its extensive examination of these and similar NATO plans and strategies for Ireland, North and South. The 'Tribune' also revealed that Fianna Fail Euro-MP Noel Davern is calling for the Free State to join NATO immediately without pre-conditions.

Whilst Davern is straying from the Haughey/Lemass/de Valera line that joining NATO could only come about after an end to partition, an anti-Haugheyite in Fianna Fail, former Minister for Defence Bobby Molloy, was claiming that the 'gut reaction of ordinary Fianna Fail people' was against any trade-off of a defence pact with Britain. Molloy also called for a referendum on continued 'neutrality' — another individual confused over the Free State's real position in world affairs.

This 'neutrality' myth was further exposed by further revelations in the week, this time in Holland, that Haughey had attended a meeting of European leaders last December, at which he had joined in discussions on such matters as European policy on Poland, the siting of NATO missiles, and 'matters which had nothing to do with the EEC and everything to do with NATO' according to the Dutch sources.

Moreover the only proponent of a neutral line was not Haughey but the Danish premier, Anker Jorgensen. (Denmark is currently a NATO country.)

DEBATE

So there was plenty to discuss, for those who wished, in Wednesday's Leinster House debate. The bland Fianna Fail motion was that the house "confirms the principles which have guided the defence policy of the government and their predecessors."

To which the Fine Gael, stirring the pot, had put down an addendum "and confirms that a defence pact with the UK has not been mentioned in the current discussions with the UK government and is not part of the joint studies underway."

Predictably the debate did nothing to defuse the controversy surrounding the supposed defence deal. Haughey told an opportunistically sceptical opposition that his government are not discussing or negotiating a defence agreement with Britain or any group of countries.

However, Foreign Minister Brian Lenihan has previously drawn careful distinctions between discussions and negotiations on the one hand, and studying (as in London/Dublin study groups) on the other, which leaves the whole matter wide open.

In Leinster House, on Wednesday, Haughey used such phrases as 'not an issue at this time', and went on to say that given a 'satisfactory agreement' on the North, he would 'obviously' have to 'review Ireland's defence arrangements'. And more specifically he said that the Free State government had always admitted 'Britain's right to ensure the security of her western flank.'

He could hardly have gone further in openly admitting that a defence pact is indeed very much part of his calculations in arriving at some mutually acceptable deal with Britain.

The spectre of the hangman

BELFAST republican Peter Rogers, aged 36, was sentenced to death by hanging, by the Special Criminal Court in Dublin on Wednesday.

The date of execution has been set for April 6th, but he has been given leave to appeal, which will, inevitably, at least postpone the carrying out of the sentence.

Peter Rogers was sentenced for the shooting dead of Detective Garda Seamus Quaid in Wexford on October 13th last year. The shooting took place when Rogers was stopped by two gardai when driving a van containing explosives, arms and ammunition.

Whilst trying to escape, Rogers was fired at five times by Detective Quaid and was injured in the foot. As he told the court later, he returned fire aiming at the gunflashes in the darkness and did not know until the following morning that one bullet had hit the garda.

ANDERSONSTOWN

Peter Rogers is originally from

Andersonstown in Belfast and in January 1972 was one of seven internees who made the daring escape from the prison ship Maldstone. Swimming through the dangerous currents of Belfast Lough, all seven evaded the net of troops and RUC men thrown out to capture them and appeared at a press conference in Dublin seven days later.

Peter Rogers, who is married with one child, has lived in Wexford since 1975 where he has been described as a very popular figure locally and is widely known because of his occupation as a vegetable roundsman.

He is now the fourth man to be facing death by hanging in the Free State. Three non-republicans

are currently awaiting an appeal for the shooting dead of two gardai in Roscommon last year.

CAMPAIGN

A campaign for the abolition of state executions has already been launched by a joint committee of Amnesty International, the Irish Council for Civil Liberties, and the Prisoners' Rights Organisation.

Since that campaign got under way, Fianna Fáil's Minister for Justice has publicly stated that he sees no reason to alter existing death penalty legislation, and in a predictable cry for blood, the Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors demanded that death sentences be carried out. The prospect of another repub-



■ PETER ROGERS
sentenced to death

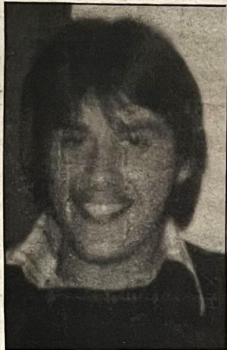
lican facing the hangman in a Free State jail, perhaps thought to be a distant horrible memory of the forties, is therefore very real indeed.

South Derry intimidation

A YOUNG South Derry farmer, engaged in routine farm work, found himself the target of Brit and RUC intimidation on the afternoon of Thursday 26th February, when four carloads of RUC men (thirteen in all) descended on him only yards from his home.

Twenty-four-year-old Francis McMullan, from the Maghera area, comes from a large family which has suffered intense and sustained harassment over the years; but Francis has been singled out particularly, ever since he walked free from Crumlin Road jail after seven months on remand in 1978.

This latest incident occurred when Francis was stopped by the RUC patrol as he was driving a tractor loaded with hay along the main Maghera/Swatragh road. Although only twenty yards from the farm to which he was delivering the hay, the RUC held Francis until they had called up British army reinforcements who unloaded the hay bales across the road. Francis was finally released three hours later when this 'security operation' was completed, and after local republican and solicitor



■ FRANCIS McMULLAN
target of intimidation

Kevin Agnew had arrived on the scene.

The cost of the hay damaged during this search was added to when a sick calf which Francis had been on his way to attend, died as a result of the delay. Just one more incident in the Brit/RUC campaign of harassment against the nationalist people of South Derry.

Dungannon harassment

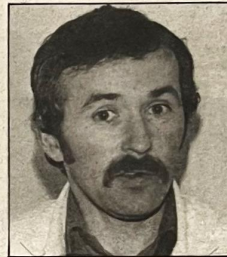
A CAMPAIGN of harassment by Brits and RUC against Dungannon man, Sean Hughes, has escalated over the past few weeks into what appears to be a vendetta aimed at driving away business from the butcher's shop which he jointly owns.

Sean, aged 33, spent three-and-a-half years in Long Kesh until his release in October 1978. Ever since then, he has been plagued by the unwelcome attentions of the British army.

