

LIMERICK SOCIALIST

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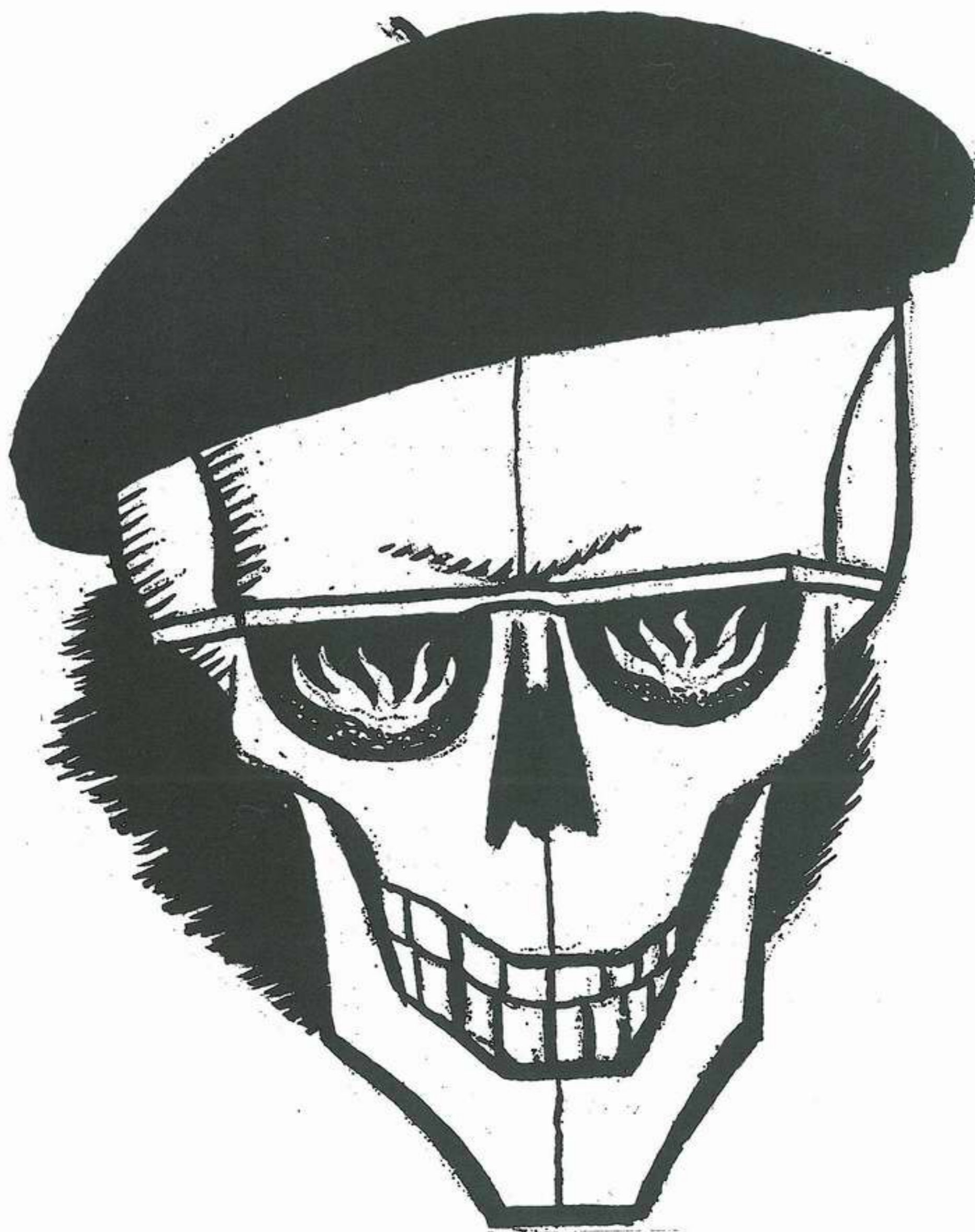
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VOLUME 10 NO. 10

THE
VOICE
OF THE
WORKER

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

THE HUNGER STRIKE ENDS



JOURNEYINGS

By James Dwyer

THE BELL TAVERN

A certain upright posture of these gentlemen of the city indicates something of the real Limerick man. Also a full concentration on the cards they are playing while all the time retaining humour and balance.

Their faces are red and rosy from fresh air and outdoor work or pale and wizened from an interior life.

The room is hung with rugby pictures, trophies and maps and drink signs.

The customers are mostly men without their wives; but this being Sunday there is a scattering of women on their own drinking light beer. The women of my native place are beautiful but have an arabic addiction to bright colours. To the left a woman dressed in pink and brown, next to her a woman in electric blue.

Their faces and eyes reflect the history of the city - gay

sadness that pervades. There appears to be a mirror in their eyes.

