

LIMERICK SOCIALIST

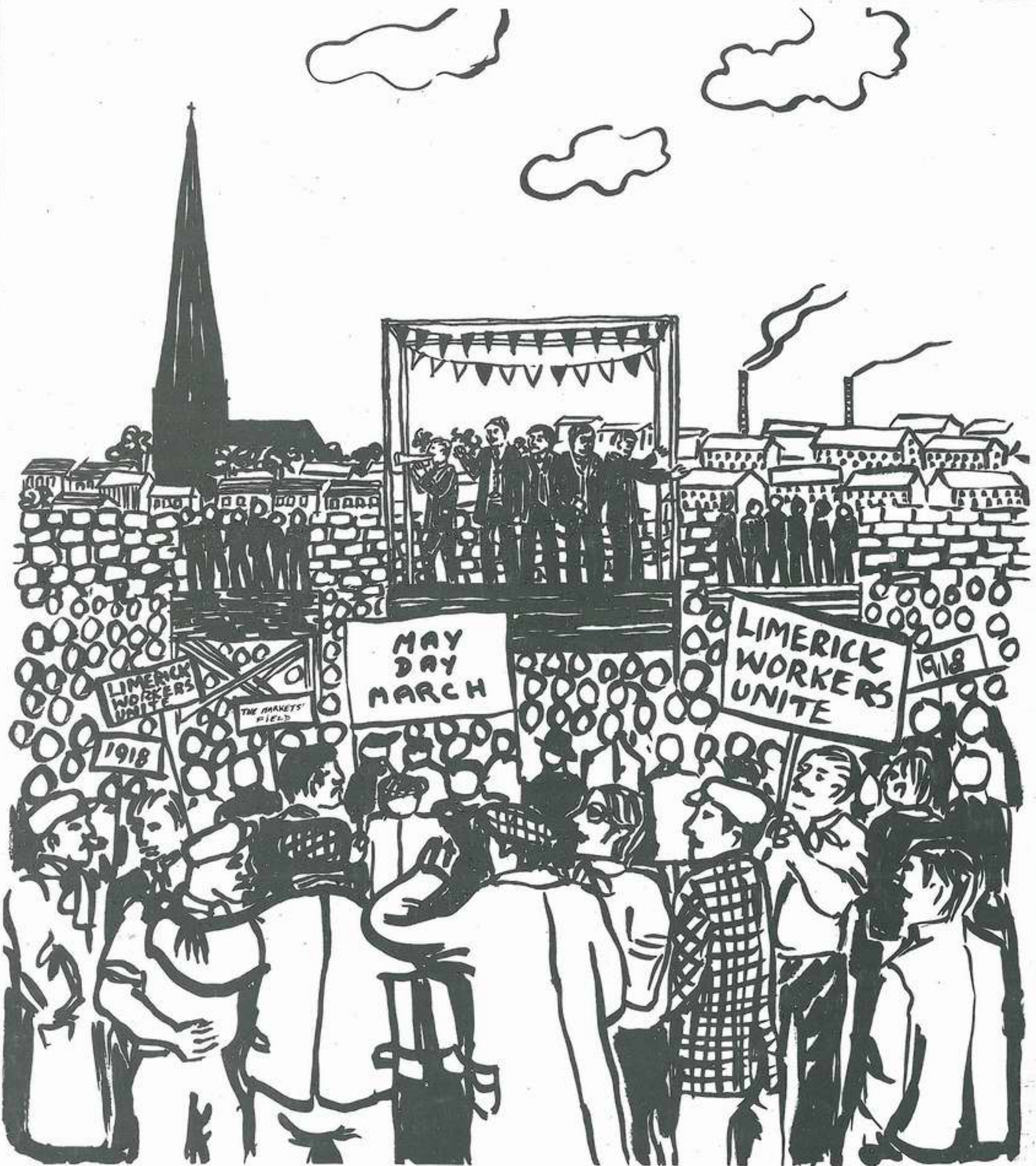
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**THE
VOICE
OF THE
WORKER**

'That which is good for the working class I esteem patriotic' *James Connolly*



MAY DAY MARCH 1918

**PART
SEVENTEEN**

**BY
P.J. RYAN**

THE DIEHARDS DIG IN

The Diehards had held the city for four weeks but made no move to defend it. By their rapacious and peremptory seizure of goods, they aroused the hostility of such citizens as were in favour of the republican ideal until their goods vanished. In the arrival of the Staters in the city, there was consternation and outraged indignation in the Diehard camps at their audacious and unexpected entry. Confused groups of Diehards marched, raced or trotted down Henry Street and occupied Russell's Mill, the G.P.O. and Daly's Bakery; they also occupied the Mills along the Lock Road. As they marched or trotted to their positions, they were occasionally barraged by missiles from upper windows on their route. They occupied the bakeries in Parnell Street and Edward Street. They now held three bakeries and had secured a breadline for the New Barracks and other posts held by them. They now had enough bread for their needs and a little bit more for the citizens in their territory.

Included in the Diehard territory were the houses of the wealthier citizens and the Medical profession. The Staters held the two hospitals and the County Infirmary, so that they had hospitals but no doctors, while the Diehards had doctors but no hospitals. Though the Diehards were prepared to defend the Republic, they were not prepared to die for it. Any wounds which they might receive would be mere scratches, easily treated by a medico with a dab of iodine. The injuries which they proposed to inflict on the Staters would need hospital treatment and so the Staters would need the Hospitals; this was a happy and encouraging thought.

Having gained one side of Sarsfield Street, the Staters remained quiet and unobtrusive; they did not wish to draw a massed attack on themselves. For nine days, they watched the thundering breadvans racing up and down Henry Street from Daly's Bakery, with an armed escort on the high seat beside the driver. On the ninth day, as the vans came galloping down Henry Street, they were fired upon and their gallop was halted. One man was wounded and several others were flung from their high perch with the shock of surprise. This was the opening volley in the fourth siege of Limerick.

