

TROOPS OUT

OF IRELAND

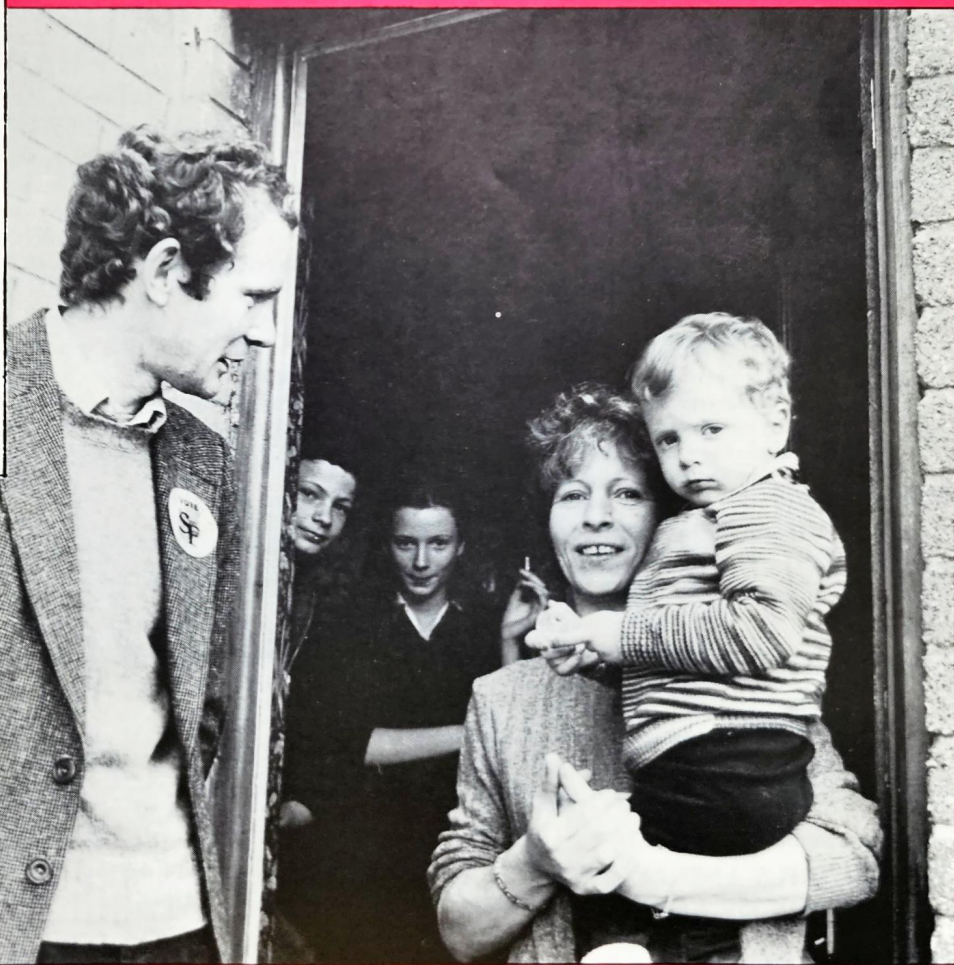


Vol. 12 No. 8
June 1989

50P

Sinn Fein speaking tour: Hear the voice the British try to ban

*Inside:
Sinn Fein
tour dates
1913 Lock Out
Hunger
Strikes
Elections*



TROOPS OUT MOVEMENT

The Troops Out Movement is a movement in England, Scotland and Wales made up of people who believe that the cause of the 'troubles' in the north of Ireland is the continuing British presence there, both military and political. We believe that British troops are in Ireland not as a peace keeping force, but in order to maintain British rule, and that their presence is the most serious obstacle to any progress towards peace. Ever since 1969 the troops have been occupying a part of Ireland, coercing and oppressing the nationalist people, maintaining the division of Ireland and ensuring that its people cannot unite to determine their own future.

We have been working as an organisation for immediate British withdrawal since the early 1970s. We have a number of branches in England, Scotland and Wales. These branches, working locally in whatever way circumstances allow are the backbone of the TOM. Membership or affiliation is open to any individual or group our demands:

- TROOPS OUT NOW
- SELF - DETERMINATION FOR THE IRISH PEOPLE AS A WHOLE

APPEAL

The Troops Out Movement has been campaigning for the withdrawal of troops for almost as long as they have been deployed in the six counties. In this twentieth year of troops on the streets we need support more than ever in order to fight for Troops Out Now and Self - Determination for Irish People as a Whole. Please send a donation to support our Year of Action to the address below.

JOINING TROOPS OUT

If you would like to join the Troops Out Movement in campaigning for a British withdrawal from Ireland you can do so in a number of ways.

- ★ Join a local branch and get involved in activities in your area.
- ★ Become a national member of Troops Out and we will keep you posted of developments, send you our discussion bulletins and inform you about national events. You will also automatically get a sub to 'Troops Out'.
- ★ If there is no local branch near you we can help you form one. We can provide videos, speakers, leaflets and advice about booking rooms etc.

National membership is £12 (includes sub to paper) Unwaged £8

'TROOPS OUT' SUBSCRIPTION



**TROOPS OUT
OF IRELAND**

Why worry where your next copy of Troops Out is coming from when you can have it delivered to your door. A Troops Out subscription will ensure that every month you receive the news and analysis of Britain's war in Ireland. If you know anyone who is having difficulty getting a copy of Troops Out why not suggest they take a subscription as well.

The rate for 10 issues is £7. If you would like to further support the struggle against misinformation on Ireland you can take out a 'supporters subscription' at a rate of £10 £15 or £20.

Name:
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Troops Out is now available on tape for people with sight disabilities. For further details write to P.O. Box 817, Camp Hill, Birmingham B11 4AF. or telephone: 021 773 8683/021 551 3166

Troops Out Paper

Troops Out is produced by a collective drawn from branches of the Troops Out Movement in London

Readers' views, articles and letters are always welcome (although we can't guarantee to publish everything that comes in).

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TROOPS OUT

OF IRELAND



Don't mention the war

The tenth anniversary of Thatcher's premiership was covered in the full range of the British media yet nowhere (except a small piece by R. Ingrams in *The Observer*) was another anniversary mentioned. The 20th anniversary of British troops being sent onto the streets of the North of Ireland. Perhaps the fact that the nationalist people have not been defeated deters the mainstream press from commenting on Thatcher's record.

But the Left's record of events was just as dismal. Pages were filled with comment on her defeat of the miners and the subsequent quashing of trade union resistance and yet resistance in Ireland, which is alive and well, was not recorded.

Though insularity is the great hallmark of British politics, we could have expected that Thatcher's first great challenge - the Hunger Strikes of 1980, where she laid down her iron gauntlet and the world looked on in horror, might have deserved some analysis. But, consistent to the last, imperialism and racism is shoved into the backyard of British politics. The danger of any analysis might be of course, that a sizeable majority of people reach the conclusion that jingoism (as re-asserted in the Falkland war) and British colonialism are not in their interests.

It might also reveal the inadequacy of the Labour opposition's response to events - from the Hunger Strike to their recent failure to challenge the PTA after the European courts had ruled against the 7 day detention. A failure which can only be seen as farcical given the parties policy commitment to scrapping the PTA.

Ten years of an extreme right wing government have seen the increase of state authoritarianism and a determination to hold onto the North of Ireland whatever the cost.

Yet these ten years have clearly brought a succession of failures even in their own terms:

1981: After ten people died, the hunger strike was called off. The government though, quietly conceded to the hunger strikers' main demands. Their policy of criminalisation and normalisation, inherited from the Labour Government, was in tatters.

1982/3: Jim Prior's 'Assembly' structure is presented as the beginning of 'rolling devolution' for the North. It collapses as an expensive waste of time.

1986: The Supergrass system collapsed in a farce as case after case was thrown out of court in a series of show trials.

1988: Their shoot to kill policy (although vehemently denied) has been exposed by the controversy surrounding the Stalker affair and the Gibraltar killings. Amnesty International and NCCL have called for judicial inquiries.

1989: The European courts have ruled against the PTA's seven day detention but the British Government still made the act permanent. Legal harmonisation in Europe is questioned by Thatcher.

Thatcher's attempts to eliminate the Republican movement by breaking people's support and isolating Sinn Fein has not worked. She promised to alleviate poverty yet recent unemployment figures for Catholics are worse than ever, and West Belfast still has the highest infant mortality rate in Europe. Her problem of how to maintain Britain's presence in the North of Ireland and have a peaceful solution is an unmanageable feat. Only British withdrawal from Ireland and self determination for the Irish people can offer any hope for the future.

Communist comment

The West Belfast branch of the Communist party has blasted the saturation of areas of West Belfast with members of the British army.

Local Party Secretary, Kevin O'Donnell said the posting of a large number of Paras and Marines to West Belfast is "designed to quiet the 'law and order' screams of Ian Paisley and Co. Yet the British government has learnt little from the experience of having troops on the streets here for twenty years if they believe more troops and more repression are part of a solution to the so-called 'troubles' here."

Mr O'Donnell added "Memories of previous encounters of people here with these 'crack' regiments, the increase in petty abuse and not so petty assaults on local people that inevitably accompany their presence, can only increase the tension and violence. I would reiterate the Communist Party's view that there can be no military solution to the violence in Ireland."

Gaelic Capital

Cardinal O Fiaich, who spoke in Irish at the recent Eigse Ourghialla festival, said Belfast had become the gaelic speaking capital of Ireland. He commented that this was not the first time Belfast had taken on this role. It had done so previously during the 18th century when northern protestants had pioneered the Irish language revival.

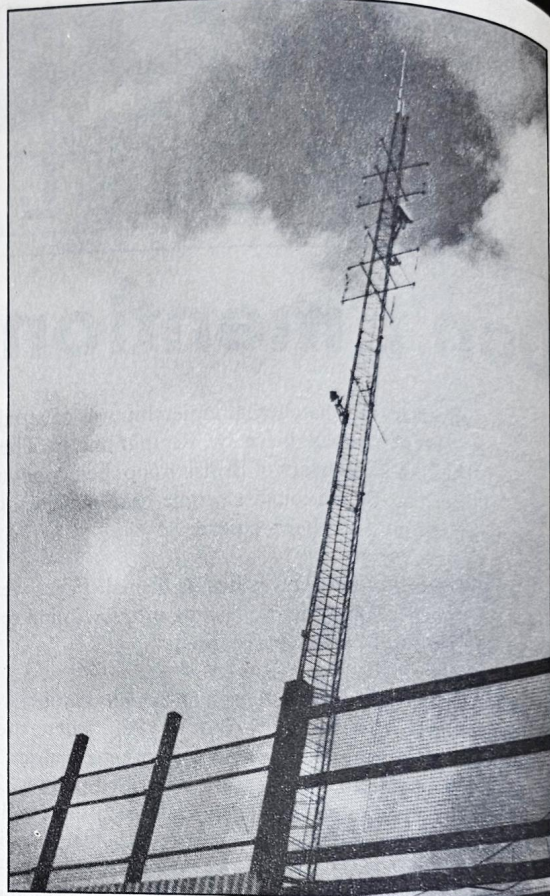
Cardinal O Fiaich added "it should be a matter of pride to us all that Belfast has again taken on this role. Today it has an estate of Irish speaking families on the Shaws Road, the only one in Ireland. There are two Bunscoil and nine nursery schools, more than 60 night classes, and the only Irish language daily newspaper, *La*. These are just some of the things which mark Belfast out today as the Capital City of gaelic Ireland."

Look out

Farmers in the Crossmaglen area of South Armagh are protesting about the latest phase of work on British army spy posts in their area.

The solidly nationalist South Armagh has been called "the most spied upon rural community anywhere in the world". The 20 high-tech spy posts are just part of the extraordinarily heavy army presence there, which also comprises several large army bases, including at Bessbrook the busiest heliport in Europe. Although the county has more greater scale than usual for local Republican cross-border operations, the only real target for the army to protect is itself. The main reason for the massive army presence seems to be that such a nationalist community is in itself a thorn in the British side, which cannot be seen to be some sort of British no-go area.

The present refurbishing work on three major spy posts has meant disruption on an even greater scale than usual for local people, with helicopters patrolling the sky all night as convoys of machinery are delivered, and roads swamped with troops. This continues a whole history of disruption, in which land has been seized and fences broken down. Cattle disease is therefore hard to control and Bovine TB is rampant. Cattle also suffer stress from low-flying helicopters.



Farmers living close to the spy posts, which are crammed with state-of-the-art surveillance technology, complain of dizziness and nausea, and animals suffer abnormally high rates of death and

deformity. Unsurprisingly, the British have denied that there are any health risks, but it seems unlikely that a device which can X-ray a car can be anything other than harmful.

