

# BOBBY SANDS

(A.T.G.W.U.)

Born: 1954, Belfast

Married with one child

**School** — Went to Stella Maris School, Rathcoole. Left school at 15 years of age.

**Employment/Union** — Started as an apprentice coach builder with W. H. Alexander in March, 1970 when 16 years old. Worked there for 2½ years until he was threatened at gunpoint and forced to leave. Belonged to the National Union of Vehicle Builders (N.U.V.B.) and the A.T.G.W.U. (Membership No. 655, Branch 38).

**Home** — The sands family had only moved to Twinbrook (an extension of the Falls/Andersontown district) in the summer of 1972, some months before Bobby's arrest. They had been forced out of Rathcoole in Newtownabbey, where they had lived for 21 years. A dustbin had been hurled through the front window, late at night, and shots were fired into the house. When the R.U.C. arrived three hours after being summoned they "diagnosed" a case of vandalism. Later Bobby himself was threatened at work — he was told he would be shot if he continued working there.

**Arrest and Interrogation** — He was arrested with five others on Thursday, 14th October, 1976. As a result of the ill-treatment received during interrogation they all made complaints against the R.U.C. The D.P.P.'s office, as usual, directed "no prosecution". In the case of Bobby Sands, he was taken first to Dunmurray, then to Crumlin Road and then to Castlereagh Interrogation Centre. He had already been beaten but worse was to come at Castlereagh.

Prior to being charged he was interrogated for six days, during which time he was the victim of extreme physical and psychological ill-treatment. He was denied sleep and was forced to undergo constant interrogations throughout the six day period, with only short breaks in between. He was viciously beaten throughout the period also, being punched, thrown about, kicked, traumatised by the hair, abused, threatened and humiliated. When he asked to see a solicitor and a doctor he was told "there's no fucking way you'll see a doctor". No statement was made. When seen later by his mother, she described him as being extremely upset and still terrified by an obviously traumatic experience. He was remanded until September 1977.



**Court Case and Sentence** — In September 1977 he was found guilty, with five others, of hijacking and possession of firearms. All were sentenced to 14 years jail. When sentenced Bobby Sands was beaten in court by a warder for saying "cheerio" to his mother. In a statement to A.L.J. (Association for Legal Justice) he claimed that he was beaten by prison officers after the court case on the way to the cells.

**H-Blocks** — Bobby Sands went on blanket protest immediately after sentence. He was not seen again by his parents until eight months later. During this period he spent approximately three months in solitary confinement, with only a towel for clothing.

**Health** — He is now very pale looking, his hair is going grey; is very gaunt and withdrawn. His eyes are sunken and he has lost a lot of weight. In the winter of '78/'79 he suffered from a severe 'flu, and he had to be taken to hospital bay on a stretcher, totally naked. He had a very high temperature and was unable to walk.

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# Save Bobby's Life

# NATIONAL TRADE UNION STRATEGY

*A National Trade Union Conference was held in Derry on February 21st at which the national trade union strategy for this hunger-strike was worked out.*

**A National Day of Industrial Action is planned for mid-April when the condition of Bobby Sands and the other hunger-strikers becomes critical.**

**In every workplace groups of sympathetic workers must be formed to link up with other workplaces to form Trade Unionists Against H-Block/Armagh Committees.**

**The question of the hunger-strike must be raised at every level of the official trade union movement i.e. shop floor, branch, district, regional and national.**

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**Already in Derry the Trades Council and Branches of the A.T.G.W.U. AND A.U.E.W. have passed motions of support for the prisoners five demands.**

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## WHAT YOU CAN DO

1. Make sure your workplace, however small, has got a H-Block/Armagh representative or group.
2. Make sure that your workplace group sends two delegates to the weekly Monday night meeting of the Trade Unionists Against H-Block/Armagh.
3. Organise distribution of this leaflet to every member in your workplace.
4. Organise collections in your workplace and send the money to the Derry H-Block/Armagh Committee. All adverts of support will be co-ordinated by the committee and placed at key times.
5. Sign and circulate the Derry Trade Union Petition of support for the prisoners five demands.
6. Organise your workplace to attend Branch and other union meetings, pass the following resolution and publicise the fact:

**"This Branch condemns the British failure to implement the agreement of December which ended the last hunger-strike. This branch supports the five demands of the prisoners. This Branch demands that the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (I.C.T.U.) holds a trade union inquiry into conditions in Long Kesh and Armagh and into the legal, judicial, political and economic background of the prison struggle. This Branch gives maximum publicity to this resolution both within the union and to the public at large."**

7. Answer the call of the prisoners and the National H-Block Committee by walking out on the National day of Industrial Action in April.