

H-BLOCK ARMAGH BULLETIN

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Committee

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5p

THE PRISONERS' DEMANDS: THE RIGHT NOT TO WEAR PRISON UNIFORM * THE RIGHT NOT TO DO PRISON WORK * THE RIGHT OF FREE ASSOCIATION WITH OTHER PRISONERS * THE RIGHT TO ORGANISE THEIR OWN EDUCATIONAL AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES AND TO RECEIVE ONE VISIT, ONE LETTER AND ONE PARCEL PER WEEK * FULL REMISSION OF SENTENCE

TEN DEAD — OUR SILENCE IS CONSENT

Last week was a momentous one in Irish history. On Friday morning the unthinkable happened when the number of deaths of hunger strikers rose to double figures with the death of Micky Devine.

A year ago anyone predicting such an event would have been roundly laughed at. No-one would have believed that the "mother of Parliaments", one of the self-styled "bastions of democracy", would allow ten prisoners to die rather than allow them to wear their own clothes, associate with each other, and do productive work of their own choosing.

Britain has abused and murdered colonial prisoners before, for instance in Kenya and India. These deaths are unusual because the first was of an elected member of Britain's own parliament. Another was of a member of parliament of a neighbouring country.

And these prisoners are not isolated in their fight. From the initial street protests, to the election of Bobby Sands, to the massive marches and continuing local activities carried out in defiance of intimidation and harassment, to last week's enormous victory for the prisoners' candidate, Owen Carron, their own communities have shown continuous solidarity with their fight. When, as last week, relatives can no longer bear to watch a



Owen Carron and Sean Sands meeting well-wishers

hunger striker in terrible agony, and ask for medication, the press pounce on this as a "crack in the hunger strike", a "body blow to the prisoners' campaign", rather than admiring the amazing strength and determination of both prisoners and relatives.

The main reason for the government's continued stubbornness is the lack of co-ordinated opposition within this country. The calculated collaboration given by the likes of Don Concannon and Michael Foot to Thatcher is matched only by the deafening silence of the labour movement in general (with a few notable exceptions).

But what hope have we of

achieving social justice in this country if some hundreds of miles away we allow our government to drive the hunger strikers to death? What hope have people here of attacking the barbarity of unemployment if at the same time we allow the barbarous campaign of death in the H Blocks to be carried out in our name? Passive sympathy or straightforward indifference are no longer excusable. The H Blocks must be of prime importance to people in this country. The spectre of ten deaths lies with us; let us work to ensure there are no more. **Speak out. Break the government's stubbornness. Force them to concede the prisoners' five demands.**

DEFIANT VICTORY

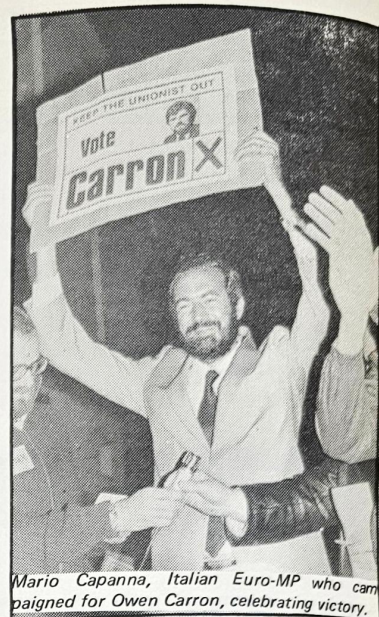
	Votes
Owen Carron (Anti H Block).....	31,278
Ken Magennis (Official Unionist)	29,048
Seamus Close (Alliance)	1,930
Tom Moore (Workers' Party/Republican Clubs)	1,132
Martin Green (Peace Lover).....	249
Simon Hall-Raleigh (General Amnesty).....	90
TURNOUT	83.2%

In a firm statement of support for the hunger strikers the electors of Fermanagh/South Tyrone elected Owen Carron as MP with a majority greater than that achieved by hunger striker Bobby Sands last April.