Winchester three campaign launched

A new Irish-based campaign to overturn the convictions of the three young Irish people jailed for 25 years in a Winchester court last October has been launched by their families in Dublin.

The three, Martina Shanahan (23), Finbarr Cullen (27) and John McCann (25) were arrested, two near Tom King's house and John 40 miles away, "because they had Irish accents". Their trial and astonishingly vicious 25-year sentences both confirmed and surpassed any knowledge that Irish people can get no justice in British courts, and certainly influenced the Dublin government's refusal to extradite Fr Ryan.

The Winchester Three Support Group aims to put

pressure on Dublin to back the appeal now being presented to the British Court of Appeal. The appeal is based on five main points:

1. The allegations made in the British media about the three before and during the trial.
2. The venue of the trial, Winchester, a garrison town and base for many young soldiers killed in the North.
3. The timing of the trial, October '88, which coincided with the Tories' return to Brighton for their annual conference.
4. Tom King's outrageous intervention in changing the right to silence law during the trial.
5. The use of conspiracy charges, putting the onus of proof onto the defence, and making the appalling

25-year sentences possible.

The Three are now enduring the inhuman conditions expected of British jails, especially for Irish prisoners. Conditions for Martina in Durham 'H' Wing are particularly horrific.

Campaigns already exist in Britain and the US. The Winchester Three Campaign here has recently issued two petitions: one to be sent to the Dail (Irish parliament), whose backing could be very important, the other to send in support to the prisoners here. Maximum support is needed now in the run-up to the appeal. Also available soon is a leaflet on the Three, 'Trial by Media', 25p, bulk orders welcome; send a 19p stamp with single orders.

Contact: Winchester Three Campaign, c/o Grass Roots, 1 Newton St., Manchester 1.

Local council elections

The Local Council election results in the north of Ireland failed to signal any major shift in support away from Sinn Fein.

The poll was widely predicted to be a major trial for the Sinn Fein electoral policy. Recent Ard Feis (Annual Conference) decisions, such as the taking of seats in the Dail (Irish Parliament), the formation of a breakaway Republican Sinn Fein and the civilian casualty rate of the IRA were all seen as factors that would deter support. A propaganda offensive from the British state included the imposition of an 'anti-violence' oath on all successful candidates and the media banning order on Sinn Fein representatives and their supporters. As ever this was accompanied by the usual escalation of harassment by 'security' forces of Sinn Fein election workers. The election campaign was also conducted in the shadow of an increase in loyalist paramilitary violence that included a wave of random sectarian attack, the murder of a catholic workman, and a rocket and machine gun attack on a Sinn Fein Advice Centre.

Overcoming these considerable obstacles, the Sinn Fein vote dropped by an insignificant 0.6%. In 1985, 59 Sinn Fein councillors were elected in a resounding endorsement of the newly established electoral strategy. They then had 11.8% of the vote. Four years on with 11.3% of the vote they still have 44 councillors - a substantial voice

in local government, and a major obstacle to British plans for devolved government.

Of the other nationalist parties, the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) fared the best, seeing its share of the vote rise from 17.8% to 21.2%. This was reflected, due to the working of the single transferable vote system, in an increase in seats



from 101 in 1985 to 121 at present.

The main loser in the election was Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party (UDP) which saw its share of the vote slump by 25% and 28 seats. A result like this for Sinn Fein would have been headline news in the British press but passed virtually without comment. The result reflects the disarray of hardline Unionism, and is being seen as a personal snub to Paisley after his attempts to distance himself from Ulster Resistance following the S. African arms bust.

British strategy in Ireland, through the workings of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, is dependent for its success on the marginalisation of anti-imperialist republicanism. While Sinn Fein can win votes at their present level, British policy will continue to be frustrated and Republicans can accurately claim to have a veto on British solutions. The task remains for anti-imperialists in England, Scotland and Wales to force a change in British strategy that recognises the right of the Irish people to self-determination - the logical extension of which is British withdrawal.

Rod Earle

European Elections

The Irish people together with the peoples of each of the member states of the European Community will go to the poll on the 15th of June to elect their respective representatives to the virtually powerless European Parliament; The European Commission, an entirely unelected body together with the Council of Ministers are the supreme policy making bodies of the EEC.

To compound this sham of democracy for the Irish people, Ireland has been allocated 18 seats (15 + 3 in the 6 Counties) out of the total of 518 with which to represent the Country in this Parliament. While Sinn Fein is the only Irish political party which has little faith in what amounts to a 'talking-shop' and in fact campaigns for full Irish withdrawal from the EEC, it intends to fight the elections in order to highlight the unequal and exploited position which is Ireland's for as long as she remains within the 'Community'.

Sinn Fein is putting forward eight nominations out of the total of 63 nominations for the election. Anne Speed, who is a full time organizer for the Irish Transport And General Workers Union, is to

represent the Party in the Dublin Area. Terry Moore, a social

worker, Kevin Dumphy a lorry driver and Pearce McGeough a book-keeper, are to contest the election in Leinster. In Connacht-Ulster, Dermot Coy who is unemployed, Patrick Doherty a site engineer and Caoimhin O Caolain are the Sinn Fein nominees while Danny Morrison is to contest the election in Ulster.



In Munster Sinn Fein has withdrawn in order to support Fr Patrick Ryan who is to contest the election as an anti-extradition candidate. Fr Ryan, who is a member of the Pallottine Fathers has been threatened with dismissal from the order if he continues to contest the election. In publically disapproving his candidacy, the Pallottine Fathers cite the views of Pope John Paul in Mexico in 1979 when he said that priest and members of religious orders are not 'social directors, political leaders or functionaries of temporal powers'. Father Ryan has 30 days to respond before he faces possible dismissal proceedings. Raymond Crotty, University lecturer, economist and anti Single European Act activist is to contest the election as an Independent in the Dublin area in order to resist any moves for further Irish integration into the EEC 'I seek to represent the 35% in Dublin who voted no to the Single European Act' he said.

Gibraltar

As more details slowly emerge of the Gibraltar cover up it becomes more obvious that the only hope, not even of justice but only of recognition of the crime lies in some international forum.

On the 23rd of May "The Independent" published new details of the Spanish surveillance and the information passed to British intelligence.

It seems that at least five suspects were under very close observation in Spain and the so called blocking car was parked in Gibraltar on Saturday, the day before the murders. The Spanish also told the British they were sure the car contained no bomb.

This exposes the elaborate set of lies the security services told at the inquest as a complete fabrication. They simply ambushed the three and murdered them in cold blood. And the reaction of Thatchers loyal opposition to this murder?... "The Spanish police have been very badly treated." Mo Mowlam. "The controversy is straining relations with an otherwise friendly government" Kevin MacNamara (talking about Spain not Ireland.)

There ought to be a full judicial public inquiry in Britain but in the absence of widespread outrage here the families of the three are obviously right to pursue the case to the European Court of Human Rights.

The making of an English Soldier-Poet

On March 8, this year, two English soldiers were killed in Derry. They were Lance-bombardier Stephen Cummins and Gunner Miles Amos of the 32nd Heavy Regiment, Royal Artillery. Within two days, the tabloid press in London was building Stephen Cummins up as a "second Rupert Brooke". They were carrying front-page stories with such headlines as: 'Soldier's Last Poem', 'Soldier-poet Stephen' and 'Help our boys in memory of soldier poet'.

According to *The Sun* (March 10): "Tragic Stephen Cummins, 24, a kind-hearted romantic who wrote verse every day, had a strange premonition of his death". The "sensitive soldier-poet" is said to have penned some lines to his parents forecasting his death. The poem begins: "Do not stand at my grave and weep/I am not there. I do not sleep..."

As well as *The Sun*, the *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail*, *Today* and *People* joined in the image-making exercise. Even Lt. General Sir John Waters, General Officer Commanding Northern Ireland, was quoted in fulsome praise of the soldier-poet. A predictable emotionalism was stirred up and on March 11, *The Sun* was able to launch a fund (*The Sun Stephen Cummins Fund*) to raise cash "to help our boys in Northern Ireland".

Yet this poem, and other poems attributed to Stephen Cummins by the tabloids, was not written by him. They are blatantly the work of other, and famous, poets.

The long campaign of

propaganda, of disinformation, distortion and downright lies concerning the continuing war in Ireland has surely plummeted to new depths. I feel a sense of outrage at the attempt to stir up negative emotionalism against the Irish people by this method-media-hype which seems to have emanated from the British Army press office. The worst insult to ones intelligence is that one of the poems was, in reality, written by the Irish poet and playwright Padraic Colum (1881-1972).

According to *The Sun* (March 11) Stephen also wrote a touching poem to his girl-friend. This turns out to be almost a direct transcript of Padraic Colum's world famous poem 'She Moved through the Fair', which has been set to music and recorded by many well-known operatic tenors

As for 'Do not stand at my grave and weep', it has, ironically, been used in the columns of *An Phoblacht* in the memorial notices of IRA volunteers killed in the conflict. This seems the most likely source from where Stephen copied it. The last line in this

version usually reads: "While Ireland lives, I will not die". Its origin is a traditional prayer of the North American Indian nation, the Makahds.

The media-hype is an insult to the memory of the dead soldier himself. The manipulation of his personal papers, in which the soldier had apparently copied down verses from poems, with which he must have felt some empathy, is an appalling piece of cynicism.

Stephen Cummins died a victim. He died in a country about which he probably knew little, apart from the misinformation indoctrinated into him by his superiors. The war in which he was fighting was not of his making. He was only four years old when the current phase of the struggle for Irish independence started. His death, like the deaths of everyone who have given their lives in this immoral war, on both sides, is a sad, regrettable event. He died a victim of his Government's 'slug it out' policy; its 'acceptable levels of violence' strategy, which is substituted for any real attempt at an end to the conflict.

This is a shortened version of an article by Peter Berresford Ellis, which appeared in *Irish Democrat*, May '89.



Prisoners birthdays

Please remember to send birthday greetings to Irish prisoners in English jails. Let them know they are not forgotten and make sure you use the number.

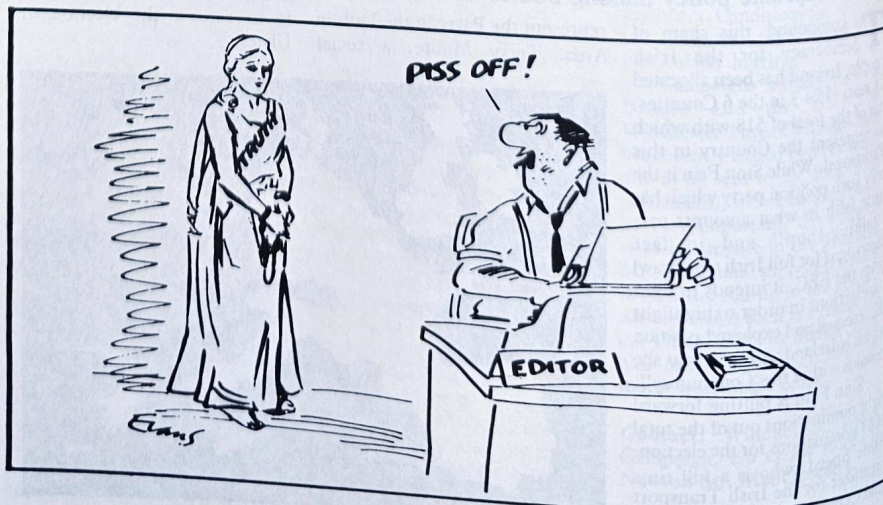
22th June

PAUL HOLMES 119034
HM Prison Frankland, Finchdale
Av., Brasside, Durham, DH1
5YD

30th June

PETER SHERRY B75880
HM Prison Parkhurst, Newport,
Isle of Wight PO30 5NX

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Time to Go Show

Time to Go launches its second major initiative on 17-18th June. It takes the form of a weekend of workshops, discussions and talks examining different aspects of the question "How can British withdrawal be accomplished?". A host of 'name' speakers have been invited, ranging from MPs Diane Abbot and Gerry Adams, to journalists Eammon McCann and Nell McCafferty. Time to Go advertise over "seventy sessions from all points on the political spectrum" and the weekend promises to be a lively and stimulating event.

The venue is the City University, Northampton Sq., London EC1. Registration costs £15 (12.50 concessions) from Clare Short MP (Time to Go Show), House of Commons, Westminster, London SW1A 0AA.



DELEGATION— MESSAGES OF SOLIDARITY

The Troops Out delegation this August will take place from August 11th to August 14th.

This August will be the 20th anniversary of troops being sent into the North of Ireland in August 1969.

The delegation will take messages of support and solidarity to the Nationalist people. Ask your trade union, community organisation or political group to send a message of solidarity—these can be passed on to Delegation Organising Committee, P.O. Box 104, Sheffield 1.