On Wednesday 25th February, British soldiers entered his shop five times within the space of an hour, hurling abuse at himself and customers and commenting on the state of the shop, while blocking the door and preventing anybody entering. When complaints were made to the RUC, the Brits claimed that Sean had threatened them.

Six days later, on Tuesday 3rd March, the Brits again entered the shop, abusing customers and spitting on the floor and shop window.

The RUC, too, have been active in the persecution of Sean Hughes, stop-



■ SEAN HUGHES
object of vendetta

ing his car everywhere he goes and charging him with minor traffic offences. In one recent incident, he and his seven months pregnant wife were stopped at Middletown in South Armagh while his car was minutely searched.

Then, when he refused to sign a form saying that no damage had been done to the car, he was threatened with being charged with driving on dangerous tyres. Sean still declined to sign the form or to be intimidated, and was subsequently charged with having unsafe tyres.



Defiance

LIAM BERKERY (left), aged twenty-one, from the Twinbrook estate in Belfast was released from the H-Blocks of Long Kesh, last Friday 6th March, having defied Britain's criminalisation policy, and was greeted by former blanket man Martin Lavelle.

Liam completed his three-year sentence on the no wash protest in H4 after a period of remand, during which time he endured several physical assaults by prison warders. In fact, one beating, of himself and his young cell-mate Claren McGillicuddy, was so savage and received such an embarrassing publicity exposure, that the two warders concerned were charged with assault, and the case against them is due to be heard soon.



■ The students' union at Queen's University, Belfast, occupied for two hours by hunger-strike campaigners

Building sound local foundations

THE nationwide campaign in support of H-Block hunger-striker Bobby Sands, although low-key at present and concentrating on building sound local organisation to ensure steadily increasing mobilisations, has begun with support activities in several areas.

In Derry, last Friday 6th March, about one hundred people blocked the junction of Strand Road and Great James Street. Two youths were arrested and charged with obstruction when the protestors were violently removed by the RUC. In the past few days all nationalist areas of Derry have been heavily leafleted and posted.

In Lurgan, last Saturday, several hundred leaflets were distributed during a three-hour picket in North Street during the afternoon.

And in Belfast, on Monday night, several hundred took part in a march



■ Springfield torchlight march

and rally jointly organised by hunger-strike action committees in the Beechmount, Springfield and Lower Falls areas.

In north Belfast, the New Lodge Road action committee has held a daily picket during the whole of this week, despite harassment from the RUC.

Last Thursday, concerned students at Queen's University Belfast launched their renewed campaign by occupying the students' union for two hours. At a meeting of the students' union on Monday, a motion was passed calling on the British government to implement the agreement which had resulted in the ending of the previous hunger-strike.

COUNTY COUNCILS

In the South, the County Councils' General Council meeting in Dublin on Friday 6th March, unanimously passed a resolution in support of political status for the prisoners.

The motion, proposed by Cavan County Council and passed by representatives of all twenty-six county councils, reads: "That we call upon the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to restore political status to prisoners in Long Kesh and Armagh prison on humanitarian grounds and in the interests of basic human rights."

An addendum calling on Charles Haughey to pressurise the British government to this end was also approved without opposition.



■ MARY DOHERTY
shot dead



■ ANDREW MURRAY
stabbed to death



■ MICHAEL NAAN
stabbed to death

Infamous regiment

THE Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders must now rank as the most infamous of British army regiments for their atrocities committed in the North, except perhaps for the Paras, the butchers of Derry's Bloody Sunday. So far this year, ten members (plus one former member) of the regiment have appeared in court in three separate cases involving killings of civilians by soldiers and two members (plus one former member) have appeared on burglary charges.

In January, Sergeants Stanley Hathaway and John Byrne, and former Lance Corporal Iain Chestnut, were convicted of the Fermanagh 'pitchfork murders' of two Catholics, farmer Michael Naan and his assistant Andrew Murray, whom Hathaway stabbed to death in a berserk frenzy in October 1972. Captain Andrew Snowball was convicted of 'withholding information' about the killings.

In February, Private Robert Davidson was found guilty of the manslaughter of Strabane woman Mrs. Mary Doherty, whom he shot dead with a machine-gun in April of last year.

Also in February, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders John Aitken and Duncan Boustead, and former regiment member Raphael McCullough (now a prison warder), appeared in court on a series of charges relating to

burglaries in Belfast five years ago.

Then last Monday, Privates Christopher Wilson and Thomas McCallion (like Aitken and Boustead, currently stationed at Ballykelly barracks) were charged with the murder of nineteen-year-old Colin Taggart, a Protestant from Bushmills. Taggart died from stab wounds received after a disco in the County Antrim coastal town of Portrush in the early hours of last Sunday morning.

On Tuesday, four more soldiers serving with the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, appeared in court on charges in connection with the killing of the youth. The four are Privates Alan Boyd, aged 20, Hugh McQuillan, aged 18, Andrew Hay, aged 17, and Steven Gilliland, also 17. They are each charged with assaulting Taggart, 'thereby occasioning him actual bodily harm', not to say killing him.

ARMAGH RALLY

HUNDREDS of demonstrators took part in a militant, enthusiastic, and at times emotional, picket of Armagh jail last Sunday, March 8th — International Women's Day — in solidarity with the protesting republican prisoners' struggle for political status.

A large international contingent — women from Britain and the Continent — ensured that the RUC, although present in large numbers, maintained a diplomatic low profile and did not prevent the picket marching right up to the jail.

In addition to several speeches, messages of solidarity were read out from women's organisations in Latin America, Africa, Europe, England, Australia, the USA and Canada. Solidarity greetings were also sent from Bernadette McAliskey, and from British actresses Vanessa Redgrave and Frances de la Tour.

The name of each of the protesting prisoners in Armagh was chanted to the loud chorus, 'We support you', and republican, socialist and feminist songs were sung beneath the prison walls, to the indignation of the RUC, and of a band of Union Jack-waving loyalists who stood some distance away.

As well as being a welcome morale boost to the republican protestors in Armagh, and an important display of international solidarity with the liberation struggle, the picket demonstrated the clear and vital link between republicanism and feminism in the anti-imperialist struggle in Ireland.