Daly's Bakery was now isolated and, unless the garrison went underground into the sewers, they could not escape from the premises. Because of their hasty occupation of the bakery the garrison had neglected to stockpile some nourishing tinned foods and vegetables. They had depended on the New Barracks for their daily intake of calories and now that supply line was severed. Each morning, they hoped for an expected relief force from the New Barracks, but no fierce attack and relief force came to their aid. By sunset, they feared and dreaded an attack from the Staters on the opposite side of the street. The silence and inaction of the Staters was more menacing than any attack; they were not going to wade through their brothers' blood.

For four days, the garrison lived on bread and on bread alone. No streaky rasher or smiling sausage lay on their breakfast table, even the solace of a blue duck-egg was denied them. Their dinner was bread and their supper was bread, but man cannot live on bread alone; he needs a balanced diet of proteins and carbohydrates, washed down with vitamin rich fluids for sustained effort. On the fourth day of this malnutritious diet, the Staters attacked by firing several volleys through the plate glass windows and doors. They then entered the bakery and took the garrison of thirty-five men into custody. There was no resistance and there were no casualties.

The Fourth Siege of Limerick

The prisoners were taken to Cruise's Hotel, where they were given an enriched soup, followed by a substantial meal of tender meats and vegetables. Not until their release from internment over a year later did they enjoy such a meal.

The Diehards were now minus one bakery, leaving them but two. The Staters were one bakery up, their score now being six bakeries. The bakeries held by the Staters were, Daly's in Sarsfield Street, McNamara's in Mary Street, Reillys and Russell's in the Irishtown, Troy's in Patrick Street and Tubridy's in Athlunkard Street.

The Staters gave themselves and their opponents three days for political meditation and then sent a scouting patrol of twenty men up Henry Street to test the defences and the road barrier which the Diehards had erected by Russell's Mills. The Staters had come within fifty yards of the G.P.O. when they were fired upon and retreated with three wounded but mobile men. On returning to their base, they were rebuked for their unseemly haste and chided for their precipitate and unheroic retreat.

One man amongst them suggested that if the officer with all the talk led them and arranged covering fire, they would advance again with happier results. The suggestion was acted upon and thirty men raced up Henry Street firing at the G.P.O. and the road barrier at the Mills. Two groups of twenty men advanced behind them, halting, taking aim and advancing again. A Lewis gunner was set up on a third-storey window which covered Henry Street and he carried on a light conversation with the gunners behind the barrier at Russell's Mills. The Lewis gun in Sarsfield Street, having the advantage of height, gained the honours and the scouting party and its supports entered the G.P.O. and found it to be empty. The Post Office now came under heavier fire from the Mills.

For almost a fortnight the Diehards had enjoyed the leisurely occupation of the G.P.O. on the corner of Henry Street—Cecil Street. They had a line of retreat towards the New Barracks by the Post Office Lane and other lanes which ran parallel with the main streets. They also had an opening into the spacious underground sewers to the Telephone Exchange in Number 6 Upper Cecil Street.

In the sewer, they had installed electric light from the plant in the Post Office and could move as they pleased up to the Exchange. In the Exchange, they could listen in on all calls and enjoy the secretly gained information from various points in the city. In the second attack on the Post Office, they retreated up the lanes to the New Barracks and in their haste neglected to burn down the Post Office. The men in the Exchange phoned the latest information and were instructed to burn the Exchange and join the garrison in the Glentworth Hotel, but the Staters emerging from the lighted sewers took them prisoner and prevented the destruction of the Exchange.

The Staters could now enjoy listening in on confidential information and gain the names of those people in their territory who were supplying information to the Diehards and later arrest and intern them. The reaction of the Diehards to the capture of Daly's Bakery and the G.P.O. was that one Free State soldier was shot dead in Waller's Wells, another at the junction of Roche's Street with four other streets, and a third on Boyd's roof water tank. Three civilians also were wounded.

(To be continued).

THORNLEY AND THE SILENT STEVIE

The expulsion of Dr. David Thornley from the Parliamentary Labour Party on April 28th caused little surprise. What was surprising however, was the fact that one of Thornley's bosom friends in the Parliamentary Party, Deputy S. Coughlan, was not among the three members who voted against the expulsion.

Coughlan has often posed as a "republican" and has even claimed to have had a fleeting flirtation with the IRA, during a short period he spent in Co. Kerry. Extensive researches have failed to find any record of Coughlan's IRA activities, so his claim remains almost as big a mystery as that of the missing postman. A close look at Coughlan's record in Limerick clearly shows that his republican veneer could be wiped off with an oil-rag and that it has been exploited solely as a political expediency, depending on the ebb and flow of Catholic nationalism.

At first sight, Thornley and Coughlan might appear to be an incongruous pair, with few common interests. The personal and political differences between the two men appeared to be vast. Coughlan, the Limerick bookie, had failed twice to get elected to the Dail on a Clann na Poblachta ticket, had been rejected as a candidate by Fine Gael and, through his sectarian and anti-democratic activities against socialists, Maoist, Jews and anti-apartheid people, had made Limerick a byword for bigotry and sectarianism. On the other hand, Thornley, the Trinity College man, was a distinguished academic scholar and writer, a political scientist who had been a leading RTE current affairs commentator before becoming a Labour Dail deputy.

What then was the basis of the friendship between Coughlan and Thornley? Coughlan is usually regarded as a figure of fun in the Dail and his rare contributions to debates there have invariably been interjections and hackling remarks from the floor rather than prepared speeches. Following the 1973 general election, when the Coalition Government was being formed, Coughlan had not the slightest hope of getting any kind of Cabinet post. But David Thornley had very strong hopes of landing a leading position in the new Government. After all, he was as politically intelligent and able as the best members of Fine Gael and Labour. But, as he waited desperately and sleeplessly for news of a cabinet appointment, he saw less brilliant colleagues such as Michael O'Leary and James Tully become Ministers, and backwoodsmen like Michael Pat Murphy become Parliamentary Secretaries, while he was passed over. He let his disappointment be widely known and was given the consolation sop of a Labour representative at the European Parliament at Strasbourg.