For further information please contact 01-609 1743

Billy Bragg pops the question

Billy Bragg has carried all before him as Britain's No.1 pop politician. He has aligned himself with a variety of causes from Red to Green, but until recently the subject of Britain's occupation of Ireland had yet to appear in his Top Ten list of issues.

He has now signed the Time to Go Charter and declared that "I think the situation in Ireland is an important, if not the most important issue, that confronts the British and Irish people."

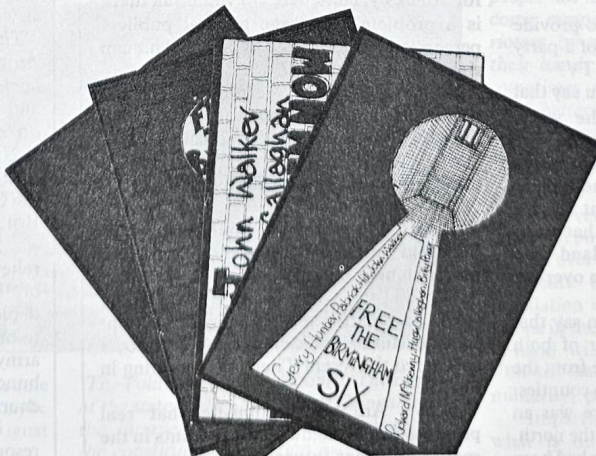
So what got him thinking about 'England's backyard'? "What sparked it off was not knowing enough about the situation there to be able to hold a conversation about it with people abroad who'd come up to you after you'd been giving them stick about what their government was doing in other places" he explains. "The obvious example is the Americans! I give them a lot of stick over their administrations policies in Nicaragua, but you can't do that without them coming back and saying 'what about Northern Ireland?', which makes you think 'why is it such a black and white issue to them, when to me, a British person, it's really confusing? Why am I so confused about it? Why have I been watching telly for the past 20 years and still not understood anything about it?'"

Disillusioned with the

services of the media, Bragg sought out the Labour Party's policy on the North, which he found equally enlightening; "No-one seemed to have a clear idea. At the last General Election it was 'no change', that was the one thing all Parties agreed on and I don't think that's acceptable after 20 years."

Bragg endorses the Time to Go Charter "because it articulates my gut feeling" but apparently does not support a 'Troops Out' position. His main aim is to get Northern Ireland on the political agenda, to get people talking about it; "I want to get to the point where more people realise that it really is unacceptable to have strong feelings about Nelson Mandela without having strong feelings about what's going on in Northern Ireland. It's ridiculous this deafening silence about Northern Ireland when Pop music runs around getting involved elsewhere around the world."

From an interview in *The Irish News* 3.4.89



Four postcards produced by Sheffield Campaign for Birmingham 6
Available for £1.20 (including postage)
From: Troops Out Movement
PO Box 353
London, NW5 4NH

Broadcast ban challenged

A judicial review of Douglas Hurd's broadcasting ban has been brought by broadcasters and members of the public, backed by the NUJ. The ban covers direct statements by representatives of three legal political organisations, Sinn Féin, Republican Sinn Féin and the UDA, as well as eight proscribed organisations, including the IRA, INLA and UVF. It also bans words which support or invite support for these organisations.

The challenge, brought in the High Court, asserts that Hurd acted unlawfully in using the 1981 Broadcasting Act to breach Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which guarantees freedom of expression. Journalists contend that there is no pressing social need to "justify an interference with freedom of speech". The ban is also said to conflict with the IBA and BBC's duty to "preserve due impartiality in relation to news and current affairs".



Irish prisoners repatriated

After 17 years of exile, Martin Brady, one of the longest serving republican prisoners in an English jail, has finally been repatriated to the Six Counties.

Brady was sentenced to life for 'conspiracy' in London in 1973. He applied immediately to be repatriated, and it seems to be the long-standing nature of his request which has finally caused it to be granted.

A further 33 prisoners, mostly republicans, are continuing to request repatriation. Despite the fact that many meet the criteria outlined by Douglas Hogg and the Home Office, their applications have constantly been rejected. The strain this imposes on prisoners and their families is just one facet of the cruelty meted out by the British to all Irish republican prisoners.

This contrasts bitterly with the treatment of British soldiers sentenced in the six Counties, who are transferred immediately to English prisons, or the case of Private Ian Thain, who was released after serving only 26 months of a life sentence.

Info: AP/RN

Labour councils and Sinn Fein

Last month Troops Out reported on how the decision of Sheffield City Council to invite Gerry Adams to deliver the annual Marx Memorial Lecture was sabotaged by the local media. Troops Out interviewed Sheffield councillor and Labour Group whip, Alan Wigfield, to find out what lay behind the original decision to invite Gerry Adams to Sheffield.

T.O.M.: Cllr. Wigfield, what initiated the Labour Group decision to extend an invitation to Gerry Adams to give the Marx Memorial Lecture in Sheffield later this year?

A.W.: This is the 20th year since a Labour government sent troops into Ireland, and it is important that the future of Ireland should be discussed. There are several points here. For example there has to be a political solution to the problems, there is no possible military solution.

There is also the question of the banning order on Sinn Fein; we wanted to provide an opportunity for an elected member of a party which has no platform in this country. This is very important - we are not just talking about the last 20 years.

On top of that, any political solution must include Sinn Fein; it would be naive and misguided to believe that Sinn Fein can be left out of a political solution - and this is not a paternalistic or imperialistic stance that 'we know best'.

T.O.M.: Presumably there was a good deal of discussion within the Labour Group about the proposal?

A.W.: Yes. Debate took place within the group, with a substantial majority in favor.

T.O.M.: Was the Labour Group influenced in its attitude by the recent government banning order against Sinn Fein appearing on radio or TV?

A.W.: Yes, as I said, we wanted to provide a platform for an elected member of a party which is banned from Radio and TV?

T.O.M.: To what extent would you say that Labour Party members, and the wider labour movement, has understood the implications of the recent repressive measures, such as the ban and the attacks on the right to remain silent under questioning, bearing in mind too that many films and programmes on Ireland had already been banned or withdrawn over the years?

A.W.: Speaking of Sheffield, I can say that over the years a growing number of both Labour Party members and people from the labour movement have visited the 6 counties. Last year for the first time, there was an official Labour Group delegation to the north. Seven members went none of whom had been before. So there is a growing awareness of the situation in the 6 counties. We have also had the opportunity over the years to meet Sinn Fein councillors and other Republican activists.

"We are now living in a state which resembles a dictatorship"

T.O.M.: There is a saying, - "A nation that enslaves another can never itself be free." Presumably many in the Labour Party would agree but how many of those would apply it to England's relationship with Ireland?

A.W.: Many people on this side of the Irish Sea are rightly critical of imperialism and colonisation in other parts of the world, for example in S. Africa, Central America, the Middle East Afghanistan, and we are individually and collectively, rightly angry, and campaign and speak out in support of oppressed minorities throughout the world. But when faced with the prospect of criticising British troops, who are without question an army of occupation in the 6 counties, then many of us, irrespective of political affiliation, find it difficult to come to terms with British imperialism so near to home. To borrow Christy Moore's words, "when trouble gets too close to home, anger turns to fear".

T.O.M.: Trade Unions in particular and 'Socialism' in general have been targeted for attack by Thatcher. Do you think there is a problem about the general public's perception of the erosion of civil and human rights in this country?

A.W.: Yes, but after ten years of Thatcherism we can all appreciate how all of our civil liberties have been eroded gradually, and we are now living in a State which resembles a dictatorship. Effectively, one has to acquiesce or be silenced.

T.O.M.: Does the Labour Group in Sheffield have any firm plans to open up public debate on Ireland?

A.W.: Whilst we don't have any firm plans, we are committed to that course of action. Indeed a number of Labour Group members sponsored the recent Time to Go meeting in Sheffield.

T.O.M.: Are you optimistic that real progress can be made on these fronts in the reasonably near future?

A.W.: I'm convinced that the more people visit the north to see what has happened in the past, and what is happening now, the more people will realise that the British have no right to stay in the 6 counties.

British troops appeared on the streets after a week long battle between the inhabitants of the Bogside and the R.U.C. and B-Specials. The Troops were seen to be an impartial force and the Home Office in its official statement said "The government of Northern Ireland has informed the United Kingdom government that as a result of severe and prolonged rioting in Londonderry it had no alternative but to ask for the assistance of troops at present stationed in Northern Ireland to prevent a breakdown of law and order". On the role of the Troops the statement said that they would act "impartially between citizen and citizen to restore law and order". As to how long the situation would last it said "this is a limited operation" and that "Troops would be withdrawn as soon as law and order was restored".

In The Times editorial of August 15th under the heading of "What the Troops mean" it reiterated the official view, talking of "mob rule", with the army acting in the role of "pacification", having a "calming and steadying effect" and that they could be off the streets "within a few days". It went on to report that the Troops were "instructed to be strictly impartial".

The effect of the appearance of the British army on its first day of operation, was to lower tension as the Catholic population of the Bogside didn't know how to react. As Eamonn McCann, in 'War and an Irish Town' wrote "there was confusion as to what the proper attitude to the soldiers might be".

'The Times' in its editorial of August 16th was even looking to the future under the heading "Next steps in Ulster". It said the reason for the apparent calm was not the actual presence but "because Troops are acceptable to both communities as disciplined and impartial instruments of order". Its forward thinking was to keep the Troops as being seen as impartial, whether they were or not seemed irrelevant just as long as they were seen to be.

As we know the British State and its newspaper would say this, but they found an unlikely ally in the 'Socialist Worker' newspaper of the 21st August 1969 which said "The deployment of British Troops in Ulster provides some sort of security against the lawlessness of the R.U.C. and B-Specials" and went on to say that "because the Troops do not have the ingrained hatred of the R.U.C. and Specials, they will not behave with the same viciousness". Unfortunately for the Catholic population in the 6 counties, the British army learnt very quickly.

So although the Troops were sent in to relieve the R.U.C. and prevent a breakdown of 'law and order', the purpose of their deployment as told to the British people was to bring peace to the warring Irish, with the army in Northern Ireland seen as a gallant bunch of heroes preserving the peace at enormous danger to themselves.

But was this the first time that Britain had resorted to the use of Troops in an attempt to quell the discontent against British rule in Ireland? The British army has been used numerous times in the last 300 years in such a role in Ireland, and from this, do we gather that they were acting as peace-keepers or upholding the rule of the British State over

British troops, keeping the peace or taking it?

When the British army was deployed on the streets of Derry on the evening of the 14th August 1969 under orders from the then Home Secretary James Callaghan, the reason given for this was for them to act as some kind of impartial policing force that would somehow be different to the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the B-Specials in their attitude towards the Catholic minority. They were seen as being a peace keeping force, a way of keeping the warring religious factions apart. This was the view of a vast majority of people both here and in the 6 counties and enforced by the media, but this quaint and ill-informed view was soon to be shattered.

(Below) Paratroopers attacking civilians during anti-internment march at Magilligan Strand on 22 January 1972.



the inhabitants of Ireland? Thus another role for the Troops becomes apparent and maybe they were acting in this capacity in August 1969.

The rise of the Civil Rights Movement and its attempts to end sectarianism and discrimination had created a challenge to the Unionist government and its blatant repression of them had led to the riots in Derry. As Gerry Adams put it in his book

'The Politics of Irish Freedom' "The reaction of the state to the Civil Rights Campaign and the intervention of the British army, the constitutional question had come to the fore and the whole existence of the 6 county state stood in question." The campaign had gone too far and was challenging the Northern Ireland state. The British government could not allow this.

So now ask a resident of the Catholic

areas of Belfast, Derry and the rest of the 6 counties what the role of the Troops is? The continual daily harassment, being stopped and questioned, their use of house searches, all designed to wear down the resistance of the Nationalist community. Do the Unionist areas receive the same impartial treatment?

The Troops involvement in all major events since 1969 such as Bloody Sunday, Internment, detention without trial, the Prevention of Terrorism Act etc, and their role in the British attempts at 'Ulsterisation', 'Criminalisation' and 'Normalisation' and taking an active part in interrogation and strip searching is obviously not one of a peace-keeping force. It is the role of an army of occupation in one of Britain's oldest, and one of its last, colonies where for 800 years Britain has defended its interests regardless of the wishes of the majority of the Irish people. It takes its orders from the British state. Successive governments since 1969, both Labour and Conservative, have used the Troops in order to uphold their economic, political and military interests in the 6 counties and in propping up the Unionist state for this end.

The position of the British State was recently put into perspective by Tom King, the Northern Ireland Secretary, who on the 16th October 1988 said it would be "quite wrong to say that the British government was neutral on the future of Northern Ireland... I support the Union strongly, I do not think that this situation will change".