International Women's Day rally outside Armagh jail



SHOW OF SOLIDARITY FOR ARMAGH PRISONERS AT TWO WOMEN'S CONFERENCES

FEMINISM AND REPUBLICANISM DEBATED

ON THE EVE of Sunday's rally at Armagh jail on International Women's Day, March 8th, simultaneous women's conferences were held in Dublin and Belfast on Saturday. The present prison crisis, the national question, and how feminists should relate to both was the main thread running through the debate at both conferences.

Dublin

BY KATHLEEN DWYER

A CONFERENCE on the subject of 'The national question — What it means for Irish women' was held in Dublin last Saturday, March 7th, organised by an ad hoc International Women's Day Co-ordinating Committee.

Among those attending were women from the Middle East, Europe, Australia and the United States.

Messages of solidarity with the armed struggle in Ireland and with the Armagh women prisoners were read out from many groups including the Somali Women's Association, the Zimbabwe African Nationalist Union, the European Association of Eritrean Women, the SWAPO Women's Council, the El Salvador Solidarity Campaign, the Troops Out Movement in Britain.

A statement from the Armagh women prisoners was read to the conference by Denise Cregan of Sinn Féin's women's department, in which they expressed their determination to continue their protest to a successful conclusion and welcomed

the solidarity of Irish women outside the jail.

REPUBLICAN

The conference was opened by Rita O'Hare of Sinn Féin's women's department, who stressed the necessity of a victory in the anti-imperialist war and the overthrow of the capitalist system, in achieving women's liberation.

Drawing parallels with the involvement of women in the armed struggle in other countries, she urged her listeners to the fullest possible involvement in the heart of the overall struggle. This, she said, was the most effective way of ensuring women's liberation in the aftermath of the national liberation struggle.

Speaking of the Republican Movement's recognition that a national struggle is futile without the complementary building of social and economic revolution, she said that the formation of the Sinn Féin women's department alongside the economic resistance department was something which women in the movement had worked hard for and welcomed.

Anne Speed, of People's Democracy, traced the history of the feminist movement in Ireland over the past decade. The character of the women's movement in Ireland had been changed, she said, by the courageous struggle of the Armagh women which had forced the anti-imperialist war into



■ RITA O'HARE
the forefront of the women's movement.

LIBERATION

In the afternoon session of the conference, a film was shown of the revolutionary movement in Tigray in the Horn of Africa. It displayed the changes in women's status which had resulted directly from their involvement in the war of liberation.

Summarising the conference, Naomi Brennan of the IRSP again stressed the necessity for feminists to engage in the national liberation struggle to ensure women's liberation.

Christina Carney, of the National H-Block/Armagh Committee, thanked those present for their support for the prisoners and emphasised its



■ ANNE SPEED
importance.

The conference ended with a short address by an Iranian woman, who spoke of support in Iran for the Irish struggle, and expressed solidarity with the women in Armagh. Speaking of the revolution in Iran, she said that the war with Iraq, which was being armed by Western imperialism, was an attempt to squash that revolution and regain the oil fields from popular control.

In the evening there was 'a social' which began with a film about the revolution in Oman against the British-backed Sheikh Qubab, showing the achievements of the people's army in education and agriculture in those areas so far liberated.

Belfast

BY TERESA KELLY

DELEGATIONS from several countries gathered in Belfast last Saturday, March 7th, to attend a conference on the theme 'Women in the anti-imperialist struggle'.

The first session was opened by Belfast women.

A representative of the H-Block/Armagh action groups outlined the formation of the National H-Block/Armagh Committee and its four hundred action groups. She went on to claim that any emphasis given to the Armagh prisoners was due to pressure from women's groups — an explanation which overlooks the harrowing no wash protest embarked on by the women prisoners in February of last year, and the subsequent hunger-strike by three of them.

A representative of Sinn Féin's women's department gave the background to Sinn Féin's newly adopted policy on women's issues. She went on to denounce the increasing use of contraceptive injections in the six counties, and appealed to all feminists present to intensify the information on the extremely dangerous side-effects of such drugs as Depo-Provera.

She concluded by warning feminists that they must try to relate more to ordinary women who 'learned about politics from the streets of the occupied North'. The trendy jargon used by some feminist groups only puts these women off instead of helping them to articulate their oppression, she said.

PRISON

The prison report was given by

another Sinn Féin member, who explained in particular the reason for the end of the no wash protest.

A representative from Youth against H-Block and Armagh explained how that group was formed and remarked that girls are often 'meeting shy' and have to be coaxed to take a more prominent part in the campaign.

An ex-Armagh prisoner, Maureen Gibson, recounted her personal experience on the no wash protest and the refusal of medical aid by the prison doctor, Cole. She recalled hearing from her prison cell the previous March 8th picket and how it boosted the prisoners' morale.

The last speaker, a member of Women Against Imperialism, explained the aims of her group: 'to raise feminist issues in the anti-imperialist struggle.' She then proceeded to explain how the group had done the reverse — pointing out correctly that it had taken the arrest of eleven of their members to make the feminist movement begin to recognise that imperialist oppression is the major oppression in Ireland.

Delegates from the Troops Out Movement pointed out the difficulty until recently of women organising within T.O.M. feminists, although coming to realise that women's struggle must be linked to all the other political and social struggles, are obviously afraid to lose their separate identity.

SOLIDARITY

The second session opened with a speaker from the London-based Organisation of Palestinian Women.

Drawing strong parallels between the Irish and Palestinian struggles, she declared that, like Irish women, Palestinian women do not need the lesson-givers of foreign feminist groups to tell them how they are oppressed. 'The priority for us is the armed resistance', she concluded.

Messages of solidarity were read out from the Chilean women in exile



■ ANN CONWAY

in Britain, groups of Somali women, Iranian women, Latin American women in Britain, SWAPO Women's Council, and many others.

Dublin feminist Ann Conway, in a lengthy contribution, explained how Irish feminism in the mid-seventies reflected partition, but that the Armagh issue had succeeded in unifying anti-imperialists in the women's movement. She failed however to recognise the effect of the fight for national liberation, of upsetting the 'status quo' and pushing many working class women to articulate their demands.