After Bobby Sands' victory the British government introduced legislation to prevent a hunger striker, or any other prisoner, standing for the seat again. As well as avoiding the embarrassment of having another hunger striker MP, the government hoped that a proxy candidate would not get sufficient support to gain the seat. However their strategy completely backfired and Owen Carron increased the previous prisoners' vote by nearly 1,000, increasing the margin over his Unionist opposition by 2,230 votes. Despite being a "unity" Unionist candidate Magennis gained only an extra two

votes. The "Workers' Party" candidate, Tom Moore, whose main aim was to split the vote and prevent Owen Carron's election, got a derisory 1,132 votes. After the victory, the prisoners in Long Kesh smuggled out a statement thanking the electors for their support.

The winning margin of over 2,000 votes was all the more remarkable considering the circumstances in which the election was fought. From the very start of the campaign, there was massive intimidation of Owen Carron's supporters. Posters were regularly ripped down from the walls and posts. There was a shooting attempt at Owen's brother John while he was out campaigning. Supporters were regularly stopped and held for hours by UDR patrols (Ken Magennis is a former Major in the UDR).



Mario Capanna, Italian Euro-MP who campaigned for Owen Carron, celebrating victory.

On the day of the election his Unionist opposition made continuous accusations of impersonation by nationalist voters, resulting in 50 people being held. Within a few hours most of these people were released, having proved their voting rights. The small number who have been charged consists of equal numbers of Unionists and Nationalists.

DANISH WOMEN'S FESTIVAL

In a two-day festival organised by the "Women's Front of Denmark" in Copenhagen a resolution was unanimously passed in solidarity with the five demands of the prisoners. The outdoor festival, which attracted more than twenty-five thousand people, was addressed by Christine McAuley of Belfast, who outlined the lessons of the current hunger strike in the H Blocks. Other groups taking part in the festival included delegates from the Palestinian Women's Union, from Bolivia, Turkey, and South Africa.

REPRESSIVE LAWS

Emergency legislation in Northern Ireland was condemned yesterday by the Haldane Society of socialist lawyers as "a laboratory for repressive measures in Great Britain" and an attack on civil liberties. While mainly dealing with the civil liberty controversy involving lack of juries, powers of arrest in the North, confessions and interrogation, they also detail their recent call for the British government to concede the prisoners' five demands.

"Just as the British Army in Northern Ireland has become part of the problem

and not of the solution, so has the machinery of criminal justice devised by Lord Diplock", says the Society. The Diplock Courts (which are a major factor in the conveyor-belt system of repression which has led to the H Blocks and Armagh) had provided a laboratory for repressive measures and their failure to win respect as judicial institutions should remind governments that "civil liberties are not a discretionary privilege". The criticisms appear in a pamphlet, Diplock and the Assault on Civil Liberties, published by the Haldane Society.

BERNARD FOX

30-year-old Bernard Fox joined the hunger strike on Monday morning. The youngest in a family of four brothers, Bernard served his time as a coach builder and worked in the same firm as Bobby Sands.

He joined the Republican movement in 1969 and after the events of August that year became deeply involved. He was interned from 1972 to 1974 and from 1974 until the final day of internment in 1975.

When he was arrested before his second period of internment, he was held in Castlereagh Interrogation Centre for nine days in isolation, on an interim order signed by Don Concannon. He and two

others went on hunger and thirst strike for parcels and exercise facilities, which were granted within 48 hours. He was again arrested in 1977 and after 14 months' remand, charged with possessing a timing device and causing an explosion. He admitted the first offence but was also convicted of the second on the evidence of a so-called "verbal confession". Two others had their charges dismissed because of the evidence of brutality used in obtaining these confessions; he received two concurrent sentences of 12 years.