The mood of August 1969, one of possible acceptance of the Troops soon changed. Eamonn McCann put it succinctly, that by 1971 (if not before) the "Bogside people saw the soldiers during and after a riot, come rampaging into the area beating up rioters, by-standers or anyone they could lay their hands on, firing rubber bullets, now sometimes stiffened with the insertion of torch batteries, at point blank range, making random arrests and perjuring victims to jail".

So the Troops have remained for 20 years, a very "limited operation"! Their peace keeping lasted as long as it took them to take over the role of the R.U.C. The last 20 years have shown the Nationalist population exactly what the role of British troops in the 6 counties is, it is to work hand-in-hand with the R.U.C., to uphold the Unionist state and protect Britain's interest militarily, politically and economically.

Impartiality means being unbiased so what is unbiased about their oppression towards the Nationalist minority in the 6 counties?

Colin O'Brien

The Irish labour movement

A legacy of racism and chauvinism in Britain has produced a distorted and incomplete view of Ireland's relationship to this island. The current war in the north of Ireland is an extension of a struggle against British interference that has been continuous for over 800 years.

In this issue we examine the development of the labour movement in Ireland at the turn of the century. In particular, the events that led to "one of the greatest struggles in the history of the working class movement", the Dublin Lock-out of 1913.

In late May 1986 eight men met in a Dublin pub, five drinking lemonade. At that meeting they formed the Irish Socialist Republican Party. The foremost amongst them, James Connolly had come to Dublin a year earlier, invited by local socialists to work as a paid agitator for a pound a week. The wages were not always paid on time or paid at all.

Dublin and Ireland hardly seemed a fruitful ground for socialist advance. Ireland's colonial situation meant that industry was little developed outside the north east. At its first meeting the Irish TUC could only claim 17,467 members. Many belonged to unions whose headquarters were in England and unskilled workers were barely organised. The battle for independent trade unions and socialist politics faced the hostility of the clergy. In the nadir of home rule politics after the fall of Parnell the leaders of Irish nationalism attacked socialism as a 'foreign' import. It was a challenge that Connolly met head on. In the pages of the 'Workers Republic' he argued not only for Irish unity and identity but for the socialist politics that could make sense of it. "We are republicans because we would have the Irish people complete masters of their own destinies,

"The cause of labour is the cause of Ireland, the cause of Ireland is the cause of labour. They cannot be severed."

James Connolly (1868-1916)



nationally and internationally..." "Ireland without her people" he wrote "means nothing to me." Ireland would be free only when the working people of Ireland controlled their own destinies. It was thus that Connolly wedded his Irish republicanism to an international socialism. The logic then and after was too clear for many British socialists to understand.

But Connolly's party recruited few members. Although they co operated with republicans in disrupting Queen Victoria's jubilee celebrations in 1897 - a Procession featuring a black clad coffin inscribed 'British Empire' was baton charged at O'Connell bridge and Connolly jailed. But the party's attempts to win municipal seats were frustrated- and candidates pilloried as anti Catholic.

In 1903 Connolly emigrated to the USA. But the following decade was to see the labour movement grow in strength. In all urban centres trade union membership increased throughout the 1900s. Trades unionists were elected onto Belfast and Dublin corporations, taking up demands on the right to organise, and on the daily conditions of working class life.

Politics

But a labour movement in Ireland could not avoid political issues. It had to face the issue of how to organise as an Irish body rather than a junior partner of British one. The problem surfaced in 1905 when William Walker, editor of the 'Labour Chronicle' and a Belfast labour councillor, stood for the North Belfast seat in a by-election. Although standing with the support of the British Labour Party which had a home rule policy Walker, in response to a question from the Belfast Protestant Association, expressed open support for sectarianism and continued to oppose Home Rule. Within the Irish TUC he opposed forming a Labour party for Ireland.

But it was possible to unite working class people in the north. On May 6 1907 dockers at the York Dock of the Belfast Steamship company walked out objecting to working with non union members. The employers, seeing an opportunity to weaken the union, brought in strikebreakers from England. The National Dock Labourers Union's organiser was the thirty one year old Jim Larkin, born



James Larkin (1876-1947)

in Liverpool of Irish descent and a committed socialist. Larkin was arrested in the third week of the lock out for assaulting a scab. By now others were taking sympathy action. Attempts to play the Orange card by attacking Larkin as Catholic failed, and members of the recently formed Independent Orange Order spoke on strike platforms.

In July even the Royal Irish Constabulary struck and troops were called to suppress the mutiny. It was then that they fired on a crowd in the Falls Road, killing two and wounding several others. But throughout the strike, which ended in a compromise favourable to the workers, attempts to divide along sectarian lines failed. They stood, said Larkin: "Not as Catholics or Protestants...but as Belfast men and workers, and don't be misled by the employers game of dividing Catholic and Protestant".

It was a brief and fragile unity. In five years time the Orange card would again be played and its appeal was to weaken the labour movement in the north.

Larkin had by now turned his attention to the south, and there followed recruitment and agitation that culminated in one of the greatest struggles in the history of any working class movement.

Larkin's activities - and a series of costly strikes led to a break with the NUDL. Indirectly it led to the formation of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union. That union's success was made possible by its readiness to recruit unskilled workers and defend their interests. The ITGWU managed to win members where the British led unions failed. Within the Irish TUC it led the demands for an independent Irish Labour Party to be founded, a demand won by 1912. Irish labour was preparing itself for the class struggle that would ensue after Home Rule. Home rule would not be cheap rule for the bosses.

In 1911 alone, the union had trebled its membership and by 1913 claimed 30,000 members. Delia Larkin helped establish the Irish Women Workers Union in 1911, the same year that saw the establishment of 'The Irish Worker' newspaper. It was labelled a 'libel a line' paper-possibly an

- Dublin 1913



Members of the Irish Women Workers' Union outside Liberty Hall, Dublin in 1913

understatement. Week after week Irish employers were exposed for their exploitation of fellow Irish people in graphic, sometimes lurid language.

Dublin

Dublin was the heartland. The garrison town that was the favourite watering hole of the Irish ascendancy had the worst housing of any city in Western Europe and cholera rates higher than Calcutta. In 1911-13 it had seen a major and successful recruiting campaign by the ITGWU. Aggressive campaigning and the use of sympathy action meant that by 1913 only two major employers were not unionised - Guinness Brewery and the Dublin Tramway company, owned by William Martin Murphy, the 'tramway tyrant'.

Murphy and other Dublin employers were already organising to smash the ITGWU. In August 1913 they warned staff that all union members would be paid off. In the middle of Horse Show week in late August, the ITGWU called out the tramway workers. The authorities responded by arresting Larkin and three others on a charge of conspiracy "for the criminal purposes of disturbing the public peace and raising discontent amongst His Majesty's subjects, to wit the working classes of Dublin".

A meeting on Sunday 3rd September was proscribed, but carried on anyway. Larkin burnt the banning order and a rally and meeting were held that afternoon. The police baton charged the crowd after Larkin had appeared at the French windows of O'Donnelly's hotel. Two Dublin workers were killed and two hundred injured.

As civil war broke out between the police and working class communities Larkin called out all ITGWU members. The strike entered an attritional phase. Employers demanded that workers sign a document agreeing not to join the union. As in the struggle of the mining communities in 1984-5, the strike divided a whole society and demanded a response from other unions. Under attack by the state and well organised employers, the Dublin strikers needed help from other sections of Irish society and from workers in Britain.

Sympathy and sabotage

Within Ireland, the bulk of the Unionist and Nationalist press supported Murphy. Although numerous individual priests were supportive, the Catholic hierarchy opposed the struggle of their own people. For example, in October when the ITGWU organised for the children of the now starving families to be sent to England to stay with sympathetic trades union families, church organised mob swamped the landing stage to prevent the children from alleged 'foreign' corruption. The same police who would daily baton strikers and their families did little to intervene. Yet while some middle class nationalists avoided involvement, others chose to take a stand. Patrick Pearse - whose school at St Enda's was attended by Larkin's son - supported the struggle, as did many other republicans who had hitherto not been involved in the day to day struggles of Irish people. Most significantly of all the strike saw the formation of the Irish Citizen Army. Initiated by an ex British Army officer, Jack

White, it sought to organise Dublin workers to fight back against the violence of the state. It actually had little effect on the strike itself but would have much more so after.

In Ireland and Britain working people raised money to sustain Dublin in its fight. Trades unionists helped load a ship full of food to help the families. But what the Dublin strike required was sympathy action, which British trade union leaders and Labour Party leaders were far less ready to deliver.

Larkin, who had been jailed after 'Bloody Sunday' commenced on his release, a 'Fiery Cross' tour of Britain to raise support, and drew enormous crowds. But at leadership level the response was less forthcoming. In December 1913 a specially convened TUC conference rejected sympathy action - partly alienated by Larkin's 'hostile' style.

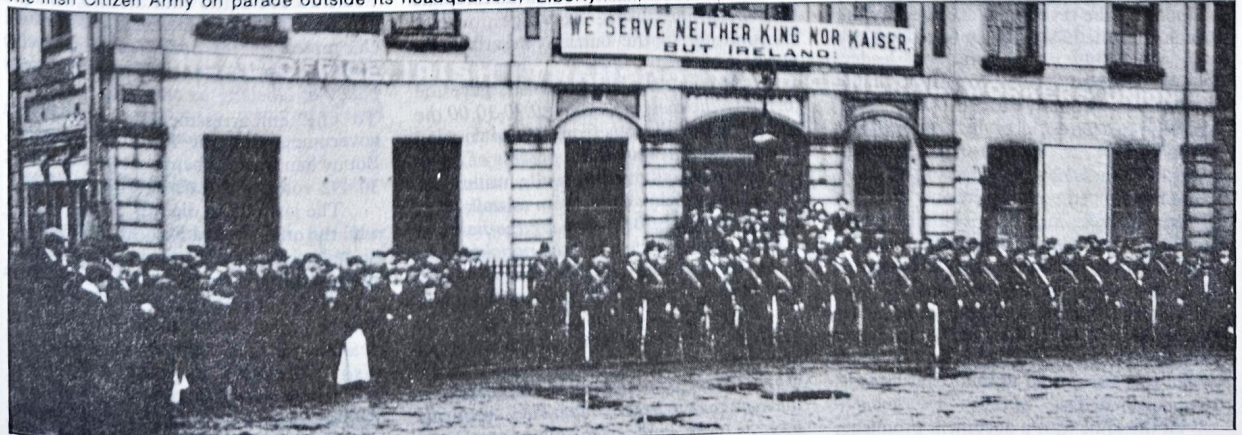
By early 1914 the workers were being gradually starved back to work. In February Connolly wrote "And so we Irish workers must go down to Hell, bow our backs to the lash of the slave driver and eat the dust of defeat and betrayal".

In Ireland and in Britain it was a major blow to working class organisation. But all had not been lost. Working people in Dublin, despite the defeat inflicted upon them, did continue to fight on tenaciously. For all who fought there was a lesson to be understood that national liberation was meaningless unless all within that nation were liberated. Important links had been made between socialists and some advanced nationalists, links which Connolly and the Irish Citizen Army would try and realise further in 1916. They were links to a nationalism very different from that of Murphy's.

In Easter 1916 it is said that Connolly ordered a member of the Citizen Army to hoist up the Starry Plough above an O'Connell Street hotel owned by Murphy. "In 1913" he said "Murphy and his class ruled over us. Now we will rule over him."

Dylan Evans

The Irish Citizen Army on parade outside its headquarters, Liberty Hall, Dublin. (National Library of Ireland)



The 1980/81 Hunger Strikes

- a pyrrhic victory for Thatcher

Last month we described the prisoners campaign to defend their position as political prisoners. The blanket and no wash protests culminated in the hunger strikes of 1980 and 81. The hunger strikes were a watershed in political development of the republican movement over the last twenty years.

In this issue we describe the personal struggle of the hunger strikers and the terrible human cost. Next month we will outline the developments in the campaign of mass support outside the prisons.

By 1980 a stalemate had been reached between the prisoners and their tormentors.

To break the stalemate it was decided to launch a hunger strike on 27 October 1980. This decision was taken by the prisoners themselves, not as British propaganda would have it, by "IRA godfathers" outside. Gerry Adams, then Vice President of Sinn Féin, wrote to Brendan Hughes, O/C of the prisoners, expressing concern that the proposed strike might be ineffective and lead to many deaths. His concern was rejected. Again Bobby Sands wrote to Adams: "I know that you are strategically opposed to a hunger strike, but you are not morally opposed to it." Gerry Adams replied: "Bobby, we are tactically, strategically, physically and morally opposed to a hunger strike." But he finally agreed after Hughes insisted they had a moral duty to do something about the horrendous conditions in the H blocks, if only for the sake of the new recruits.