Taking over journalist Nell McCafferty's shallow sloganeering, Ann Conway said: 'It has proved easier to feminise republicans than to republicanise feminists', a statement, which — while it recognises the ghetto mentality of some feminists — also perpetuates the trendy myth of 'mindless' republicans unable to progress without outside help.

A Sinn Féin delegate replied that feminists took years to realise the importance of the national question. Sinn Féin women had at least got their priorities right from the



■ PALESTINIAN SPEAKER

start.

A delegate from Queen's University H-Block/Armagh Action Group appeared totally confused about the political status campaign, complaining about the difficulty of raising women's issues in her action group.

Other delegates, outlining the growing realisation of the real relationship between the Irish struggle and women's struggle, included women from London and Bristol.

In spite of being too loosely organised the conference managed to remain relevant by tackling head-on the major issue faced by women in Ireland: imperialist domination.

duir siad

"I am a republican prisoner of war and at the moment my comrade Bobby Sands is on hunger-strike to defend my rights as a political prisoner."

Twenty-one-year-old Jennifer McCann, from Belfast's Twinbrook estate, defiantly addressing a Belfast court, last Friday, March 6th, where she was sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment for shooting at an RUC man.

"God made the Catholics and the Armalite made them equal."

South Armagh wall slogan. ('Sunday World').

"Mr. Fitt may be offered a life peerage which would allow him to continue to speak on Irish affairs at Westminster. He is now exceptionally popular with both Conservatives and Labour front benches, and his tough attitude to terrorists in the North has won him loud praise in Britain."

'Sunday Press' column, 'Gulliver's World', on the British reward for Gerry Fitt for his loyalty and virulent anti-republicanism, when, for fear of rejection by his nationalist electorate, he stands down from his West Belfast seat at the next Westminster election.

"The IRA, which we support, though, is different from all the other three. You see, we support the just demands of the people such as those of the Palestinians, but we firmly condemn terrorists."

Libyan leader Colonel Gadhafi explaining on Italian television on Tuesday that his country supports the just causes of the IRA and PLO, which he favourably distinguishes from the Italian Red Brigades, the German Red Army Fraction and even the Basque ETA.

COISTE CUIMHNEACHAIN NA POBLACHTA

Applications for speakers at Easter commemorations should be made as soon as possible, giving full details of venue, time etc., to:

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JOURNALISTS' CONFERENCE ON MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE NORTH

BY HELEN STEVENS & PETER STEELE

A CODE of reporting practice on the war in the North, which could bring RTE journalists into a direct clash with the Free State Broadcasting Act's notorious Section 31, has come closer to implementation by the British-based National Union of Journalists, of which nearly all Irish and British journalists are members.

A comparatively low turn-out of around one hundred people attended an NUJ-organised conference on Saturday 28th February in the English city of Birmingham, on 'Media censorship of Northern Ireland', held following strong rank-and-file NUJ opposition to British government reaction to a BBC 'Panorama' television crew filming the IRA in the County Tyrone village of Carrickmore.

The conference was reluctantly organised by the NUJ leadership as a result of a conference decision last April. Left to the last minute, the publicity — and hence the turn-out — was not impressive. But the mood of those present (except for the scattering of Belfast-based journalists, who were hostile to the conference) indicated a widespread concern about the issue.

RTE's Section 31 ban on republican spokespersons was attacked by various speakers, particularly the ludicrous situation it creates whereby elected Sinn Féin councillors can not be interviewed on RTE.

Alan Murray from the 'Irish Press' Belfast office led off with a disappointing contribution. He appears to think that there is a conspiracy among all organisations in the six-counties — British army and RUC included — to conceal information, while the public do not want to know. Journalists, he said, are forced to take the official line because other groups go home at 6 p.m. He did, however, call on the NUJ to campaign for freedom of information legislation and for free access to government files.

The conference invitations to two politicians, unionist David Trimble and SDLP man Austin Currie, seemed to reflect — as a speaker from the floor pointed out — the spurious notion of 'balance' favoured by the media.

Trimble put forward a position that no self-respecting journalist could accept. He said that the British army and RUC had a 'proper' desire to restrict information, that 'terrorist' spokespersons should not be allowed on the air because this gave them legitimacy, and also that he supported Section 31 — because it 'helped' journalists by removing from them the responsibility for decision making!

Currie also commended Section 31 for this reason, but went on to say that elected Sinn Féin councillors should be allowed on the air. He criticised the media for failing to look at options other than those supported by the British government, such as a united Ireland, but predictably went on to attack the IRA.

DEFENDED

Editor of 'Panorama', Roger Bolton, who was nearly sacked over the Carrickmore episode defended the liberal journalistic ethic.

He told the conference that he thought it wrong that Sinn Féin councillors could not go on RTE, as they had been democratically elected. He said that the pressure to not interview 'violent' people led to two conflicting attitudes amongst British viewers: that either it could not be a proper programme because the IRA were not on it, or that, if they were on but were only allowed to read out statements, they could not be subjected to proper questioning — and their presence alone therefore took on a disproportionately high significance.

Roger Bolton asserted: "We have the right to say the situation in Northern Ireland is of crucial importance and we must continue to report it frequently and campaign against those who say it is not a suitable subject, or that

Censorship under fire



■ SDLP man Austin Currie (speaking) predictably attacked the IRA, and commended the Free State Broadcasting Act's notorious Section 31 for prohibiting IRA spokesmen from appearing on RTE, but even he went on to say that elected Sinn Féin councillors should be allowed on the air. Journalist Mary Holland (inset) also attacked Section 31 and pointed out that every programme banned means twenty are not made, because journalists are intimidated by the 'fuss factor'.

viewers would get quickly bored with it."

Journalist Mary Holland said Section 31 creates "an atmosphere that means many other programmes get difficult to make." She pointed out that every programme banned means twenty are not made, because journalists are intimidated by the 'fuss factor'. She neatly described as 'the British way of censorship' the kind of pressures brought to bear on people who want to report against the prevailing political consensus.

She had been sacked, denounced in the House of Lords and told she was unpatriotic: these pressures could be resisted, especially if journalists supported each other — which was not always the case. She said journalists should talk to everybody on both sides, and that the only criterion for interviews should be whether a person would contribute a story. She criticised the idea of a head-count approach to discussion programmes just to give 'balance', which often meant several elected representatives were on but had nothing to say of real value.