Thornley had been unable to combine his political and academic duties and became a full-time politician. Following his election to the Dail seven years ago, he tried to provide a constituency service for his constituents. But after his rejection by Cosgrave and Corish, this work began to suffer. He failed to show the same stamina and stomach for the mundane and boring work involved. He began to spend more time in the Dail bar and began to drink more than was good for him.

But his friendship with his fellow-backbencher, Coughlan continued through the seven years. Following his election to the Dail in 1969, his nodding acquaintance with Coughlan soon ripened into friendship. Both men were frequently to be seen in the Dail bar in 1969/70 chatting and laughing heartily. During his term as Mayor of Limerick, Coughlan was also drinking heavily. Following his attacks on all types of left-wing supporters and his support for the 1904 Jewish pogrom, Coughlan's expulsion from the Labour Party was mooted. This move was blocked, mainly through the intervention of Corish and O'Leary. And David Thornley also acted and spoke out vigorously in defence of his drinking mate, Stevie. As a reward perhaps for services rendered, Coughlan invited Thornley to Limerick in September 1970, as guest of honour at the annual dinner of the Limerick Labour Party and Thornley, like a trusted political colleague, did his work well. In his address to

Coughlan's henchmen he attempted to put an intellectual gloss on Stevie's sectarianism. Under the front page heading, "Thornley Raps Coughlan's Critics", the *Limerick Leader* of September 14th, 1970, reported Thornley's speech:

I do not want to touch on the controversies of the past . . . Let me say that I understand the difficulties which my friend, Steve Coughlan has to retain his seat. And if Steve says things which I think are repulsive in a number of things, I have a feeling that he knows what he is doing (laughter). I think he is doing better than those people who write to the "Irish Times" to point out that Albania is the ideal of what a socialist country should be . . . Cliches like the Socialist Republic do not mean very much at all. What we must strive for is to emulate the man who said: "The world is a very unpleasant place with a lot of misery in it, and the most I would like to achieve in my little corner is that when I leave it one day, that corner will be a little less miserable". That is the job of the ordinary Labour T.D.'s - all 17 of them.

It is not recorded if Dr. Thornley now thinks that his former corner in the Labour Party is any less miserable now that he has been put out of it. But it is known that Coughlan kept his "republicanism" in his back pocket during the debate on Thornley's expulsion and remained silent while his friend was being put out.

But at another discussion later the same evening Coughlan's speech made a timely return. As the Minister for Education rose to speak in the Dail at the conclusion of a Fianna Fail motion calling on the Government to disallow the National University of Ireland statute enabling the N.U.I. to confer degrees on students at the National Institute for Higher Education at Plassey House, Limerick, Coughlan objected and asked for more time to speak. Coughlan had, however, no intention of speaking or of voting against the Coalition Government on this issue. But on the other hand Stevie did not want to lose votes for Thady and himself in Limerick by voting against the students' demands. Michael O'Kennedy, the Fianna Fail spokesman, saw through Coughlan's ruse and told him that he was only putting on a show trying to have it both ways and that he did not really want to vote at all. With this Coughlan rushed out of the Dail chamber in a carefully planned action just before the vote was taken.

At the end of his seven years membership of the Parliamentary Party, Thornley remains a sorry figure. He has burned almost all of his political boats and now has a shrinking few options open to him and his support for the Provos is unlikely to cut much ice at the next general election.

The one question unanswered is why Thornley wished to become publicly identified with the Provos. His disappointed political ambitions and his loss of interest in his political work forced him to take short-cuts in his efforts to keep his name before the public. His hospital visit to Mac Stiofain and his appearance on the Provo platform were desperate attempts to keep himself relevant to the issues of the day and in the centre of the political limelight. And his "freedom of speech" formula gave him the cover he badly needed.

But there is another, bigger issue involved. David Thornley has hitched his shaky wagon to a fading Provo star. In January 1965, he wrote a Tuairim pamphlet titled, "Ireland: The End of an Era?", in which he called for a more open Irish Society. Dr. Thornley's support for the Provos has certainly done nothing to make a more open, democratic here.

As a historian, Dr. Thornley has an impressive knowledge of Marxism and European working class history. He could have used this knowledge to democratise Irish society and to bring the Labour Party into the mainstream of European socialism. Instead, he used his talents in support of the Provo campaign to coerce the Northern Protestant population into a so-called "united" Ireland. David Thornley's era in the Parliamentary Labour Party has ended with a whimper, and the Provo campaign is also destined to end in the same squalid way.

ALL IN THE FAMILY WAY

IF THE Minister for Labour, Michael O'Leary, were to lose his job tomorrow he would be entitled, after three years' service, to a pension of £1,300 a year, and if the electorate should reject him as a T.D., he would have a further pension of £1,250 a year. So would other Coalition Ministers: Ministers who were in previous Coalition Governments already have pensions for that effort, so have Fianna Fail ex-Ministers who are now T.Ds or, as in the case of Brian Lenihan, Senators, and, not to forget Noel Browne another ex-Minister pensioner also in the Senate.

Three years' service, a pension of £1,300? I just could not believe it. Seeking enlightenment I asked John Mulcahy, editor of *Hibernia*, if it were true we were dishing out this largesse. "You've got it wrong", he told me. "The £1,300 would be Michael O'Leary's pension only in his first year out of office". "So then it would stop", I ventured. "Again, you've got it wrong", he said, "the pension then goes UP: it is, like all public service pensions, indexed on the cost of living. I take it you know about the cost of living?" I was able to assure him that I did. I know also that you can be *thirty-three* years in a job that is more demanding physically and mentally and less well-paid and get no pension. So is it obviously better to be a legislator than to be one of 'the legislated'. When I protested over lunch with a woman friend who is giving me lessons in being Irish-once-again she snapped at me. "Would you have an ex-Minister or T.D. on the dole!" Bravely, I replied, "Why not!" Signs on she hasn't taken me to Trinity since to hear *The Walls of Limerick* on the melodeon (or was it a concertina? I was afraid to ask). Who needs culture, make me a T.D.!