First hunger strike

Seven men started the hunger strike of 1980, symbolising the seven men executed by the British after the Easter Rising of 1916. They were, inevitably as the prisoners' leader, Brendan Hughes, Sean McKenna, Raymond McCartney, Tommy McKearney, Tom McFeely, Leo Green, all of the IRA, and John Nixon of INLA. The hunger strike had a critical weakness however. Because all seven men started together they were only as strong as their weakest member. The weak link—physically, because of a terrible beating inflicted by the police during his interrogation at Bessbrook—was Sean McKenna, a 26 year old serving a twenty-five year sentence for attempted murder and membership of the IRA. On December 18 he became critically ill and was transferred to the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast "to die".

At the same time a document promising

concessions to the prisoners was on its way from London. Hughes was forced to take a decision without being able to consult Bobby Sands, who had become O/C in Hughes place so he could participate in the hunger strike. All the frantic efforts of Sands to contact the prisoners were suddenly blocked by the authorities and Hughes, cut off from the outside world and believing the British government were about to make major concessions, called off the strike. But the concessions were few, just as Sands had expected, and the prison authorities niggardly in their implementation. It is not for nothing that Albion has its reputation for perfidy.

Preparations began almost immediately for another hunger strike, with Bobby Sands, who angrily wanted to start his own immediate fast, being warned by the Army Council to "cool it". Nevertheless the prisoners were cooperating with the authorities in the hope of genuine concessions. The authorities stalled as usual. On 23 January they refused to issue the 96 prisoners then cooperating with their own clothes. Another broken promise. More mayhem as the prisoners proceeded to smash up their cells. A comm (one of the messages the prisoners were so ingenious at transmitting to the outside) describes the scene:

...At about 9 o'clock the lads gave the furniture the message. About 9.30-10.00 the screws moved the lads from their own wing into a wing that was in the process of being cleaned. Shite all over the walls, water over floors. They didn't allow them to walk over. Instead they grabbed them by the hair and ran them over, kicking and punching the whole time. Sean McPeake from Bellarchy has a wooden leg. They tried to make him run, dragging by the hair and hooting etc. So Sean sat down on the floor and refused to get up. They got around him and gave him a rough kicking. The PO (principal officer) was the main man in beating him. They eventually had to drag him over. Eamonn Digby

Andersontown was tripped while running. He saw a medic who told him he had a broken arm. Eddie Brophy took a heart attack and was given tablets. The lads were kept lying in a dirty, empty wing with no bedding or blankets. Just a skimpy towel round the waist until 11.30 this morning when the whole wing was moved to H6...

The combination of prison authority deceit and prison officer brutality made a second hunger strike inevitable, despite the Army Council's reluctance. A comm from the prisoners makes this plain on the 31 January, saying: "...we do not deny you or criticise your extreme cautiousness. But, however distressing it may be, we regret our decision to hunger strike remains the same and we reconfirm this decision now with the same vigour and determination." But before the strike had started Bernadette McAliskey became the sixth H-block activist to be shot in six months as the UDA tried to intimidate campaigners. This leading figure in the National H-Block/Armagh Committee had nine bullets pumped into her body as she tried to hide her 2-year-old son under the bed. Still conscious, she feigned death and deceived her would-be murderers.

So the hunger strike started without the prisoners' finest publicist. Ten men—Bobby Sands, Francis Hughes, Raymond McCreech, Patsy O'Hara, Joe McDonnell, Martin Hurson, Kevin Lynch, Keiron Doherty, Tom McElwee and Micky Devine—were to follow each other to death's door and beyond before the relatives of the surviving hunger strikers brought this heroic tragedy to an end.

Bobby Sands was the first to die, after 66 days, but not before defeating the veteran Unionist Harry West in a by-election for Fermanagh-South Tyrone. He stood as an anti-H-Block candidate and sent a simple message to the electorate:

There is but a single issue at stake, the right of human dignity for Irish men and women... Our protest and this hunger strike is to secure from the British government an end to its policy of labelling us criminals.

To the embarrassment of the British government and the horror of Loyalists, Bobby Sands won a heroic victory, obtaining 30,492 votes to West's 29,046.

The last one to die was Micky Devine, who the others called Red Micky because of his red hair and allegiance to the revolutionary socialist INLA. His sad end is described in "Ten Men Dead" thus: *The children said their farewell just before...the final vigil. It was a traumatic visit. Mickey's eyesight had almost completely gone. Margaret (his sister) lifted Louise, aged 5, on to the bed first. She was rigid with fear. Then it was 8-year-old*

Some 90,000 people marched in Bobby Sands' funeral procession, here seen enroute from Twinbrook estate in Belfast on 7 May, 1981.

Michael's turn. Tears coursed down his father's face as his hands fumbled over his son, feeling the shape of him.

Thatcher

In the face of such suffering, many times repeated during the course of the strike, the British ruling class remained unmoved. Margaret Thatcher was her usual obdurate self, dismissing three Euro MPs from the South seeking mercy on behalf of the strikers and their loved ones. With cold contempt she said: "It is not my habit or custom to meet MP's of a foreign country about a resident of the United Kingdom resident in the United Kingdom." The Irish government accepted this without a murmur, thereby proving it was Thatcher who called the tune and they who danced.

Charles Haughey at first refused to see the distraught relatives, on April 22, but changed his mind the next day, suggesting that they approach the European Human Rights Commission. Like Pontius Pilot he threatened to wash his hands of the affair if Marcella Sands, Bobby's sister didn't sign an application to the Court. She, desperate to save her brother's life, complied.

Her hopes were sadly dashed when three men from the Commission flew to London, spent ninety minutes with the British, then



flew to Belfast. Bobby Sands, by now weak and retching almost continuously, refused to meet them except in the company of O/C Brendan MacFarlane, Gerry Adams and Danny Morrison. The British and the Commissioners refused his request.

The Commission went ahead without Sands and came to the surprisingly illiberal decision that the strikers were guilty of "self-inflicted debasement and humiliation" and, ruling that the legal concept of freedom "does not concern the right of prisoners to enjoy the company of other prisoners", dismissed the prisoners five demands.

The five demands were:

- 1.No prison clothes.
- 2.No prison work.
- 3.Freedom of association.
- 4.The right to organise their own education and recreation, have one weekly visit, receive

and send out one weekly letter and receive one parcel.

5.Full remission.

The first four of these demands are common in Scandinavia and, after the strike was over, would be introduced by the British into Long Kesh.

Only history will give the final answer to what they achieved, or did not achieve. One day their deed may be seen as a watershed in Anglo-Irish politics. Certainly they pushed the Republican Movement into a more political stance, "the ballot box and the bomb" policy, they panicked the British into the largely ambiguous Anglo-Irish agreement. But, despite its ambiguities, the Agreement implicitly recognises the indivisibility of Ireland, hence Loyalist hostility towards it. And they helped to focus the searchlight of international publicity on British tyranny.

The hunger strike is an ancient weapon with roots in medieval Ireland where, as Cealachan (achieving justice by starvation), it had a place in the civil code. It is, of course, not confined to Ireland.

But none have used the hunger strike weapon more bravely or at such a cost as the Irish Republicans. The Anglo-Irish War of Independence produced a rash of hunger strikes, beginning in 1917 when prisoners at Dublin's Mountjoy prison refused to eat after being brutally beaten for refusing to wear prison clothes or do prison work. Their leader, 32 year old Thomas Ashe - former president of the Irish Republican Brotherhood - died as a result of forced feeding by his captors.

Terence MacSwiney

More memorable even than this, for Irish Republicans, was the death in 1920 of Terence MacSwiney, Lord Mayor of Cork and a commanding officer in the IRA.

He died in Brixton where he had been transferred from Ireland, after a hunger strike lasting 74 days.

The bitter civil war that followed the Anglo-Irish treaty of 1921 led to further sacrifice. In 1923 a massive hunger

strike was staged by anti-treaty prisoners for their release and against Partition. At its peak it involved 8,000 prisoners.

The anti-treaty forces eventually split and the majority, subverting their Republican ideal, entered Parliament as Fianna Fail. They came to power in 1932 and, as a feud developed, began executing and jailing their former comrades.

In 1946 Sean McCaughey, then IRA Chief of Staff, went on strike for political status. He was allowed to die after 22 days - hastening his own end by refusing water as well as food.

POW status

It was nearly three decades before any further significant hunger strikes. By which time the Republicans had split into Officials and Provisionals, with the former abandoning military struggle and the latter inheriting the IRA mantle. In June 1972 forty IRA prisoners, led by the legendary Republican from Belfast, Billy McKee, started a hunger strike for POW status. It lasted 37 days, was accompanied by rioting in the streets of Belfast, and led to the Tory government conceding "special status" before any deaths occurred. This decision was a recognition of the political nature of the Republican struggle

and its denial is at the root of all the hunger strikes.

Force feeding

The following year, 1973, Dolours and Marian Price went on strike for the right to serve their sentences back in Ireland. After a fast, interrupted by forced feeding, and lasting more than 200 days, the government capitulated and they were repatriated. 1974 and 1976 saw the death of two more IRA men, Michael Gaughan and Frank Stagg, in English jails. Gaughan died of pneumonia and complications evidently caused by forced feeding, an inhuman process involving clamping the prisoner's jaws open and forcing a greased pipe into the stomach - sometimes going down the windpipe by mistake. Gaughan's death led the government to abandon forced feeding when dealing with hunger strikers. Stagg, who was initially on strike with Gaughan, abandoned his hunger strike after the government promised repatriation. The promise was false and he staged a further series of hunger strikes and returned to Ireland in a coffin. He died on 12 February 1976, after sixty-two days without food.

Dave Brooks

Connolly/Sands commemoration day

Over 500 people attended the Wolfe Tone Societies 4th annual commemoration event on Sunday May 7th in Conway Hall, London.

James Connolly, a staunch trade unionist and republican, formed the Irish Socialist Republican Party in Dublin in 1986 and was active in forming the Irish Citizen Army in 1913. He was inspirational in the organising of the Easter Rising in 1916 and was later executed along with all the signatories of the Proclamation.

The writings and actions of James Connolly have been an inspiration to socialists and revolutionaries throughout the world.

Bobby Sands, was born in North Belfast in 1954. At the start of the civil rights marches he was only 14. He soon became involved in the republican movement and in 1976 was sentenced to 14 years imprisonment. Bobby Sands was O/C of the H Blocks when the

second hunger strike for the demands of the right to wear their own clothes, to free association, the right not to have to do menial work, the right to a weekly visit, letter or parcel as well as the right to organise their own educational and recreational pursuits and the right to remission of sentence as is normally provided. He started the second hunger strike on 1 March 1981 and died on 5 May 1981 followed by nine of his comrades. While on hunger strike he stood in a British election and was elected MP.

The commemoration event included workshops videos, theatre and music followed by a major rally. The hall and balcony were full for the rally with stalls and banners of the many organisations supporting the event around the perimeter.

The rally was addressed by Francie Molloy from Sinn Fein and Bernadette McAliskey who both called on those present to campaign vigorously for British withdrawal from Ireland. Both Bernadette and Pat Reynolds (IBRG) talked about the distortion of Irish history and lack of understanding amongst people in Britain of the situation in Ireland. Pat Reynolds compared the experience of racism and intolerance faced by the Irish and black communities in Britain.

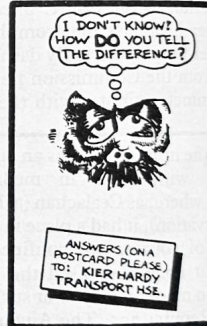
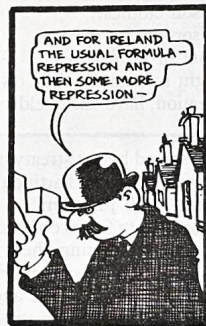
Jeremy Corbyn M.P. looked at the history of challenge to Britain's role in Ireland within Britain and in particular at the dismal record in the labour movement. He urged British people to see that international solidarity was the only means forward for socialism.

The impressive range of speakers included Niall Farrell, brother of Mairead Farrell, who paid tribute to his sister commenting that although they had their differences he had tremendous respect for her.

Geraldine Bailey, wife of Tommy Quigley serving life in an English jail and Erro Smalley of the Relatives of the Guildford Four campaign also spoke about the announcement of their appeal and of the problems facing the Guildford Four and their appeal.

Gerry MacLochlainn ended the rally by thanking all who attended and announcing next year's, now annual, event.

Mary Mason



Labour council bans Republicans

A political row has erupted in East London following the decision of Labour-controlled Newham Council to adopt a 'no-platform' policy towards Sinn Fein and other republican representatives.

The policy was agreed by the Labour Group of Councillors in Newham in response to a bid by the East London Irish Year of Action Committee (ELIYAC) to book West Ham Town Hall for an event to which either Bernadette McAliskey or Sinn Fein were to be invited. ELIYAC had not sought the endorsement of the Labour Group: it simply wished to make a commercial booking.