INTERESTING

Two of the most interesting speakers, 'Panorama' reporters Peter Taylor and Jeremy Paxman, were, perhaps unfortunately, kept for the afternoon workshops.

Taylor said the viewing figures for the two recent history series — around three million each — show that people do want to know about Ireland. He described the legislation that inhibits reporting of Ireland in Britain and said that he fears that Section 11 of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, which proscribes withholding information, will be used in future to

prevent interviews with the IRA going on the air. Manipulation of stories was very clear in 1977 and '78 in relation to Castlereagh, of which the H-Blocks are the legacy.

Paxman said there is overt political pressure on the broadcasting organisations to support the bi-partisan approach in Westminster. The reference upwards system — which requires items on Ireland to be cleared at the highest level — creates severe inhibitions.

He was pleased with the way the NUJ had supported him after the Carrickmore episode, but was distressed at the attitude of other journalists — who had treated him as they would any person they wanted to get an incriminating quote from! The North of Ireland, he concluded, is certainly one of the most important political issues and the coverage has been superficial and inadequate.

The conference chairperson, John Devine of Independent Newspapers, had evidently been chosen to dampen down any hint of controversy or excitement, and it was only after protests from the floor that a message was read out from 'An Phoblacht/Republican News' editor, Danny Morrison, who had been invited to speak but declined on the grounds that he wished to avoid detention under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, especially as another H-Block hunger-strike was starting.

The conference did not take any formal resolutions, but a move to get the NUJ to adopt a code of conduct on reporting the North gained ground. This proposed code, which could be adopted by the union's executive, lays down "the principles of the way in which the war in Ireland should be reported" — a promising formulation.

A tinge of political realism

A TINGE of political realism has finally hit the academic world with a meeting of the Trinity College Economics Society on Tuesday 3rd March in Dublin, at which four academics were at one in calling for a more serious assessment of the economic reality of a future united Ireland, which in one form or another they have apparently recognised as inevitable.

About one hundred people heard Professors Norman Gibson of Coleraine, John Bristow of TCD, and John A. Murphy of UCC, and Declan Hayes, a student at TCD (and a member of Sinn Féin), address the society on the subject of 'Irish re-unification: economic costs, economic benefits.'

Norman Gibson was not prepared to discuss an all-Ireland republic at all, but did consider what 'the republic would have to do economically to accommodate the unionists in a confederation' and dwelt lengthily on the substantial subvention which the British Treasury makes to the North.

John Bristow, following the same line, discoursed on the likely cost to the taxpayer in the twenty-six counties of having to 'assume the role

of Britain in the North'.

John A. Murphy emphasised that the other two had shown that the economic costs of unity were not insuperable and, flirting as ever with Fine Gael, had a go at Fianna Fáil for rhetorically advocating unity without considering these economic realities.

Declan Hayes pointed out that the supposed subvention to the North, which was such a burden on the British taxpayer, was in fact financing nothing but the destruction of the economy of a part of Ireland. The economic connection with Britain, he said, finances the highest unemployment in Europe, the worst housing conditions, the highest infant mortality rate, the destruction of the shipbuilding industry, the end of the linen industry, and the provision of De Lorean cars at a cost so far of £4 million each.

The only hope for the North, economically, lies precisely in an end to economic links with Britain and the integrated development of the two parts of the country, he concluded.



■ DECLAN HAYES pointed out that the six-county economy is being destroyed by the British link

Distressing news

Evenin' all,

Distressing news from Germany, I'm afraid. I had lunch with my old chum Major-General G.H.W. Howlett OBE MC, who commands the 1st Armoured Division there.

Morale it appears is shocking.

He told me that the following offences have been officially declared as being unusually prevalent in his area:

- Indecency against or with children;
- dishonest use of cheques, bank documents, and National Savings Bank Books;
- desertion and absence without leave;
- drunken driving; and
- the loss, either accidental or intentional, of arms.

Worse still, Howlett has even been stupid enough to put all this down on a confidential document. I dread to think what could happen if it fell into the wrong hands.

He also complains that all the army's telephone calls to and from Berlin are being monitored by the East Germans. (They're the bad huns, who aren't on our side, as opposed to the ex-Nazis, who are.)

Apparently some of the lads have been incredibly indiscreet over the line and he wants this to cease. 'Bit late now, Howler', I said.

The only good news he had was that Staff Sergeant Hutchinson, of the 14th/20th King's Hussars, has at last managed to pass the Mess Supervisors course and that it may now be possible to eat in the mess without contracting botulinus poisoning. Maybe.

RUC

Otherwise it's been a boring old week, what with the RUC being continually in and out of my office. First of all it was Special Brancher Slevin, he of the MBE, and his cronies Carson and McGonigal.

Ever since that old fool Maurice the Mole cut down on their 'source money', as they refer to the slush fund for informers (to which they have regularly helped themselves throughout the years) they have been pestering Jack Hermon to restore their perks.

He's ended up sending them to me, and it was my unpleasant duty to have to tell them that old Blue-rinse is insisting on yet more cuts and wouldn't take kindly to them returning to their embezzling ways. They left in a huff.

Next through the door was a strange character who was appar-



■ OLD BLUE-RINSE
Insisting on more cuts



■ RUC SERGEANT DODDS
The Portadown clown

U.D.R. Roll of Honour

Murder	Robbery	Rape

by the Brigadier

ently 'talking in tongues' and ranting and raving about the servants of Satan who had it in for him because he was a loyal supporter of the offish Paisley. It transpired that he was none other than ex-Sergeant Bobbie Dodds, the Portadown clown who's just been demoted to Constable in order to appease the Drinkers party, one of whose members, Smyth, I think his name is, was on the phone the next day congratulating Jack Hermon on his 'impartiality'.

I must say, Jack and I, sitting over a few large 'B and Sodas, had a good laugh at that one. It never fails to amaze me how these spineless toadies like Fitt, Devlin, Smyth and Napier will stoop just to try to ingratiate themselves with us.

SCREWS

Hermon had called in on me to consult on what we should do about two Long Kesh screws, Alfie Watson and his mate Courtney. Alfie is in for a spot of embarrassment when his brother, who used to work in Shorts and has now been charged with trying to assassinate Bernadette and Michael McAiskey, comes down from Crumlin to the Kesh.