Small wonder that T.D.'s like to keep these jobs in the family, that the merits of Thady to succeed pensioner Steve are being paraded in advance, that Willie T. groomed Liam, that Desmond Fitzgerald planned the career of Garret (the big G in the middle of his surname shows the right touch of ancestry which the Fitz-sign of bastardy does not in these permissive and enlightened days in any way diminish), that Mrs. Geoghegan-Quinn was moved to leave the kitchen sink . . . All of which brings me to the latest: Mrs. Noel Lemass, widow of Noel Lemass T.D. who was — you've got it right — son of former Taoiseach Sean Lemass, is to contest the Dublin South-West by-election in the interests of Fianna Fail and, coincidentally, in her own interests. Why not? It's a family business, isn't it? Moreover, the political pundits are discovering, albeit a bit late in the day, the Widow Lemass's great interest in public affairs and her administrative flair. Well, well!

She has a fair chance of winning too because of the bickering in the Labour camp. Labour boss for the constituency is the brass-faced Dr. John O'Connell and, at the time of writing, he is sticking out against the Party putting up any candidate who might have a chance of making him fight for *his* seat at the next General Election; for that reason he favours a total drip to carry Labour's colours in a natural Labour constituency, a man he would easily defeat come General Election time. Who's the drip? One of the family — his brother-in-law! What principle is involved in all this? Self-interest, mutton-head. And where does the Labour Party stand in all this? Why, it is waiting for word from the good Doctor, for if he does not approve of the candidate, his workers will not drag out the voters. All of which reminds me of that uncomfortable saying of Hazlitt's 'the love of liberty is the love of others; the love of power is the love of ourselves'. For 'power' substitute 'pension' and you've got it about right for Dublin — and, in due course, Limerick. The boys in office have successfully emasculated Labour and made the Dail an enclave in society ruled by their own customs and private arrangements. The whole thing stinks: when it comes to Limerick's turn you must throw out the stinkers, the political pensioners and their rotten relatives.

BY DERMOT MCEVOY

YOU WERE probably impressed (certainly all Provos were) by the 'solution' to the Irish question put forward by A.J.P. Taylor, the English historian: drive the million Northern Protestants into the sea, British troops having been withdrawn of course. As Mr. Taylor is an agnostic, he did not suggest as an alternative that the stubborn million should first be baptised into the Catholic faith and then consigned to crematoria, or the fishes. My own view is that the incorporation of the six counties of Northern Ireland into an Irish Catholic-dominated state is not desirable for them, or for us. Ulster has had a Protestant majority for more than three centuries and has never formed part of *an independent Irish state*. A large majority of the citizens of Ulster have refused to enter a united Ireland; that is their repeated and unequivocal decision, expressed in free elections: why should they be forced, or even cajoled, into a union they do not want?

There is, after all, no natural or man-made law which states that an island must enjoy political unity, and, if there were such a law, it was abrogated in 1921, when Irish Republicans destroyed the only unity this island has ever known. Other islands — Cyprus, New Guinea, Borneo, Hispaniola — have had to endure partition, and even the peaceful Scandinavians have failed to unify their isolated peninsula. The vast majority of the world's islands are political appendages of their larger neighbours, and few of them, not even giants like Sicily and Sumatra, have combined unity with independence. Why then should there be such a fuss about a united Ireland? Largely, I think, because a semantic aberration has given rise to a myth, that of a single and unique Irish people, still struggling to free itself from — who can doubt it? — the clutches of British imperialism. To talk of an Irish people is absurd, but it is this absurd terminology that has fostered the pernicious illusion that the Northern Irish are somehow a mere tribal offshoot from the great central stem of the Irish people, with no claim to be considered a separate people in their own right.

In reality, no such entity as the *Irish people* exists. If the ghastly sectarian murders have proved anything, it is that there are two peoples in Ireland, who have been polarized by conflicting loyalties into a total and irreconcilable antipathy. Each of the two peoples in Ireland is rightly to be regarded as the sovereign ruler of the land it occupies; if one of them chooses to associate itself with a non-Irish state it has a perfect right to do so. The only equitable solution is for the 26-County Government to repeal the de Valera Constitution that claims the whole of Ireland as the "national territory".

Let it be remembered that both peoples in this island (yes, even the Celtic Irish) acquired their present territories by dispossessing previous occupants. Or do you think that three hundred years' resistance does not entitle the separate and distinct Protestant people in the North to a squatter's title? How many hundreds of years must elapse before their title is as good as our own? Without the Provos, the Officials, the IRSP, the Fianna Fail Republicans, the Blaneyites and, don't let's forget it, the obscurantist nature of the Catholic Church in Ireland, we might, just might, have achieved unity by consent and a pluralist society where we'd share and share alike. For our present murderous mess we can thank all these shades of Republicans and bogus Christians, not forgetting Steve Coughlan who still thinks it was the perfidious Jews who crucified Christ. Which reminds me:

How odd
Of God
To Choose
The Jews.

and the rejoinder:
Not half so odd
As those
Who choose
A Jewish God
Yet spurn the Jews.

But then the Coughlans, Steve and Thady, are obviously in a class of their own.