Councillor Conor McAuley,

Deputy Leader of Newham Council, said that Sinn Fein should never be allowed a platform in Newham because they were a right-wing organisation which was associated with 'terrorism'. This was the same Newham Council which was recently rightly proud to fly the ANC flag over their Town Hall.

In March this year ELIYAC held a public meeting in neighbouring Tower Hamlets,

addressed by Sinn Fein Councillor Dodie McGuinness and Ken Livingstone, which attracted an audience of over 500. "We know that many east enders want to hear for themselves what Sinn Fein has to say" commented Julian Scola, Chair of ELIYAC. "Banning Sinn Fein is not only arrogant censorship - it is politically dangerous. In 1968 it was the refusal of the Unionist and the British Government to listen to the demands of the nationalist community which has led to 20 years of bloodshed. Twenty years on we cannot allow a Labour Council to get away with gagging

the republicans. That a Labour Council can lend legitimacy to the Government's broadcasting ban is a disgrace. ELIYAC will lead the campaign against Newham Council until they reverse the ban and recognise Sinn Fein for what they are: a legitimate political party with a right to freedom of expression".

Please send letters of protest to: Councillor Fred Jones, Newham Town Hall, Barking Road, London E6.

MASS PICKET, Wednesday 7th June 6.30pm, Newham Town Hall, Barking Road, E6 (near East Ham tube).

Camden Year of Action

Over fifty people attended a meeting organised by Camden Year of Action on Ireland on Tuesday 9th May. The meeting heard Breda Power, daughter of Bill Power of the Birmingham Six, describe the experience of their unsuccessful appeal. She said that the campaign was continuing with an approach to the European Court and that all of the Six were as determined as ever to prove their innocence.

Speaking next was Lily Hill of the Guildford Four Campaign. She gave a graphic account of the bizarre 'evidence' that has resulted in the incarceration of her son and three other people for 'crimes' they could not possibly have committed. The decision of the Home Secretary to re-open the case and allow an appeal was received with some caution, she said, given the handling of the Birmingham Six appeal.

The Guildford Four campaign is now organising to ensure that the appeal in October receives as much international publicity as possible and will be monitored by human rights organisations from all over the world.

After the speakers, contributions from the floor reflected the growing anger in the Irish community at the double standards of the British and Irish establishment. One speaker called for a boycott of the annual London Irish Festival if it continued to deny a stall to the Birmingham Six Campaign. Another called on the Irish in Britain to cease voting for Labour while the Labour Party refused to

commit itself to British withdrawal from Ireland.

The meeting was organised by Camden Year of Action on Ireland, a coalition of local Irish in Britain Representation Groups (IBRG), Troops Out Movement and Time to Go groups. The meeting received and endorsed a model resolution, which is reproduced below, that all supporters are urged to pass through their local organisations.

Attention was also drawn to a new leaflet produced by The Coordinating Group of the Campaign to get justice for the Birmingham Six, Guildford Four, and Maguire Seven. Copies of this excellent leaflet, with a text by Michael Farrell, are available from, **The Irish Commission for prisoners overseas, c/o 7-8 Lower Abbey St., Dublin 1.**

VICTIMS OF INJUSTICE
The Birmingham Six
The Guildford Four
The Maguire Seven

Breda Power was dragged into a darkened room. The officer who had me by the bare wrist and head pulled downwards let go and from all sides I was being punched, hit and kicked. I dashed up and slid down the wall. I was dragged up by the hair and again punched systematically.

A voice shouted, "Stretch his back!" Another shouted, "You'll never have sex with your wife again." Power roared his protest. Then he signed a statement admitting he had planned one of two IRA pub bombs that killed 21 people in Birmingham, England, on November 21, 1974.

Model Motion in support of The Guildford Four.

This Union / C.L.P. welcomes the decision by the Home Secretary to reopen the case of the four people convicted of the Guildford pub bombing in 1974. The Guildford Four were convicted solely on the basis of their own confessions and substantial evidence has come to light which throws doubt on the soundness of these convictions.

We believe that there is sufficient doubt about the safety of the confessions for the Home Secretary to quash them under his existing powers and are concerned that instead he has referred them to the Court of Appeal. Not only does this prolong the suffering of the four, who are now in their fifteenth year of imprisonment it also means that no jury will have ever heard the most crucial evidence in their case, in particular the confessions of the Balcombe Street I.R.A. unit who have admitted actually carrying out these bombings.

We call on the leaders of the Labour Party and the T.U.C. to publicly support the campaign to free the Guildford Four.

We would appreciate it if you could let us know if your union / C.L.P. passed this motion by writing to: Free the Guildford Four Relatives Campaign, 131, Eastgate Building, St. John's Way, Archway, London N19.

EVENTS

Manchester

Justice for the Irish
A one day conference organised by the IBRG
Manchester Town Hall
Sat June 10
Speakers include:
Ken Livingstone, Mike Mansfield, Fr. Des Wilson, Fr. Joe Taaffe
Fee £3 waged, £1 unwaged £6 Statutory orgs.
Details: Manchester IBRG
c/o Grass Roots Books,
1 Newton St.
Manchester M1 1HW

London

Kilburn TOM
Branch meets fortnightly from June 5th 7.30
June 19th Mother Ireland Video + discussion
Irish Cultural Centre, 70-79 Salusbury Rd., Kilburn, Queens Park Tube
7.30 pm All Welcome

US Embassy

Free Joe Doherty Picket
Sat June 17th 3-4pm
Grosvenor Sq.
Called to mark Joe Doherty's 7th year imprisoned without charge in the US while fighting extradition.

BENEFIT for

Bread 'n Roses
Typesetting
Sat 17 June 8pm to 1 am at Vauxhall Gardens Community Centre, 100 Vauxhall Walk, SE11
Live bands include Taurus and Musicworks
Big Band plus DJ Dayo (African sounds)
Bar and food
Tickets £5 and £4
Phone 01-582 7286

BIRMINGHAM

Delegation briefing / educational + videos
6th June, 20th June, 11th July, 18th July
7.30-9pm
Trade Union Resource Centre, 7 Fredrick St., Hockley (76 Bus to door)
Everyone welcome
Tel: 021 773 8683

Haringey Video

Haringey TOM has decided on a strategy for increasing membership in which we alternate 'business' and 'public' meetings. At the most recent of the latter we showed the video 'Sentenced', which is about the hardships endured by the families of Irish POWs in British gaols. Eighteen people attended the screening of which ten were existing branch members and two were representatives from the Irish Prisoners Support Movement.

The video showed how the British State harrasses the families of Republican prisoners by keeping them in England and

moving them from gaol to gaol, at short notice, to prevent visitors from seeing the prisoners. Other, more direct, techniques include the use of PTA and strip searching against visitors. Loyalist prisoners, even convicted UDA terrorists, do not face these hardships.

After a brief coffee break, Tom Barron, from the Irish Prisoners' Support Movement, led a discussion. He appealed for TOM members to help with accommodation for visiting families. A network of helpers could combat 'ghosting', the sudden transfer of prisoners just before

they are due to receive a visit. If families knew that there would be somewhere to stay near the new prison, then they would suffer much less. He also asked people to write to their MPs and MEPs on the families' behalf.

A lively discussion highlighted that the Home Office regards the prison service as just one more weapon to deploy against the Republican community in the Six Counties, one which is frequently forgotten by activists in England.

Roger Witte

Abortion - a partition issue

Many people know that abortion is illegal in the 26 County State and attribute this to the 'backwardness' of Catholicism. What people are largely ignorant of is the fact that abortion is also illegal in the Protestant State of the 6 Counties.

Abortion was made illegal in Ireland by the 1861 Offences against the Person Act, a nineteenth century piece of British legislation which still applies in Ireland today. (The 1861 Act was the first act which actually criminalized abortion).

The British Establishment, by its traditional manipulation of religious difference in Ireland, partitioned the county along religious lines in 1920. In this way it was able to continue its economic control of the Country. But Partition also paved the way for the creation of two fundamentalist religious states; a Protestant one in the North and a Catholic one in the South, the existence of which distorted the social and cultural development of Ireland as a whole and compounded the oppression facing Irish women North and South.

The reactionary Protestant state in the North prevented the 1967 Abortion Act from being enacted in the 6 Counties thus forcing over 20,000 women, in the last 12 years, to travel from the 6 Counties to Britain for abortions. The unavailability of abortion in the 6 Counties also prevents the introduction of screening tests for Spina Bifida and Downs Syndrome. The 6 Counties has now the highest rate of babies born with neural tube defects in the world. The Northern Ireland Abortion Law Reform Association (NIALRA) is presently campaigning for the extension of the 1967 Act to the 6 Counties.

The 26 County State has become even further entrenched in its anti-abortion legislation. In 1981 the European Parliament called for the end of "Abortion Tourism" within the member states, suggesting that the EC

would insist on making abortion a legal right for women in all member states. (At present only in Belgium and Ireland does the law force women to travel to other countries in order to procure an abortion).

However, European Law cannot interfere with a member States constitution. For this reason in 1981 there was a mushrooming of a variety of right-wing fundamentalist style Catholic groups under an umbrella group. Pro Life Amendment Campaign (PLAC). Their aim was to have a referendum which would enshrine the right to life of the unborn into the Irish Constitution thus preventing any action by the EC on the availability of abortion in Ireland. Funded by British and US pro-life forces, a moral crusading campaign was launched which culminated in the 1983 Abortion Referendum. The poll showed that 50% abstained and the constitution was amended by only 35% of the electorate. The Constitution now reads that "The State acknowledges the right to life of the unborn and, with due regard to the equal right to life of the mother guarantees to respect, as far as practicable, by its laws to vindicate that right"

Censorship

Not yet satisfied the Society For The Protection Of The Unborn Child (SPUC) immediately declared their intention to ban any information on abortion availability to Irish women across the water. In 1986 an injunction was granted by the Courts. It closed the only two non-directive pregnancy counselling services, "Well Women" and "Open Line" which discussed abortion as one of the options for women with unwanted pregnancies and

referred women to abortion clinics in England. The Court Ruling specified that "It is illegal for any named person or organization to give any information which could lead to a woman procuring an abortion" Judge Hamilton argued that the "right to life of the unborn is a more fundamental right than the Right to information"

The situation now stands that access to information about abortion availability outside of Ireland is, by law, censored. This censorship has been, in the usual way, compounded by self censorship imposed in 1987 by RTE. A legal guide line document was circulated to senior radio and television producers warning that programme makers might



carries on in the Courts huge numbers of Irish women (North and South) are forced to continue with unwanted pregnancies. Those who do manage to get information on abortion facilities in Britain do so by word of mouth. If they can then raise the money to make the traumatic journey and to pay for the abortion, they join the 6,000 other women who make the trip according to official statistics. The unofficial figure has been suggested to be more like 10,000 since many women are afraid to give Irish address for fear of being found out.



"possibly be liable to prosecution for conspiracy to corrupt public morals if abortion information was given over the air...abortion should not be discussed at all on live programmes"

In 1988 the Broadcasting branch of the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) which represents RTE journalists, abstained from a motion condemning the ban on information "important to women". This is the same NUJ branch which does not oppose Section 31, the censorship of Sinn Fein, and refused effective support to Jenny McGeever when she contravened the ban on Sinn Fein during the funerals of the three IRA volunteers murdered in Gibraltar.

While the war on information

The Womens Information Network has set up helplines in Ireland and continue to campaign around the issue. At present the Clinics are taking their case to the European Court but a decision is not expected until 1991 at the earliest.

In London the Irish Womens Abortion Support Group (IWASG) run a help-line and fundraise to support Irish women's right to choose (North and South). They are always in need of new Irish women members and would be grateful for contributions no matter how small.

Contact:

52-54 Featherstone Street
London EC1
Tel: 01-251 6332(3)

Mairead and Jo



Kurdish refugees in Britain: no return to repression

In the last month hundreds of Kurdish refugees have arrived in Britain from Turkey. Fleeing from violent repression, they are currently being put up by community organisations in Hackney, north east London, and are urgently in need of help and donations. This article aims to give some of the background to their current desperate situation.

The Kurdish people have been called "the world's largest forgotten nation". They are a people with a distinct identity, culture and language, but they have never had a state of their own. There are around 17 million Kurds living in south eastern Turkey and northern Iraq and Iran, with others in Syria, the USSR and other Arab countries. They have suffered brutal repression under the reactionary regimes of Turkey, Iraq and Iran, all of which can be said to be pursuing policies of genocide to varying degrees. In Iraq and Iran the Kurds are struggling for autonomy and in Turkey for independence.