It seems he might be even more embarrassed if it came out that on the morning of the assassination attempt he was telling his fellow screw Courtney that 'they've got them', only to have to re-cap a few news broadcasts later with 'the



boys have been lifted'.

What can it all mean?

Jack also wanted to know what to do about the half-dozen soldiers from the Argyll and Sutherland pitchfork regiment who murdered a Bushmills man last Saturday night. In this case I had no hesitation in ordering that Privates Christopher Wilson, Thomas Mc Callion, Alan Boyd, Hugh Mc Quillan, Andrew Hay, and Stephen Giffillan be prosecuted.

The victim, Colin Taggart, was a Protestant and these squaddies ignored all my previous warnings. For the last time, may I make it perfectly clear: the security forces have my carte blanche approval to shoot down or stab to death any tag, but only to kill Protestants if there are fewer than three witnesses. If these pitchfork squaddies haven't learnt that by now, they deserve every month of the suspended sentences which they will undoubtedly receive.

Bye for now,
your old chum,
The Brigadier.

WHAT'S ON

HUNGER-STRIKE MARCH
7.45 p.m. Thursday 12th March
Assemble Rathfarnham Village
DUBLIN

HUNGER-STRIKE MARCH
1.30 p.m. Saturday 14th March
Assemble Gala Cinema
Ballyfermot
DUBLIN
March to Thomas Street, Liberties

SINN FEIN WOMEN'S DEPARTMENT MEETING
1 p.m. Saturday 14th March
Imperial Hotel
DUNDALK
All Sinn Fein women welcome

HUNGER-STRIKE MARCH
7.30 p.m. Sunday 15th March
Assemble O'Neill's Park
March to rally at Ann St.
DUNGANNON

HUNGER-STRIKE TORCHLIGHT PROCESSION
7 p.m. Sunday 15th March
Assemble Norglen Gdns. shops
TURF LODGE
Belfast

SINN FEIN MEETING COMRAIRLE CUIGE LAIGHEAN
2.30 p.m. Sunday 15th March
5 Blessington Street
DUBLIN

SINN FEIN MEETING COMRAIRLE CUIGE MUMHAN
2.30 p.m. Sunday 15th March
LIMERICK
Two delegates from each comhairle ceantar to attend

CLONARD MARTYRS ANNUAL COMMEMORATION
1 p.m. Sunday 15th March
Milltown cemetery
BELFAST

TOM SMITH COMMEMORATION
11 a.m. Tuesday 17th March
Assemble Berkeley Rd. Church
DUBLIN
March to Glasnevin cemetery

CUMANN NA N-UIAGHEANNA NAISIUNTA

THE National Graves Committee has decided to postpone the dinner in Dublin on St. Patrick's night, as a mark of respect, owing to the death of Peggy Fitzpatrick, the wife of Sean Fitzpatrick, the committee's secretary.

BELFAST YOUTH CONFERENCE

THE BELFAST Youth Against H-Block/Armagh Committee is staging a day-long conference this Sunday, March 15th, in the Divis Community Centre in the Lower Falls, to discuss the role that youth can play - through youth committees - in the present hunger-strike campaign.

Organised under the slogan 'The Prisoners Need You', the conference is particularly relevant to youth from Belfast, but is also open to youth from outside Belfast.

Themes in the conference, which will be addressed by former H-Block blanket men and Armagh women, will include: perspective of the prison struggle; the conveyor belt system; military harassment; prison conditions; and 'the way forward'.

All those young people who care about the prisoners, and want to know more about the youth committees, should come to the conference in the Divis Community Centre this Sunday, starting at 11 a.m.

GET WELL SOON

MacAODHA, Brian. Get well soon Brian, from Paddy, Georgie, the Johnson family and your mates in Dublin.

MacAODHA, Brian. Some people will do anything to get out of cumann work! Get well soon from Cumann MHC Chaba/Ui Chloighigh, Balie Munná.

DRAW RESULTS

Cumann Cabhrach Monthly Draw

February Results
£100: No. 236; £50: No. 391; £25: No. 191; £10: Nos. 340 and 229; £5: Nos. 5, 257, 393, 260, 222, and 239.

PARIS CONCERT

SEVERAL HUNDRED people attended a concert held in solidarity with Irish political prisoners at Dauphine university in the French capital of Paris. The concert was organised by the Committee for the Defence of Irish Political Prisoners (CDPPI) on Thursday 26th February.

The concert, which was part of the re-mobilisation of support in Paris for the new H-Block hunger-strike, was preceded by an address outlining the background of the present prison crisis and was used to publicise organising meetings for future protests.



Leabhair i nGaeilge do pháistí

TÁ réimse leathan de leabhair i nGaeilge ag an Art Shop i mBeal Feirste faoi láthair. Leabhair do pháistí atá i gceist agus tá siad an - ádhdeach do pháistí atá ag foghlaim na teange.

Tá na leabhair gradaithe ó chéim go céim agus níl locht orthu ón dtaobh sin de. Méiditear foclóir an fhoghlaimora go mall Reidi agus tugann na leabhair seo seans chun chleachtaithe freisin. Tá na leabhair go léir maisithe go hailainn.

I measc na leabhair atá ar fáil tá leabhair as an sraith, An Bhunscoil le Máiread Ní Ghráda, agus leabhair an sraith, Sraith na Cainte le Millicent Ní Shiomóin. Fíche pingin a luch agus is mór is fiú iad. Is féidir ordaithe a sheoladh go dtí: The Art Shop, 53 Falls Road, Belfast.



STOP THE TOUR!

SEVERAL THOUSAND people marched from Parnell Square in Dublin to the Lansdowne Road headquarters of the Irish Rugby Football Union, last Saturday, March 7th, in protest against the proposed tour of South Africa by the Irish rugby team.

The demonstration, organised by the Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement, was supported by various political organisations, trade unions, and student bodies, including a contingent from Dublin Sinn Féin.

The march to the rugby ground, where the Irish team were playing England, was well received, with only a few catcalls and minor skirmishes (due mainly to rugby supporters in pub doorways), and the numbers swelled for the rally which concluded the demonstration.