Bernard immediately joined the blanket protest and during his time in the H Blocks has suffered the usual harassment and brutality from the warders. In February 1980 he received a particularly

severe beating from prison warders who accused him of trying to smuggle a letter through. His back passage was forcibly and painfully searched and he received injuries to his legs. No letter was found on him.

Like many of the previous hunger strikers, Bernard is in H Block 5. He is the eighteenth prisoner to join this hunger strike.

LAURENCE McKEOWN

Meanwhile Laurence McKeown is at a critical stage. He will have completed 62 days without food this Friday.

Matt Devlin, who has been 45 days without food, is very weak and having difficulty with his eyesight.

PAT MCGEOWN

Pat McGeown, who had been on hunger strike for 42 days, was given medical treatment and fed intravenously last Friday at the request of his family. Pat's condition had deteriorated suddenly and over a period of hours unforeseen and serious complications occurred, and he became semi-conscious.

His wife, Pauline, and his parents rushed to the prison, where they found him in a critical condition and close to death. Mrs. McGeown said they prayed at his bedside for some time and "then Pat took bad again and started convulsing with pain. I could not bear the sight of him suffering so much and I decided to call for medical attention to relieve the agony."

Pauline McGeown stressed that her husband had volunteered to go on the hunger strike and condemned those who had used her action to try to undermine the hunger strike.

She called on the British government to reconcile their intransigent position and to meet with the other hunger strikers and their representatives on behalf of

to reconsider their intransigent position and to meet with the other hunger strikers and their representatives on behalf of the blanket men before more lives are lost.

March to Pat McGeown's home last week



MICKY DEVINE



Micky Devine (27) died on the morning of Thursday 20th August at 7.40 after 60 days without food, and became the tenth prisoner to die on hunger strike in Long Kesh. A dedicated and articulate young man, he had been active in Republican socialist politics since he left school.

Micky was born in Derry in May 1954 and grew up in that city. His father died when he was only 11. He was fourteen when the first Civil Rights march in Derry was brutally attacked by the RUC and from then he became increasingly politically active. "Within a month everyone was a political activist. I had never had a political thought in my life, but now we talked of nothing else. I was by no means politically aware, but the speed of events gave me a quick education."

In the February 1969 General Election he campaigned for the Derry branch of the Northern Ireland Labour Party (which was a relatively radical branch of the party). As the year wore on he became involved in defending the Bogside from RUC and was hospitalised as a result of baton injuries. He also left school that year and got work as a shop assistant.

In 1971 he joined the James Connolly

Republican Club, and was heavily involved in defending Free Derry, as well as agitating on working-class issues.

Bloody Sunday in 1972, when Paratroopers shot dead thirteen unarmed civil rights demonstrators, was a turning point for Micky.

"I will never forget standing in the Creggan chapel staring at the brown wooden boxes. We mourned, and Ireland mourned with us. That sight more than anything convinced me that there will never be peace in Ireland while Britain remains. When I looked at those coffins I developed a commitment to the Republican cause that I have never lost."

In September of that year his mother died suddenly from a brain tumour. Micky was close to her and her death was a great blow to him. The following year he married. He and his wife Margaret had two children, Michael, now aged seven, and Louise, now aged five.

Micky was still very active politically though he became very disillusioned with the Republican Clubs (Official Sinn Féin) as they became more and more inactive. He joined the newly formed Irish Republican Socialist Party in 1974 along with most other members of the Republican Clubs in Derry. His next few years were spent helping build and stabilise the new party which was attacked physically and politically by their former comrades in the Republican Clubs as well as the British Army. He was arrested in 1976 and imprisoned for twelve years in 1977 on an arms charge.

On Sunday 21st June of this year he completed his fourth year on the blanket and the following day he joined Joe McDonnell, Kieran Doherty, Kevin Lynch, Tom McElwee and Paddy Quinn on hunger strike.

The next 60 days without food were a harrowing and painful slide towards death as the British Government refused to listen to the prisoners' demands.