SPIRITUAL standards and the eternal verities have a high place in my thinking, at any rate when I'm not engaged in combating the wicked grocer by shoplifting in the interests of mathematics. For that reason and while our new Culture is being fought over by supporters of Dr. Conor Cruise O'Brien and Dr. Newman in the columns of the *Irish Times*, I offer readers some thoughts by the Rev. Chad Varah, founder of the Samaritans, who, replying to the Archbishop of York's 'call to the nation', has this to say: "Our nation (Britain) has always responded to an inspired call to tackle the real enemy, as it did in 1940. The reason why it is uninterested in the call by Church leaders is that advocacy of censorship and condemnation of sex, etc. are both wrong and irrelevant to our problems. The Church will have to get to grips with the real evils, in a Christlike manner, before our basically religious people take it seriously". Chad Varah is, of course, referring to the Church favoured by our "separated brethern", but his comment seems worthy of study by leaders of the Irish Catholic Church who never seem to make pronouncements about the less sophisticated tensions, the nagging worries brought about by illness, unemployment or problems of education.

As regards education, I, for instance, no Catholic bishop, or Protestant either, has come out in condemnation of a system that transmits an existing social order from one generation to the next. There is no doubt that the rich get more education because they are rich, and as education is the key to future income, they thereby perpetuate their economic advantage. Children going to low-income schools are taught different work habits from those going to elite schools; the former learn to accept hierarchy, to conform to the system and 'their station in life'; in schools that prepare their students for managerial positions, emphasis is shifted to self-discipline, initiative, creative and critical thinking. Must the poor always be deprived, down to their children's children? Or should they have fewer children so that by making dreadful sacrifices, not demanded of the rich, those few can be bought a better education? How about it Drs. Browne, Lucey and Newman?

One does not have to be an agnostic to see the commonsense of Family Planning, or a Communist to demand equal opportunities for all children, or a libertine to regard

divorce as a reasonable way to end a marriage that has irretrievably broken down. For what it's worth, I advocate all these things. No bishop issues statements, irritable or otherwise, on my behalf about the problems that beset us; these problems are all too clear to me and thousands like me. We are not conned any more: we want fair dos and we'll get 'em no matter who has to go to the wall; we have nothing to lose but our chains! Good populist stuff our clerical readers may say; But, of course. And now, pray, what do *you* say? What is *your* truth? O.K?

No hard feelings though. Indeed, here's a little ammunition for Dr. Newman: Dr. Conor Cruise O'Brien has probably forgotten that he wrote in *Michelet Today* of "... the resignations of agnosticism, one of the artificial paradises". Small wonder that Dr. O'Brien, having chosen agnosticism, finds himself in that sublime artificiality, the paradise (or, if you like, coalition) of all the talents. Consorting too with mongrel foxes, serves him right!

SELLING like hot cakes in Easons in Dublin is *The Further Experiences of Emmanuelle*, another piece of hard-core pornography by the author of *Emmanuelle*, a book, if you could call it that, for which Easons provided a special display stand in its main hall. I'm not advertising this dreadful rubbish but merely questioning why Easons prefers to find space for it and will not, in its Limerick branch, stock the *Limerick Socialist*. Come to think of it, if Easons goes on displaying pornography, the *Limerick Socialist* might not want to be displayed on its shelves. Meanwhile, our readers might ask the manager in O'Connell Street to explain his head office policy. After all, he sells the works of Karl Marx...

A paperback you might buy though is *Ladies and Gentlemen, Lenny Bruce* (not at Easons of course till you get a reasonable explanation). One of Lenny's funniest pieces is about the much written-up Forest Lawn cemetery: he sits behind a desk and talks to customers on the phone: "Yes, madam? Please don't take up our time with a lot of extraneous details! We do a volume business here. What time did you say your husband died? Three o'clock? Well, put him on the front porch and we'll pick him up at five... The basic price of our funeral is eight hundred dollars - to break ground. But we have a dirt-saving plan where we bury you in cement. Wouldn't you like to be part of that new freeway that's going out to Sawtelle?" The American Way of Death, as operated by your friendly funeral undertaker?

Note to investors: Anyone who put £100 in a building society in 1953 and, wait for it!, let the interest accumulate would now have £241. But, wait for it!, it would be worth only what you could have bought for £72 in 1973. And they tell you to be thrifty!

See you on The Late Late!

Family planning

The Limerick Family Planning Clinic has made considerable progress since its opening three months ago. Located at 6, Cornmarket Row, the clinic now has an average of over 50 enquiries per week. People from all parts of the city and from Clare, Tipperary, and County Limerick have consulted the clinic about its range of services.

The clinic is open for three sessions per week, and an educational service is also in operation. Literature available includes booklets on family planning and one publication gives a simple explanation of various family planning methods.

All literature and supplies are dispatched in plain envelopes. Those who would like information on the clinic should write to 6, Cornmarket Row, Limerick, enclosing a stamped addressed envelope.

Moves are now being made to provide full medical facilities at the clinic. The clinic at present offers a comprehensive postal and collection service, including the supply of condoms,

contraceptive jelly, pessaries and diaphragms.

The clinic sessions are held on Tuesday (6.30 to 8.30 in the evening) Thursdays, 10.00 to 12 noon, and on Friday evenings for two and a half hours beginning at 7 p.m. Any donations would be welcomed by the clinic as a contribution towards the provision of a full range of family planning facilities in Limerick.

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**DAYS OF THE
"BOTTOM DOG"**

PART FIVE

THE REPUBLIC

Throughout 1918, Limerick was going through a period of social and political ferment. Definite strands of opinion were becoming clear in the ranks of the labour movement. Echoes of the continuing battle against capitalism and of the growing strength of Sinn Fein found expression in the "underground" press of the time.

Officers of the United Labour and Trades Council, notably Secretary, Ben Dineen, through his writings in the "Bottom Dog", forecast the coming clash between workers and employers. Men like M.J. O'Connor organiser for the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union worked to strengthen the trade union movement through increased membership. One of the overriding factors of the day was the allegiance "to the Republic", declared in blood by Pearse and Connolly outside the GPO in 1916.