Donal Nevin, of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, declared the trade union movement's abhorrence of the racist South African regime and condemned the tour. Rev. Eugene Lewis, an executive member of the Irish Missionary Union, said that the Irish rugby union had no right to use the name of Ireland on its proposed tour.

A number of Free State politicians also addressed the meeting and were anxious to pass responsibility for

stopping the tour on to the rugby players themselves or onto popular pressure, apparently as an excuse for avoiding direct political action. The Fianna Fáil representative, Niall Andrews, in particular came in for a good deal of heckling from the crowd.

The meeting was wound up by Kader Asmal of the Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement, who declared that the tour must be stopped in any way possible. He announced that a token fast would commence outside the Lansdowne Road grounds on Wednesday evening, March 11th, in memory of all those murdered at Sharpeville.

Meanwhile inside the ground, as an illustration of the extent of the Free State government's displeasure with the rugby union, the garda band was entertaining the crowd with a variety of tunes, including (as a sample of cross-border co-operation) an enthusiastic rendering of 'The ash my father wore'.



■ Rallying call, Dublin, Saturday

London solidarity

A NUMBER of protests were organised in London, the week before last, in solidarity with the H-Block/Armagh prisoners.

On Saturday 28th February a motor cavalcade was held by East London Troops Out Movement.

(On the same day members of Battersea and Wandsworth trades council held a picket outside the British army recruitment centre at Clapham Junction to protest against the presence of British troops in Ireland.)

On Sunday 1st March, the first

day of the H-Block hunger-strike, a picket was held at Downing Street to greet British premier Margaret Thatcher returning from her US trip, and a picket was held by London Sinn Féin at Wormwood Scrubs prison.

On Monday 2nd March, a meeting was organised in Conway Hall by the London H-Block/Armagh action committee. Messages of solidarity came from various organisations, including SWAPO's London office, the London representatives of ZANU, the Indian Workers Association, the Azania solidarity organisation, and several London Irish groups.



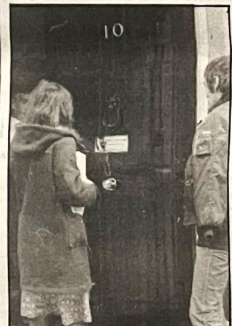
■ East London motorcade



■ Conway Hall speakers were (from left): Maeve Foreman of the London H-Block/Armagh action committee, journalist Eamonn McCann, Marie Mulholland of the action committee, human rights activist Lord Gifford (speaking), former British soldier Alastair Renwick, Von McCleary of the IRSP, Mary Tyler who was held for five years in India as a political prisoner and Kevin Colfer of Sinn Féin



■ Wormwood Scrubs picket



■ Letter of protest being handed in to No. 10 Downing Street

Easpag agus easpag eile

LE TOMÁS Ó SÉ

Thug an t-Easpag Éamonn Ó Cathasaigh ráiteas iontach uaidh le déanaí mar gheall ar ghníomhaíocht Mheiriceá in El Salvador. Bhí an ráiteas an-soiléir agus b'fhuirist a theachtairacht a thuis-cint. Thaispeán sé go raibh sé ag seasamh leis na daoine bochta ata ag fulaingt.

Níor cháin sé na treallchogaithe atá ag troid ar son a saoirse ach cháin sé Rialtas El Salvador as a mbarbaracht. A mhálairt a dhein an t-Easpag Edward Daly agus é ag caint mar gheall ar an staid sna H Blocanna.

Cháin Daly na treallchogaithe atá ag troid ar son saoirse sa tír seo agus d'ionsaigh sé na príosaíneach atá ag troid ar son a gcearta. Níor dhein sé tagairt ar bith do bharbaracht Arm Shasana sa tír seo.

Mhol an t-Easpag Ó Cathasaigh don Rialtas sna Sá Chontae Fíchead an ceangal taidhleoireachta leis na Stáit Aontaithe a bhriseadh chun ar mhíshábháil lena bpólaisthe in El Salvador a léiriú. Dúirt sé gurab é an forneart a choimeád an Rialtas i gcumhacht in El Salvador.

Níor dhein an t-Easpag Edward Daly aon ráiteas dá leithéid. Cé go ndúirt sé go raibh Rialtas Shasana "inflexible" níor mhol sé do dhaoine rud ar bith a dhéanamh faoi. Bhí sé ag tagairt don staid

sna H Blocanna.

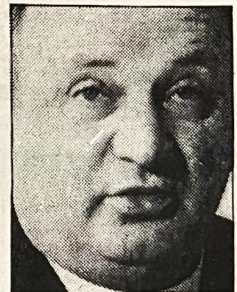
Go bunúsach tá an rud céanna ag táirgint sa tír seo agus in El Salvador. Sa dá thír tá mionlach ag iarraidh an cumhacht a choimeád acu féin. Sa dá thír tá forneart an Stáit á úsáid chun cumhacht an Stáit a choimeád i lámha an mhionlach.

Sa dá thír leis tá cabhair ón iasacht ag coimeád na Rialtas mídheathacha i gcumhacht. Tá na Sasanaigh sa Tuaisceart agus tá na Meiriceánaigh in El Salvador. Ach níl moladh ar bith ag an t-Easpag Edward Daly chun saoirse na hEireann a bhaint amach.

Ní raibh le rá ag Daly ach an foréigean a sheachaint. Níor mhol sé dúinn rud ar bith eile a



■ EASPAG EDWARD DALY



■ EASPAG ÉAMONN Ó CATHASAIGH

dhéanamh chun ár gcearta a bhaint amach. I ndeireadh na dála níl síl ar bith eile ann. Cúis bhróin dúinn is ea é ach 'síl an foréigean an t-aon síl le saoirse a bhaint amach don tír seo.

Seasann an t-Easpag Edward

Daly leis na hEaspaga a chuaghaí roimhe a cháin Eireannaigh a throid ar son a saoirse. Chonaicamar athrú tóirín ag cuid mhaith easpag cheana. Beidh caint an t-Easpag Edward Daly spéisúil nuair a bheidh Éire saor.

NOTES

BY
CORMAC



ANOTHER HUNGER STRIKE AT THE MESH! BUT THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO HELP!!

BUT THERE'S PLENTY THAT YOU CAN DO! YOU CAN SUPPORT THE DEMONSTRATIONS...