Ironically the day on which he died, pushing the number of dead hunger strikers into double figures, was that on which the electors of Fermanagh/South Tyrone showed their unequivocal support for the prisoners, by electing Owen Carron. Micky was buried on Saturday 22nd with full military honours, provided by the INLA.

PLASTIC BULLETS DEFENDED

The use of plastic bullets is defended in the current issue of *Police Beat*, magazine of the Police Federation for Northern Ireland. The magazine describes the plastic bullet as "an example of the RUC's desire to use the minimum force necessary".

Earlier in the week a young boy lost an eye due to a plastic bullet injury. Another boy was hospitalised after the same attack, though he will not have any permanent injury. This happened exactly a week after a middle-aged man died after being shot in the chest by a plastic bullet at close range. On Monday a 15-year-old girl was also shot, and received stitches in her head.

LOYALIST/R.U.C. ATTACK

On Monday evening Unity Flats was attacked by a sectarian mob from nearby North Street. However the residents of the flats fought back and dispersed them. Then the RUC arrived and fired round after round of plastic bullets at residents of the flats, and then began holding and questioning them. No questions were asked about the earlier sectarian attack.

WASHINGTON DEMONSTRATION

Several thousand demonstrators marched to Constitution Avenue from the Washington monument in support of the hunger strikers last Sunday. The predominantly young crowd were led by posters of the ten dead hunger strikers.

Messages of support from Senator Ted Kennedy, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives (Tip O'Neill) as well as a speaker representing the Washington Archbishop were loudly booed for their mildness. Mayor Koch of New York has been very forthright in his condemnation of the the British government and support for the prisoners.

NEW YORK RALLY

Robert Abrahams, the Attorney-General of New York state, addressed a demonstration in front of the British Consulate on Saturday. He ignored a British request not to do so, which called his action "a regrettable departure in policy".

He condemned "the conveyor-belt legal machinery" which made the H Blocks an illustration of "the moral bankruptcy of the British presence in Northern Ireland" and said the men on hunger strike are not criminals but "part of a political conflict". Assembly woman Marie Howe, co-leader of the Democrats in the Massachusetts legislature, said there would be "a second Boston tea party" on September 26th when they intended to dump British goods into the harbour.

There were about 7,000 people at the rally.

D.U.P. HYPOCRISY

In an attempt to discredit the H Block hunger strikers and their growing support in this country, a group of Ballymena councillors, members of Paisley's DUP, brought three young brothers to meet Ken Livingstone, leader of the GLC last Friday. The boys' mother, Mrs. Dunlop, was tragically killed when a bomb placed in the shop she worked in exploded prematurely. Hunger striker Tom McElwee, had been convicted of the manslaughter of Mrs. Dunlop.

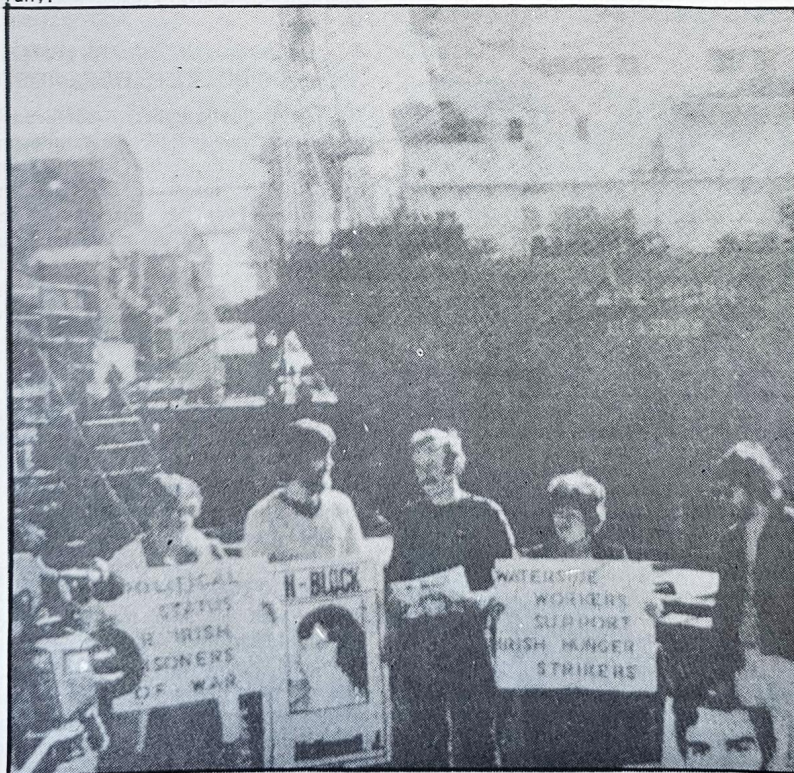
The councillors insisted on going through the gruesome details of Mrs. Dunlop's death in front of the three boys, reducing them to tears. So callous were they in their use of the children that even the press men there protested.