The situation of the Kurdish people finally gained some sort of international recognition last year when the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussain attempted the extermination of entire villages through chemical warfare. This was in reality only a continuation of what had been happening for decades: the final cessation of the Iran-Iraq war had merely given the Iraqi government leeway to turn their attentions fully to the Kurdish struggle. Nor did these policies end when the chemical weapons outcry died down; now whole villages are being 'resettled' to southern Iraq...except that they are never seen again. Likewise in Iran the end of the war has enabled the regime there to concentrate on the repression of its 'internal' opponents, including the Kurds.

Kurdistan-Ireland

There are between 9 and 10 million Kurds living in Turkey, or about a fifth of the population. Kurdistan could in many ways be called Turkey's Ireland. Thatcher's recent attempts to build links between Britain and Turkey underline the parallels between the two: in both, right-wing, though would-be 'democratic' governments are conducting covert, so-called 'internal' wars against distinct peoples, who in turn are

struggling for self-determination.

Most Kurds in Turkey live in villages in the mountainous south east, which is also the poorest area of the country. Like the Six Counties, the area is saturated with the military, about 400,000 troops at present. A journey through apparently peaceful rural communities yields view after view of military bases, and intimidatory military exercises are a standard tactic. Repression was stepped up massively after the 1980 military coup in Turkey, and besides the hundreds killed in the

Non-Existent Kurds

In Turkey it is illegal to speak Kurdish or simply to say that Kurds exist. Both 'crimes' carry heavy prison sentences, during which torture would almost certainly be used. Kurds are commonly referred to by the euphemism 'mountain Turks' and claims prevail such as, "Some Turks speak dialects but there is no Kurdish minority in Turkey", (a ruling party MP). If you visit south east Turkey people will look over their shoulders for any sign of an official uniform before telling you, "This is Kurdistan". Thus in towns where the entire population speaks Kurdish as a first language, all signs, notices, newspapers, etc., are in Turkish, and Turkish is taught compulsorily in schools.

This policy of denial serves a double purpose. Firstly, the

Refugees in Britain

The present refugees, about 450 of whom have arrived in Britain since 2nd May, come mostly from the Maras area in south east Turkey. In December 1978 Kurds in Maras were attacked by Turks and fascists, leaving an official death-toll of 117, and many more wounded and homeless. This March, in local elections, many of the right-wing elements involved in the Maras massacre were elected to local office. The run-up to the elections had seen a huge escalation in the terror inflicted by the army and military police in Turkish Kurdistan, and refugees report systematic village round-ups, with people being beaten, harassed and intimidated, in an attempt to prevent villagers giving food and shelter to guerillas. Fearing a return to previous atrocities, many Kurds in the area were forced to flee, some arriving with the marks of beatings still on them.

The refugees must now present appeals for asylum to the Home Office. Britain's record on refugees is abysmal, the recent case of Tamils being deported back to torture in Sri Lanka being only one example. The right-wing press has reacted with knee-jerk racism: "Scandal of the 'refugee' scroungers", "Turkish Delight over British Free-for-all", "Kick them all out!", (Daily Star, 17.5.89).

Support needed

In this sort of climate all possible public support is vital. Petitions have been produced to send to the Home Office in support of the claim to asylum, and to allow families to be reunited. All refugees have been put up temporarily in Hackney, but help is now urgently needed. A Kurdish Refugee Support Group has been set up, and it is appealing for volunteers, accommodation, access to bathrooms, and donations of money, clothing, heaters, food, cooking utensils, bedding, toiletries including towels, games and toys, such as chess, draughts, backgammon, and TV sets.

If you can help in any way, contact: Kurdish Refugees Support Group, 489 Kingsland Road, London E8, tel: 01-249 6930

Katy



conflict, Amnesty International's figure of 250,000 people detained and tortured in Turkey during the last eight years includes a substantial proportion of Kurdish political prisoners. Hunger strikes have taken place both inside and outside to protest against prison conditions and the widespread use of torture.

There are several Kurdish nationalist parties, and since 1984 the Kurdish Worker's Party (PKK) has been conducting an armed struggle against the Turkish state. Between August '84 and August '88 there were an estimated 1,100 battles fought, and 50 towns temporarily occupied by Kurdish forces, which gives some idea of the scale of the war.

attempt at forced cultural assimilation is directly in line with the wish for Kurdish extinction. Secondly, and particularly more recently, as the Turkish government tries to assert its liberal democratic credentials with an eye on EEC membership, it serves to cover up and depoliticise the war. Clearly the Irish comparison applies in some detail, both in terms of the invisible war tactic, and in the way the struggle is carried out at all levels, including those of language and cultural identity. The Turkish state has even attempted its own version of 'Ulsterisation', by recruiting militias of Kurdish people to fight in Kurdish areas, though this seems to have been largely unsuccessful.

Peggy Deery: A Derry Family at War

A biography by Nell MacCafferty
Virago £4.99

Peggy Deery was a Bogside, Derry woman, the mother of fourteen children and a Civil Rights marcher; until Bloody Sunday and the British Army left her with half her leg shot away. From then on the battle was to bring her kids up and keep her family together slap bang in the middle of a warzone. To bring fourteen kids up is an achievement; to have enough love for them all in the midst of a war is a miracle - but one that's happening everyday.

She liked to go out for a dance and a laugh, but burying two sons and seeing her children constantly imprisoned didn't leave her much to laugh about. At 54 Peggy Deery died of a heart attack and exhaustion.

Hers is the story that's usually left

unwritten. The story that the people in power don't want to hear about. They want to imagine that poverty makes a person less than human, and if they can't break you down with poverty they'll do it with a bullet. Peggy Deery died sad but not broken, she was still joking with her family on the night she died, and they still gathered in the security of her home every Sunday. Nell MacCafferty's biography is a tribute to a woman who lost more than most of us can ever imagine; and yet still managed to drag a bit of dignity out of life instead of just surviving.

There are tens of millions of Peggy Deerys in the world; each having their homes raided; their children taken away; living with the fear that when you say goodbye to your children it might be the last time you'll ever see them. It's a triumph of the human spirit that Peggy Deery never lost the ability to laugh.

Alice Nutter

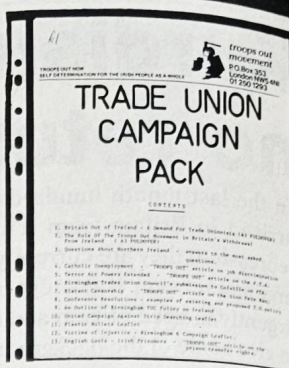
Trade Union campaign pack

The Troops Out Movement Trade Union department has produced a new campaign pack.

The pack is intended as a tool for active trade union members wanting to raise the question of Britain's role in Ireland. It contains a series of papers and leaflets that deal with different aspects of the struggle. As well as a 'basic case' leaflet titled 'Britain out of Ireland - a demand for Trade Unionists', there are papers on Catholic unemployment, censorship, the Prevention of Terrorism Act, Plastic Bullets, Strip searching, the Birmingham 6, and Republican prisoners in British gaols.

The pack is especially relevant in that it has been drawn up by activists in the Trade Union movement, and lists examples of existing and proposed policy in various Unions.

There is also a handy list of awkward questions that are often put by people unfamiliar with role of the British state in Ireland. Each question, such as "wouldn't there be a bloodbath if the army left?" or



"doesn't this mean supporting terrorists?", is clearly and convincingly answered.

It is vitally important that activists in the Trade Union movement ensure that the 20th anniversary of British troops being re-introduced into the north of Ireland does not go unnoticed by the organised labour movement. Every opportunity must be taken to put British withdrawal from Ireland on the Trade Union agenda.

The pack is available from T.O.M. PO BOX 353, London NW5 4NH, price £1

Charlotte Despard: A

Biography by Margaret Mulvihill

Constance Markievicz: An

Independent Life by Anne Haverty

Both published by Pandora at £7.95 as part of a series about valiant women.

You'd have more chance of getting to know Despard's character if you held a seance than you would by reading this book. I don't doubt that Despard the suffragette/socialist/vegetarian-social reformer/and Irish republican supporter was a woman, but it's difficult to tell what else she was from this incomplete sketch of life. Facts and dates are as religiously recited as the seven times table, and the prose style is about as enthralling. There's no flesh and blood in it: Despard's childhood is relegated to about three lines and her 'courtship' and marriage is given the same treatment.

Mulvihill's portrait of Despard is one of the chaste saint administering to the poor - yet she never questions the Victorian social climate that saw martyrdom and self-sacrifice as virtues. Despard is shown as a cross between Mother Theresa and Ghandi (except Ghandi had faults as his treatment of the women around him shows.) I didn't expect Despard to have feet of clay but if you believe Mulvihill she had no feet at all; just a pair of wings which she used to hover three feet above the rest of us like a prim guardian angel.

Real heroines have contradictions, intrigues, and bad moods as well as good hearts. Discovering women's history should be an inspiration for us to get up off our knees: sadly all this

book exhorts us to do is to get back down there and worship yet another dead saint.

Where Mulvihill failed Haverty succeeded, her biography of Markievicz manages to be both a tribute to a great woman, and a 'warts and all' photograph of real life.

A book full of contrasts: From the dull overprivileged world of the Irish Aristocracy to the street battles which tore Dublin apart in 1916. Haverty gives us the best and the worst of Markievicz: brave and sharp both with her tongue and a gun; so vain that a well tailored uniform was almost as important to her as the revolution. Nothing is skipped or smokescreened, the history's all there and it's well written enough to convey the tensions, the excitements and the disappointments

that accompany revolutionary history. Her association with Connolly is put into the perspective of a deep and loyal friendship, rather than the 'woman as the shadow of a great man' theory that history is so fond of selling us. The difficulties that she experienced in combining her married and political life are covered in depth (a problem that many women today are still struggling with.) Markievicz expected a lot from the people around her, but she never expected more than she was willing to give herself.

Her commitment to fighting for a free Ireland never changed; whilst her political contemporaries were making compromises that would have devastating affects, she was still working with the rank and file. She broke the barriers of class and sex and deserves to be remembered.

Alice Nutter

Murder on the Rock, Maxine Williams, (Larkin).

In this booklet Maxine Williams of the Revolutionary Communist (RCG) Group examines in detail the killing of the Gibraltar Three, its background and subsequent cover-up. Setting the Gibraltar murders in the context of previous SAS shoot-to-kill operations, Williams then looks at the events of 6th March '88, the versions concocted by government and media, and the fixed inquest. Through the various slips and contradictions, she builds up a picture of the operation which starts long before and goes on long after the shots fired on a Gibraltar street.

The booklet seems thoroughly researched and deals with the mass of evidence clearly and effectively. If, like me, you had known that most of what got out about Gibraltar was a pack of lies, but had been unable to untangle it all, this account of the extent and



success of the government's efforts could leave you feeling pretty sick and frightened.

Highly recommended, except that £2.50 seems expensive for a 60-page booklet.

Katy Watson

Letters

The following letter was received after a local screening of the banned TV programme 'Mother Ireland'.

Dear Troops Out

Thanks for the chance to see a very interesting, and at times very moving account of the nationalist and other women's struggle in Ireland.

I hope you realise that the footage of Mairead Farrell is an extremely important part of the counter-propaganda struggle against the British establishment. No wonder Channel 4 ordered (or was ordered) it to be cut!

The frank, honest woman shown in the film counteracts the "Queen of Terror-Weaned on Hate" (Daily Express) image fed to the British public.

I for one found it traumatic to counterbalance the pictures of a dead body lying in the Gibraltar sun, with the woman on the screen! I hope this video is shown to as many British and Irish people as possible.

Thanks

Alison Rocks
London



One day at a time

April

8/9

At the Ard theis (conference) of The Workers's Party, in Dublin, there is condemnation of Sinn Fein for waging genocidal war, criticism of the SDLP as tribal and sectarian, and support for the market economy. And in Belfast, the annual conference of the Alliance Party sees devolution as the way forward.

10th

The broadcasting ban on Sinn Fein is lifted for 5 weeks prior to the local government elections in May (and then also for the EC elections in June).

A new Director of Public Prosecutions takes over in N. Ireland: Alasdair Fraser replaces Barry Shaw, who retires.

12th

A civilian, Joanne Reilly, is killed by an IRA bomb which explodes prematurely. The bomb was in a van parked by a shop next to the RUC station at Warrenpoint, Co. Down, and causes widespread damage and injuries to 34. The IRA apologises, and Gerry Adams says "Sinn Fein does not condone what happened."

13th

Republican prisoner Paul Kane is extradited from the Republic to N. Ireland by helicopter. Kane's original conviction - at a supergrass trial - was overturned on appeal, so he is extradited solely for alleged offences in connection with escaping from the H Blocks (where he was unjustly imprisoned). There is outrage, and hijackings and riots in Belfast. In the following days, three high-up members of the ruling Fianna Fail resign from the party in protest.