YOU COULD WORK WITH YOUR LOCAL COMMITTEE! RAISE THE QUESTION WITH YOUR TRADE UNION!

THE LIST OF THINGS YOU COULD DO IS ENORMOUS!!

AND MY LIST OF EXCUSES FOR DOING ABSOLUTELY NOTHING GETS SHORTER EVERY DAY!!

THE DEATH OF FRANK MAGUIRE, INDEPENDENT WESTMINSTER MP FOR FERMANAGH / SOUTH TYRONE

Many tributes and intense speculation

BY PETER ARNLIS

MANY TRIBUTES have been paid to Frank Maguire, the Independent Westminster MP for Fermanagh / South Tyrone, who died suddenly of a heart attack last Thursday, March 5th, and there has been intense speculation as to who will succeed him, with Sinn Fein declaring that they are actively considering contesting the seat.

Fifty-one-year-old Frank Maguire was a publican in Lisnaskea, County Fermanagh, and was elected as a compromise anti-unionist candidate in 1974 and held the seat in 1979 despite the intervention of SDLP man Austin Currie on an anti-IRA ticket who failed to effectively split the nationalist vote.

The President of Sinn Fein, Ruairi O'Bradaigh, who was an acquaintance of Frank Maguire for over twenty-seven years, says that he was "no lackey and never sought personal publicity, but sought only to help his people. Despite being elected to Westminster he preferred the company of his own people rather than rubbing shoulders with those in the British parliament whom he considered responsible for the violence in Ireland."

INTERNEED

Frank Maguire was born in Salthill, County Galway, but was reared in Athlone, and when a teenager moved to Lisnaskea to help manage the public house owned by his aunt and uncle, and which he later inherited.

He was a Fermanagh County Gaelic footballer in the early 1950's and also joined the IRA, and was interned on January 4th 1957, after the 'Brookeborough raid', until June 1958. He was a member of Conradh na Gaeilge and spoke Irish at every opportunity.

When interned in Crumlin Road jail, he was O/C of the internees in 'D' Wing and was instrumental in smuggling out statements about the circumstances of the torture by the RUC of Tyrone men, Kevin Mallon and Francie Talbot, which led to a successful campaign and their reprieve on 'capital murder' charges.

In 1964 he worked for the Sinn Fein candidate in the Fermanagh / South Tyrone area, Al Molloy, and in 1966 he supported Ruairi O'Bradaigh's candidature.

In the late 1960's he was prominent in the civil rights movement and later in the anti-internment and civil resistance campaign.

WESTMINSTER

At the Westminster election in February 1974, the SDLP put up executive member Denis Haughey against the sitting anti-unionist, Independent MP Frank McManus, splitting the nationalist vote and allowing Official Unionist Harry West to take the seat. There was much bitterness at this action of the SDLP and so in the election of October 1974 Frank Maguire went forward and was successful as an agreed compromise candidate.



■ The funeral of Frank Maguire (inset) in Lisnaskea last Saturday morning

He rarely attended the British parliament, but served the people of his constituency well. He also gave support to the republican hunger-striker, Frank Stagg and campaigned for his repatriation to an Irish jail, and in recent years became increasingly involved in the prison struggle in the H-Blocks and Armagh.

As the British Labour government's majority in parliament shrank dangerously in 1978 and '79, they turned to politicians from the North. They bartered with the unionists for their support in crucial confidence votes in return for increased representation, from twelve to seventeen seats, at Westminster (which should come into effect before the next British election).

In the spring of 1979 they turned to Frank Maguire, whose vote would decide if Labour stayed in office, and he was visited at home by deputy direct-ruler Don Concannon. Frank Maguire's price was apparently that the Brits should resolve the blanket protest in the H-Blocks, but this they refused to do, and his abstention in the subsequent confidence vote brought the government down.

In the election which followed, in May 1979, SDLP man Austin Currie broke ranks from his party to challenge Frank Maguire and unsuccessfully attempted to turn an IRA ambush on the RUC to Frank Maguire's disadvantage. It was a four cornered contest, with the unionist vote also split between Harry West and Ernest Baird, but Frank Maguire held the seat with a majority of

almost five thousand.

CANDIDATES

Last Saturday's meeting of the ard comhairle of Sinn Fein sent a message of condolences to Frank Maguire's family and Belfast republican Joe Austin officially represented Sinn Fein at the funeral on the same day.

The raving Reverend Robert Bradford, of the Official Unionists, whose speeches in recent weeks have made him almost indistinguishable from a Paisleyite, has called on loyalists to nominate a united candidate and regain the seat.

But Paisley is unlikely to warm to this idea (also advocated by unaligned unionist MP, James Kilfedder). He has done a lot of fieldwork in the Fermanagh area; was a prime mover of a large rally in Newtownbutler last year, and is likely to feel confident that his Democratic Unionist Party could outdo any Official Unionist candidate and perhaps win the election if the nationalist vote

is split more than two ways.

Speculation is rife that Bernadette McAliskey, former Westminster MP and PRO of the National H-Block / Armagh Committee, at present recovering from a loyalist assassination bid, will contest the election. Indeed, she intimated as much in a BBC interview after a press conference in Coalisland last Monday, announcing her comeback to the H-Block / Armagh campaign.

It is almost certain that the SDLP will also field a candidate, attempting to justify their intervention by virtue of the fact that Frank Maguire had been an agreed candidate and that his death now leaves the field open.

Frank Maguire's brother, Noel (with, it is rumoured, encouragement from Bishop Edward Daly!), declared last Sunday night that he will be contesting the seat, and the Irish Independence Party, whose co-chairperson, Frank McManus, held the seat from 1970 until 1974, will almost certainly be footing a contender.

Confirmation that Sinn Fein are interested in fielding a candidate came after the weekend meeting of the ard comhairle in Dublin at which the forthcoming Fermanagh-South Tyrone by-election was discussed. Other bodies of the organisation, particularly locally, have now been given clearance to seriously consider the proposal.

Any republican contestant would obviously be canvassing on an abstentionist ticket and although the question of putting forward an H-Block blanket man from the area has been raised, nothing firm has yet been decided.



■ BERNADETTE MCALISKEY speculation is rife, reinforced by a press conference in Coalisland last Monday (above), that she will contest the by-election