The Rising, a squalid and dismal failure in military terms, served to unite a dissenting people in a common aim. The blood sacrifice had been made. The fight had to be carried on . . . and Connolly's use of the Citizen Army had subordinated labour to the nationalist cause. It was not clear at the time, but the embryo socialist movement had perished in the flames of the GPO.

Two years on, nationalism had forged unchallenged to the front. During 1918, Limerick papers like the "Bottom Dog" and "The Factionist" served the labour and nationalist struggles respectively. Their writings alternated between working class radicalism and nationalist conservatism. It was a stirring time; there was a flexing of the people's muscles as they asserted their nationhood, and a growing antagonism towards British rule.

But inside the trade union movement there were differences. The labour and national strands became interwoven and inevitably merged. In the end, one would have to win . . . one would have to wait.

In Limerick, the conflict was seen within the Trades Council. After the death of Ben Dineen in November 1918, the "Bottom Dog" slipped into the forgotten archives of trade union history. Its message: "We must look at life in all its aspects from the point of view of the "Bottom Dog" — the oppressed be it nation, class, or sex", was no longer being preached through the streets of Limerick. The torch had passed to another publication, and it became the voice of the triumphalist nationalism . . . "The Republic" came out in November 1918 with a quote from P.H. Pearse across the masthead: "I do not know how nationhood is achieved except by armed men; I do not know how nationhood is guarded except by armed men".

And the men were arming themselves in Limerick. Some of these men were also involved in the growing trade union movement, as was shown when an active trade unionist, Robert Byrne, of Town Wall Cottage, was arrested for possessing a revolver and ammunition.

"If you have not got a gun — beg, steal or borrow one", declare "The Republic", which openly preached revolt against British rule in Ireland. Bobby Byrne was to give his life living up to that slogan. He was adjutant of an IRA Brigade in Limerick, and was a former delegate to the Trades Council. Despite Byrne's trade union activities, his nationalistic leanings and his willingness to pursue the "brave and glorious Republic" were the dominating forces in his life.

Byrne's arrest and trial before a military tribunal in February 1919 aroused considerable unrest in the city. He was sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment. Inside the Mulgrave Street jail, he began a series of protests including hunger strike, demanding to be treated as a political prisoner. The authorities would not concede this demand and Byrne, in a weak condition, was moved to the Union Hospital in the Shelbourne Road. Throughout this time, a vigorous campaign was carried on by "The Republic", and even the Trades and

Labour Council got caught up in the general hysteria at the time.

The fact that Byrne had been Council delegate gave him some standing in local trade union movement and the Council therefore had a duty to ask questions about his welfare. The fact that he was an IRA man and a member of an illegal organisation was not, however, questioned, and it is clear from its statements at this time that the Trades Council had succumbed to the potent nationalistic influence.

On Sunday April 6th, 1919 the tragedy of Bobby Byrne came to its bloody end. A large force of IRA men attacked the five policemen guarding him in the hospital. A Constable O'Brien was shot dead and another policeman seriously wounded. In the struggle Byrne was wounded and his fellow IRA men brought him to a farmhouse where he died, shortly after eight o'clock that night.

Byrne's funeral was used by Sinn Fein for a massive military style demonstration. The British military authorities, fearing more trouble and bloodshed, stepped in and "proclaimed" the city of Limerick. Barriers were placed on all roads leading to the city and special permits had to be shown by all people passing these barriers. The rest of the story is a well-known chapter in local labour history.

The Limerick General Strike, or Soviet of April 1919 is well documented. Yet, even to-day, fifty-seven years later, a number of puzzling mysteries remain. A strike that has too often been seen as a declaration of strength and an expression of militancy by the working class, must now be re-assessed. Was it really a dramatic milestone in the labour/capital struggle, or was it just another tactic in the nationalist struggle against Britain?

Why did the strike end so suddenly? At the time, workers, through their strike committee, controlled the whole city. For nearly two weeks, they were the power. The Queen's Writ failed to run in Limerick. Yet, "The Republic" spewed out nothing but contempt for the Trades Council. Why? Could it be that the Trades Council felt that it could not continue to allow Limerick workers to be exploited for nationalistic purposes by Sinn Fein? Or was the strike a brief and glorious realisation of a dream, destined to die in the hard reality of a broader, nationalistic struggle?

A clue to the answer of these questions is given in "The Republic" of May 3rd 1919. Under the heading "The Debacle" it said: "Once again Limerick has vouchsafed the opportunity of striking a smashing blow for Irish freedom, and once again has Limerick bowed the knee in shameful submission to the Army of Occupation. To anyone who was present outside the Mechanics' Institute, it was patently manifest that the surrender of the nincompops who call themselves the "Leaders of Labour" in Limerick came as a death blow to the hopes of the thousands who had assembled in expectation for hearing a message of quite a different character".

"The Republic", calling for, and encouraging, armed revolt, made no attempt to disguise its disappointment at the ending of the strike. A few days afterwards, the British lifted their martial law. The city returned to normal. The IRA and Sinn Fein, through papers like "The Republic" preached the message of Easter 1916 and within two years the British were leaving.

The death of Bobby Byrne was recorded by "The Republic".

*Another martyr for Ireland
Another name on the scroll
Another son gone bravely forth
To fight for his Mother's soul.*

*They tried to break his spirit
In the darkness of their jails
Forgetting the heart that holds Right
Is the heart that never quails.*

*Onward, no crepe on our banners,
No cloth on the clamorous drums;
But remember O'Byrne of Limerick
When the day of reckoning comes.*

NEW YORK JOTTINGS

BY BILLY LEONARD

We are living in a crisis city. Unemployment averages 13 per cent; it's much higher in black neighbourhoods. Budget cuts forced by Federal aid threaten jobs, schools, libraries, day-care and drug centers. The financial moguls who now call the tune are undermining or dismantling all the radical programs that made New York City justly famous. Like free tuition at the City University. Or open enrollment that was designed to give an educational boost to blacks and minorities. Two of the University's 20 colleges are being shut down; two others are being downgraded.