Ken Livingstone said he was impressed by the boys as he had been by Mrs. McElwee, though not by the councillors. He said that both the Dunlops and Mrs. McElwee were victims of the "tragedy of Ireland", but he condemned the Paisleyites for using the children, rather than trying to find a solution to the problem.

The sectarian attitudes of the councillors were mirrored by the actions of their leader Mr. Paisley and the DUP councillors in Glenorm (Co. Antrim) that day. They spent the day seeking an injunction to stop the school meals, for the Protestant primary school (which has only four pupils) being prepared in the kitchen of a nearby Catholic school, claiming the food would be interfered with.

The councillors also omitted to mention to the press conference in County Hall the fact that soon after the accidental and unfortunate death of Mrs. Dunlop, members of the UVF (the DUP's military wing) kicked to death and poured petrol over a young Catholic, Mr. Crystal, in a declared revenge attack.

BELOW: Picket on Wollongong docks, Australia, where workers refused to unload a British ship after hearing of the death of another hunger striker.



**PLEASE INFORM THE OFFICE
OF EVENTS IN YOUR AREA.
01-267 2004.**

MARCH FOR THE 5 DEMANDS Called by Sinn Fein

**SATURDAY 26th SEPTEMBER
IN LUTON**

**Assemble People's Park 1.30pm and
march to town centre.**

**IF A HUNGER STRIKER DIES, BLACK
FLAG MOURNING VIGILS continue in
KILBURN SQUARE for three evenings
consecutively or until the day of the
funeral, starting each evening at 7.30pm.**

NATIONAL DAY OF ACTION

organised by the

TROOPS OUT MOVEMENT

Saturday 5th September

**BLACK FLAG VIGILS IN LOCALITIES
in memory of all dead hunger strikers**

**London: 2-7pm Westminster Cathedral
(for info on other areas ring the office)**

"WE OURSELVES SPEAK"

**new video by London Media Workshop
showing on Tues. 8th September at 7.30**

at Hemingford Arms, Offord Rd, N1

**Camden & Islington T.O.M. "Monthly Event"
Adm. 75p waged, 50p for unwaged**

WORKERS' MARCH FOR IRISH FREEDOM

**From Manchester to Blackpool,
5th-8th September**

**3-day march and lobby of the TUC
organised by Smash the Prevention of
Terrorism Act Campaign. For more
details write BM RCT, London WC1N
3XX.**

SAOIRSE — IRISH FREEDOM FESTIVAL

October 17th,

Caxton House, London N19

Org. Cttee for Withdrawal from Ireland

**An all-day event of cultural resistance to
Britain's continuing war in the north of
Ireland. Exhibitions, films, videos, music,
poems, talks. Stalls available. Contact:
1 North End Road, London W14 8ST.**

*Would anyone who made a V.H.S.
cassette VIDEO TAPE of the NEWS-
NIGHT programme on Friday 21st
August PLEASE RING THE OFFICE?*

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