14th

And republican prisoner Gerard Sloan, who escaped from Crumlin Road Jail and was rearrested in the Republic, is sentenced to five years at Dublin's Special Criminal Court. He was tried under the Criminal Law Jurisdiction Act (which permits trials in the Republic for offences allegedly committed in the UK, and vice versa). Amnesty International publishes a report on the Gibraltar killings which calls for a judicial inquiry. The report argues that the inquest was limited by the "public interest immunity certificates" (which prevented evidence about government policy and army intelligence being heard)

and by the absence of Spanish police witnesses.

19th

A civilian, Francis Galbraith, is shot dead in East Belfast: it is not clear by whom.

In the Republic, the government announces a plan to press for increased safety standards for the European nuclear industry when it takes on the EC presidency next year. It has been arguing for some time for an independent safety inspectorate.

20th

A statistical survey carried out by the Northern Ireland Office shows an increased disparity between Catholic and Protestant households in living standards, rates of unemployment and employment prospects since 1983/84.

In Dublin a campaign is launched on behalf of the Winchester Three (framed and jailed last year in England for conspiracy to murder Tom King, N. Ireland Secretary, and other offences). A date has not yet been set for their appeal.

More exposure of miscarriages of justice in the Gibraltar inquest (of three unarmed IRA members shot dead by the SAS last March): Spanish journalists report that the head of Malaga's anti-terrorist police denies making a statement that their surveillance of the three broke down, as a result of which breakdown the SAS claimed at the inquest that they were justified in shooting to kill.

21st

A taxi driver, Walter Thompson, is shot dead in North Belfast by the IRA who state that he had been involved in 'loyalist sectarian killer gangs'.

In the USA, the Irish National Caucus campaigns to have John Cushman registered as an agent of the British government. Cushman is former leader of the Alliance Party, present Fine Gael (opposition party in the Republic) candidate in Munster for the EC election: the INC claim is based on his lobbying work in the US against the MacBride Principles (principles opposing discrimination in N. Ireland).

22nd

Three loyalists and a US arm dealer are arrested in Paris while allegedly negotiating with a South African diplomat to buy arms in exchange for a Shorts missile or missile parts. The three are members of Ulster Resistance, set up in 1986 with the support of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP). One was also a

member of the Ulster Defence Regiment until 1986; one is a long term supporter of Paisley since his anti-civil right activities in the 60's; one is a missile instructor with the Territorial Army at Newtownards, Co. Down. A demonstration Blowpipe missile was stolen from that T.A. base two weeks previously, and parts of Blowpipe and Javelin missiles were stolen from Shorts in Belfast last November. The Republic's government makes a strong protest to the South African government, the British government makes a less strong protest. The French government expels three South African diplomats on the 28th, the British government takes until 5th May to do the same.

24th

As candidates for May's local government elections hand in their nominations in the North, the new "anti-violence declaration" comes into operation for the first time. Sinn Fein candidates sign, but condemn the new law. DUP candidates come in for a media grilling about their links with Ulster Resistance: Paisley claims they had broken ties some time ago. Republican Sinn Fein, a breakaway group, had refused to sign the oath on 21st April and their candidates were disqualified.

27th

In Dublin, a republican prisoner due to be released is brought to court to face two extradition warrants from the British authorities. The warrants against Desmond Ellis allege possession of explosives and conspiracy with Thomas Quigley, Gilbert McNamee and Paul Kavanagh (all serving sentence in Britain). He is remanded in custody.

28th

Father Patrick Ryan announces that he is standing as an independent candidate for the Munster seat in the EC election, on a platform of opposition to extradition, unemployment, emigration and poverty. Last year Ryan fought off extradition to Britain from both Belgium and Ireland; charges under the Criminal Law Jurisdiction Act—whereby he would be tried in the Republic for offences allegedly committed in Britain—are under consideration but at present he is a free man.

29th

In the Republic, two arms dumps are found in Monaghan and Donegal, believed to belong to the IRA. Six people are arrested in Monaghan but are released without charge. Another dump in Donegal is discovered on 2nd May.

May

1st

A public meeting in Belfast about devolution is cancelled when the speakers for the DUP and the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP, previously known as the Official Unionist Party) are pressurised to withdraw by their parties. Neither party wants to be seen discussing political options while the Anglo-Irish Agreement is in place. The meeting had been organised by the Campaign for Devolved parliament and

was scheduled for 3rd May.

Tom King takes a propaganda trip to the USA to oppose the MacBride Principles and plug the new Fair Employment Bill, which he promises will be strengthened. Then to Canada to discuss the sale of Shorts to the Bombardier company.

3rd

In Dublin, a public meeting is held by Trade Unionists for Irish Unity and Independence: the speaker for the Irish Labour Party, Emmet Stagg, urges Sinn Fein to join a broad front of the Irish left to seek reunification—but only if the IRA ends its armed struggle.

4th

A prison officer and a British soldier are killed by IRA bombs, both in Co. Armagh. There has been more than usually intensive activity in South Armagh by the British recently, erecting new observation posts and causing disruption and harassment.

8th

Ian Paisley seeks permission to visit the three loyalists detained in Paris (see above, 22nd April). He explains his concern in terms of being a religious minister and MEP. However, the French authorities ban all visits.

9th

The British Labour Party's policy review by its National Executive agrees a "unity by consent" position on N. Ireland. Clare Short, Tony Benn, Ken Livingstone and Sam McCloskie vote for immediate withdrawal of troops but are defeated.

New evidence from Spain shows that six members of the IRA were involved in the Gibraltar operation—further invalidation of the inquest where a picture of three plus one was presented and accepted.

10th

Three people, all Irish, are arrested in Stoke on Trent: media link the arrest with the investigation of the IRA bombing of Ternhill Barracks in Shropshire in February. However, they are released on police bail two days later.

Shorts announces 700 redundancies; the trade union there claims this is connected with its forthcoming privatisation.

11th

The president of Nicaragua, Daniel Ortega, visits the Irish Republic at the end of his European tour, and receives a warm welcome from people and politicians alike. Premier Charles Haughey agrees to push the case for increased aid and investment to Nicaragua at the EC Council of Ministers.

13th/14th

At the annual conference of the Progressive Democrats (opposition party) in Dublin, unionists and nationalists in the North are urged to start a dialogue, and the government of the Republic is criticised for not putting enough eggs in the Anglo-Irish Agreement basket. A motion calling on the Republic's government to break off trade and diplomatic links with Libya—believed to supply arm to the IRA—is passed.



SINN FEIN COUNCILLORS SPEAKING TOUR

3rd - 8th July 1989

Venues confirmed:-

MONDAY 3 JULY 7.30
Public Meeting, Camden
Irish Centre, London.
Coventry Public meeting
org by Trades Council
Irish Sub-Committee at
KOKO CentreArches
Industrial Centre,
Spon End, Coventry

WEDNESDAY 5 JULY
7.30 Hackney Year of
Action Public Meeting
Hackney Town Hall Mare
St,
-Birmingham Public
meeting, Josiah Mason
Hall, Chamberlain Square.
50p/25p

THURSDAY 6th, 7.30
South London Y.O.A.
Public Meeting
Deptford Town Hall
Deptford SE14

FRIDAY 7th 7.30 Public
Meeting Tottenham Town
Hall, Approach Rd.
Tottenham N17 (Seven
Sisters Tube)

SATURDAY 8th 8.00pm
Cardiff. Social with
SF Guest Speakers
Club Iforbach
Cardiff

TOUR OUTLINE

SOUTHERN ENGLAND
London (Camden, East
London, Haringey,
Tottenham, & South
London) Norwich, Brighton,
Bristol.

Contact-T.O.M. Office
01-609 1743 or
Sal 01-703 1506/692 5355

MIDLANDS/SOUTH WALES
Birmingham, Coventry,
Redditch, Nottingham,
Cardiff, Swansea.
Contact-Mary Pearson 021
773 8683

NORTHERN ENGLAND
Leeds, Bradford, Sheffield,
Liverpool, Manchester,
Newcastle.

Contact-Box 1969, 52 Call
Lane, Leeds LS1 6DT
General info: Mary
Pearson, Tour Co-
ordinator, 021 773 8683

Plus other meetings in the
cities above
For details contact Mary
Pearson: 021-773 8683

Time to split

On 9th May BBC2 broadcast two programmes about 'Northern Ireland and its troubles'. Chris Reeves, an independent film maker himself, was watching.

Split Screen is a series of half-hour programmes which are cut into two "opposing views on a controversial subject each made by members of the public under their own editorial control".

The proposition under discussion on May 9th was that "peace in Northern Ireland will never be achieved without British withdrawal". The 15 minute film supporting the case was made by Ken Loach for the Time to Go campaign. The film against was produced by Graham Reid, author of the 'Billy' series of plays.

The Time to Go film proved that despite the restrictions on broadcasting brought in by the Tories last October, it is still possible to put forward a coherent and powerful case for withdrawal on television. The programme uses no commentary, constructing its argument from six nationalist interviews intercut with footage of the army presence in the North and archive of RUC repression of the civil rights movement, Bloody Sunday, army house raids and arrests and the recently discovered film of the shooting of Emma Groves in 1971.

The film examines the origins of the artificial Northern Ireland statelet and describes the legacy of partition: "The British government created the six county state by carving out from Ireland the largest land area in which it would be possible to maintain in perpetuity a majority of protestant loyalists. That then created an impetus which forced those people to set up structures which would ensure their domination..."

Oliver Kearney

Time to Go describes the peaceful revolt of the nationalist minority in the late 1960's and the state response:

"The British government could not deal with that, and by a series of manoeuvres including the shooting down of 13 protestors in Derry they turned that peaceful civil rights campaign into a military campaign."

Des Wilson

The programme charts the escalation of the war in the North and the methods adopted by successive British governments: "The only way they can contain the situation here is by repressive legislation and by a massive army of occupation. It's like the Vietnam war for America, it becomes a war that can't be won, and can only be held to a draw by fighting a dirty war..."

Michael Farrell

Addressing the fears of the protestant community, the film stresses that they would have an equal place in a new Ireland: "(We) are not asking the protestant people of the North to live in Charley Haughey's Free State. I wouldn't live in it myself, and I wouldn't ask anybody else to live in it..."

Bernadette McAliskey

The film concludes by arguing that the only way forward to peace in Ireland is for the British government to declare its intention to withdraw:

"The Northern Ireland state has failed, and the attempts to keep it in existence just lead to a steady haemorrhaging of blood, to the political and military conflict that we have which kills 100 people a year, maims 1000 people a year and results in hundreds of people being jailed...The people who have the power to break the vicious circle are the British government. They can do it by saying that they are going to withdraw the troops from Northern Ireland and then agree with the Southern government to a round table conference with everybody involved in the conflict."

Michael Farrell

Ken Loach's film is a welcome contribution to the campaign for withdrawal. It is to be hoped that it will soon be available on video from Time to Go as it is an ideal length for showing at meetings as part of a longer agenda.

The film by Graham Reid opposing withdrawal was by contrast a failure in its own terms. Unconvincing in argument and confused in structure, it could also have found limited resonance amongst loyalists as it put forward an unpopular 'integration with the UK' line.

The programme began by promoting the 'bloodbath' argument with a backdrop of Enniskillen, bombs exploding, gravestones and the sound of gunfire. Reid then attacked the Time to Go campaign, suggesting falsely that they wish the re-settlement of the unionist population in England. On several occasions during the film, free publicity was given to Time to Go in the form of quotes from spokespeople and sponsorship lists on the screen (albeit attempts at red-baiting).

The film asserted a number of times that the Northern Ireland situation was not a colonial one, using 1912 footage of the signing of the Ulster Covenant to show the depth of feeling amongst the protestant community to remain British citizens.

Partition, it was argued, had 'stood the test of time', and had been the "only means possible to avoid civil war". A colourless interviewee again attacked Time to Go, saying that they were prepared to "see more troops used" to "expel Northern Ireland from the UK". The programme eulogised the RUC and the British army, whose "contribution to peace was massive and vital". On a number of occasions Reid shot himself in the foot, for example the commentary "most people go about their day to day business" was cut against film of an RUC 'P' check of a motorist.

The programme then put forward its own solution - the achievement of a "unity of hearts and minds" through integrated education! Reid's use of footage of Hazelwood integrated college has apparently annoyed some of the parents of children at the school - integrated education can be seen as part of the process of Irish reunification.

The film ended by arguing that withdrawal could lead to fascism (shot of hooded paramilitary), that British political parties should organise in the North and the defensive "we are as British as anyone in the Time to Go movement". A final graphic read "It's not Time to Go, IT'S TIME TO THINK!". On the strength of this effort it's not only time to go, it's time to think about giving up film making.