Meanwhile, jobs are disappearing. Light manufacturing fled the city in the late Forties and Fifties. Now the big corporations are moving out. Most of them are headed for the so-called Sun-Belt states that stretch from the Carolines to Texas and Arizona. It's conservative country, politically speaking. Labour is cheap and unions are weak. And our tired executives can enjoy their martinis in more congenial surroundings.

Another target of the financial moguls and their satraps, the big landlords, is rent control. Controls were imposed during World War II. They don't apply to new buildings erected after 1954 where the sky is the limit. Most of the controls have been whittled down but the landlords are not satisfied. They want them phased out for good. To that end, they are applying enormous economic clout; they are withholding their realty and water taxes. More than one billion dollars to date. They are also abandoning whole blocks of apartment buildings in the poorer areas. They bought these buildings originally with a small cash outlay only to milk them dry in three years and then move out and on to the next tip-off. "Free enterprise" at work.

Our political king-makers are happiest when no aspirant for the White House snares enough delegate strength to put him over the top — in the first ballot or the fiftieth. That's so they can wheel and deal in the backrooms and barter votes for patronage. They expect such an impasse will occur this coming July when the Democratic National Convention convenes at Madison Square Garden. At the moment, the only threat to their plans is in the person of a peanut farmer from Georgia, Jimmy Carter. Carter is piling up delegate strength and is confident that he will be a shoo-in. The politicians are equally confident they can upset his apple cart. Already they have handed him a setback in New York.

In the event of a deadlocked convention, the guess here is that Hubert Horatio Humphrey will be dusted off and presented to the delegates as the "compromise" candidate. Carter may be handed the consolation prize — the nomination for Vice-President. He might even accept. After all, Senator Humphrey is long in the tooth and might not last out the four-year-term if elected.

Meanwhile, President Ford is likely to get the Republican nod despite the strong challenge from right-winger Ronald

Reagan. Right now, the pollsters give the lackluster and bumbling Ford the edge in a race with the senator from Minnesota.

One of the winning delegates in our New York primary was Jean O'Leary, a petite 28-year-old former nun from Ohio. Jean, who calls herself a "lesbian-feminist" sees her main priorities at the Democratic National Convention as adoption of planks backing women's rights and gay issues. She is frank in discussing her sex preference. "I think I'd known I was a lesbian since I was in the third grade in parochial school", she said the other day. "I didn't know the name for it, but I knew I loved women".

Jean went from her Catholic high school to a convent run by the order of the Holy Humility of Mary. She took her vows as a nun and even wore a habit that "seemed like it had fifty pieces to it". Later on, she read an article by an anonymous lesbian in a popular magazine. It told about Greenwich Village and the sexual freedom that is found there. So she set aside the habit and lit out for Fun City. She has never looked back.

New York's hookers are organising. The other day they held a televised news conference to announce the birth of PONY — or Prostitutes Organisation of New York. Their articulate spokeswoman argued that since prostitution is a victimless crime, hookers should not be subjected to periodic harassment by the cops. The gals are seeking union affiliation and have the strong backing of civil libertarians.

Every so often, our politicians — egged on by sky pilots and like-minded 'guardians' of our morals — order a roundup of the hookers. As onlookers hoot and jeer, the cops corral the gals in batches and take them to the slammer. Later in Night Court, a magistrate more attuned to civil rights than the politicians will throw out the charges. The hookers will return to their stake-outs and it's business as usual. Until the next silly round.

Friends of the Kennedys in their White House years are now saying that JFK might have been less of a skirt-chaser if Jackie had been less aloof as a wife. As one put it: "She rationed her love like oil during the embargo". Jackie's sister, Princess Lee Radziwill, was more explicit. She once told a friend: "Jackie believes sex is untidy".

One night at the White House, Jackie shut her door on the impatient President. She told him she was "not in the mood". He banged on the door, imploring her to open up. She refused. Then, loud enough for the gossipy White House staff to overhear, the Chief Executive shouted: "I can make the Russians move their missiles from Cuba. I can order the world's most powerful military machine into action. But I can't get my own wife to go to bed with me".

With that, "Jack the Zipper" stormed out of the mansion, took the wheel of a fast car and sped through the Washington night to the beckoning bed of a girl friend.

The day of reckoning came. It was not socialist against nationalist, but brother against brother. Pearse's armed men "to guard nationhood" had arrived.

De Valera's words: "Labour would have to wait" sounded the requiem for the socialist movement. Nationalism had won a complete and bloodless victory over the weaker labour movement.

Onward, no crepe on our banners

No cloth on the clamorous drums . . .

. . . in the midst of bad housing, disease, unemployment . . .

But remember O'Bryne of Limerick

When the day of reckoning comes . . .

. . . the boat to England. A London building site. The Dole Queues . . . Hungry children . . . Sectarian state . . .

In 1918, the "Bottom Dog" had pointed the way towards a social and economic order which would have meant . . .

We mean to wear and share the wealth

Amassed by muscle, brain and health,

Some pleasure when the day is past,

With rod and hook,

Spade, cycle, book,

A decent home where love may last . . .

It is possible to find the aims of the two struggling forces in the poetic lines of "The Republic" and the "Bottom Dog". Contrast, "To fight for his Mother's soul" ("The Republic") with, "We mean to wear and share the wealth" ("Bottom Dog"). These two lines, taken from two forgotten Limerick papers in 1918, capture the essence of the different philosophies espoused by the Irish socialist and nationalist movements. To-day the same kind of nationalists are still marching on . . . remembering . . . and waiting. And the labour movement still tailends the nationalists (where it does not stand aside) in its action and in its thinking. It has failed to learn the lesson from what happened in Limerick in 1919.

concluded.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Brass Monkey Musical Competition?

CIVIC WEEK – INTERNATIONAL BAND PARADE

Much has been said and written about the recent Limerick Civic Week, which staged an International Band Competition as one of its major attractions, playing international or Western music (not to be confused with Country & Western); and a remarkable thing about Western music is that we get a harmonious effect when instruments (and voices) are reasonably in tune, in spite of the many discordant elements which may be present. And out of tune playing or singing sounds dreadful, here or anywhere else.

The playing of musical instruments in tune depends almost entirely on the skill and ability of the musician, who, in turn, depends on this or her previous training together with performing environment to produce a good or bad showing. The velocity of sound in air varies with temperature, and goes up 60 ft./sec. with a change from 0° to 30° Centigrade (32° to 86 Degrees Fahrenheit). As the pitch of wind instruments is affected by the velocity of sound, it follows that a rise in temperature will also raise the pitch, and this goes up by about 5%, or nearly a semitone, with a rise in air temperature of 15°C. or 27°F. For this reason, the wind instruments in a band are warmed up before a performance begins. It follows that under some conditions – like those weather conditions that prevailed on the March Sunday morning of the Limerick International Band Competition – that there would be much variation in the pitch of wind instruments played by most of the bands, Irish or foreign, on that day.

Having looked at the mechanical considerations of playing music under such conditions, one must look at the other conditions that affected the many musicians and performers – some dressed, some scantily clad – on that cold and wet Sunday morning. Many of the Irish visiting musicians had travelled to Limerick early that day to be at their place of assembly in O'Connell Avenue by 10.30 a.m., and to be shunted like trains into position by the Competition marshals. It was cold and windy in O'Connell Avenue, but at least there were toilet facilities in the Technical School, although this fact would not be widely known by the visitors. Even before the march started at all, performers were being affected by the intense cold. Some made efforts at keeping warm by playing marches and having the high-kicking majorettes tried desperately to keep warm in their brief costumes by doing some march routines. Others tried to keep hands warm by putting same in uniform pockets. By the time the parade started at 11.30 a.m., the musicians and their instruments were very cold, and this did not auger well for a good show by any band, despite what the public might have thought to the contrary.

The parade proceeded . . . stopped . . . proceeded . . . and stopped again . . . The musicians got colder and colder as did the spectators, but at least the latter had the option to take themselves to warmer places. The rain came down, the wind blew up, the performance of the musicians deteriorated to a low ebb but the show went on, and marks were allotted to the badly debilitated bands. The parade eventually wound up in the Clare Street area, over two hours later, with no toilet facilities available, not to mention a cup of hot tea or soup. By this time, at least two musicians had collapsed with the cold and the Boherbouy Band's drummer had dropped his drumstick and caused his numbed hands to bleed.

The Mayor, a Government Minister, and some other dignitaries made speeches and handed out prizes to frozen and famished musicians. Someone said that an American band won most of the prizes as it was used to playing in sub-arctic conditions. In any event, the whole affair was then over, and

performers went to their respective buses and rooms to recover from what must have been an unforgettable ordeal.

When Civic Week was over, we read in the papers of the huge tourist revenue that came to Limerick as a result of the parade and other events. Did anyone try to ascertain how many musicians and spectators were absent from work the following day or week recovering from various colds and flu caused by the weather conditions during this March madness? It would be an exercise in humanity, if nothing else, for the organisers of the International Band Competition to put the consideration of local and visiting musicians alongside that of tourist revenue and to hold this parade, if not the full civic week, at a time of the year when warmer weather – if not drier conditions – could be expected. To fill the vacant spot left by the changed date of the band parade, perhaps the Shannonside Tourist Organisation could substitute a Brass Monkey Musical Competition. But then, even the renowned and durable appendages of these worthies might have difficulty in surviving the freezing winds of a March Sunday morning in Limerick.

Michael Dillon.

BALLHOPS

The startling disclosure from the American Senate Committee investigating the activities of the CIA has stunned sportsmen in Limerick. It was disclosed last week that the CIA gave over £1 million to the GAA. It is understood that the money was used to promote hurling throughout the 32 Counties.

"There was some great hurling of bombs into the pubs along the Shankhill Road", said one source close to the G.A.A. "Tis a fine sport altogether. It is also a native game, so the Ban rule is not broken", he stated.

Limerick Soccer Club issued a statement yesterday saying that it was unfair that all the money went to the GAA. "The Grab All Association never lost it. Our club is in a bad way and we certainly would have liked some of the lolly", said a spokesman. "We would even be prepared to give the CIA representation on our Board of Directors", he added.

The Southill Community Council through its PRO stated that they had received no money from the CIA. "It would have been spent on the many worth while activities of the Council, such as holding socials, and presenting colour television sets to priests", he said. However, a local resident was of the opinion that the money would have been better spent trying to eliminate the plague of Salvia Court rats.

The Limerick connection in the CIA affair follows allegations by Deputy Stephen Coughlan that the CIA had secretly bought the Sally Grove on the Abbey River to provide a local base for its activities in combatting socialist tendencies with the Limerick Fine Gael branches.

The people of Limerick last night issued an appeal to the Government to go back to work. "The situation has now being reached where the Ministers, if seen to return to normal working hours, would earn the respect of the citizens", said Cllr. Mick Crowe at a City Council meeting. Cllr. Crowe said last evening that the situation could be described as an "all-out" one, as most of the Ministers seemed to spend most of their time out of the country.

"I'm all for knocking down walls", said the Mayor Cllr. Thady Coughlan, when he addressed nuns at the Presentation Convent recently. He said it would only be right if the wall between the Christian Brothers and the Sisters were knocked. "There are now no divisions between Labour and Fine Gael and their union has been a happy one", he stated. "After all, two can live as cheaply as one", he added. A spokeswoman at the Convent was aghast at the Mayor's suggestion. "What", she re-echoed, "we would then have no wall to jump over . . . that would take all the fun out of it".