No matter how often I come here I am always amazed at the control the landlord, Mick Quane, has over his customers. He is a fine well built man with a strong determined face. He holds to standards of behaviour which he applies to his customers. He runs his pub well, serving customers new and old with equal regard.

The inner room is reserved for the younger men who play snooker and darts. It is painted orange and is dominated by a black Victorian fireplace.

Mick's answer to my question regarding the sign over the bar.

'The Bear's Head 1640'.

'It was an old ale-house before the siege. Red and cream plastic tiles on the floor dirtied by feet and spilt beer.

A MEETING WITH CLAUD COCKBURN

Ballyrafter House, Lismore, Co. Waterford. I went down to the Cathedral at 11.30 a.m., walked a little around the graveyard and in the Cathedral itself with the sun shining in, all alone with flowers and memorials, especially one inscribed about a young man dying in 1820. Thence to **Clairvaux**, Dervla Murphy's home, where I had a drink while I read an extract from Claud Cockburn's autobiography which was published in the weekend supplement to **The Irish Times**. Dervla had arranged for us to call on the Cockburns in Ardmore that afternoon. We had lunch and then set out for Ardmore going by little country sunlit breezy tracks, over steep hills up and down, controlling the car and I slightly stoned on it all.

Soon we arrived in Ardmore which I have not seen for twenty-one years and don't remember at all. The town is perched on a cliff like promontory overlooking a mile long strand which ends in large rocks. We, Dervla, Rachel and I having parked the car on the sea front, set out for a walk along the beach. The wind was blowing a gale. The sun was shining. The wind scattered the sand in patterns so that it seemed as if one were walking on a moving surface. Rachel had 'Toot' her terrier with her, and the dog was in a ecstasy of delight with the whole scene, scampering about, scuttling after pieces of seaweed, picking them up with his teeth in order for us to throw them for him. We walked to the end of the beach to the point where the rocks begin. Coming back we had the wind behind us and a view of Ardmore perched on the side of a cliff, to one side the round tower.

We drove from the seafront up a narrow road like Monte Carlo and I had to do a three point turn to negotiate my way to the right road. We came to a white house with blue painted windows. We descended some steps to a flagged yard. At the hall door we were welcomed by Patricia Cockburn who showed us into the drawing room. Sitting on the right hand side of a

large leather settee was Claud Cockburn - a frail looking but healthy gentleman at home. I was instructed to open some Guinness which was on a table next to the door of this grey Georgian room.

Dervla, questioned by Claud as to how she had come to write the nuclear book, **Race to the Finish**, to be published by John Murray next month, answered that it was the result of pressure from several friends. Patricia spoke of the North Yemen where one of her sons (Patrick? Alexander?), who is Middle Eastern correspondent for the **Financial Times** had been recently, of how the President of that country sleeps in a tank, and how there are strange unexplored ancient cities in the desert of 2,000 B.C. and of how there are hundreds of tribes all fighting each other in that country.

Claud Cockburn spoke of his father who was a British diplomat in China at the age of seventeen and of how his sister had been born during the Boxer Rebellion. He told the story of how his father met the Governor of the province he was stationed in and the whole army was called out on parade on that occasion. His first language was Chinese and he regrets that his father, who spoke the language, did not continue its use after their return from China. He also spoke of his hallucinations during a recent illness when he thought the house was surrounded by bloodthirsty Chinese pirates. He seemed pleased by the feature on his book in both the London and Irish **Times** today.

Then Patricia brought us downstairs through a pantryish hall to her workroom which must be kept locked from the cats. A light airy room where she makes shell pictures. There in boxes and containers of all descriptions is kept the shells with which she works. She had some very delicate and detailed examples of her work to show us.

We went back upstairs. Patricia asked Dervla if she would like some fresh herbs from the garden. I went to go into the garden with them but Claud asked me to stay. We had a little conversation, I admired the river and he said that it was a distraction from writing books on which he could gaze for an hour.

His stick fell from the settee and as I went to retrieve it he stopped me saying, 'It's only my stick'.

I said goodbye and left him sitting by his fire in his eerie overlooking the sea. Rachel had come to fetch me and I went to the back of the house where I found Dervla and Patricia examining the fence of a wood. Dervla went back into the house to say her goodbye and we set off once more for Lismore.

THE HUNGER STRIKE ENDS

Throughout the H-Block hunger strike, Socialists Against Nationalism opposed the prevailing Southern viewpoint that the whole business was about humanitarian prison reform. We maintained that it was firstly about the restoration of political status, and above all, that it was essentially a battle of political wills between the IRA and the British Government - an integral part of IRA strategy and war effort.

Republic demands, even ostensibly major ones, are never primarily concerned with the demands themselves. They are always a test of political strength, a focus for anti-British activities and a rallying point along the road to their ultimate goal - enforced Irish unity. Provisional supporters may try to claim Prior's reforms as a sort of consolation prize, but since reform was not the central issue in the campaign, this is no victory. A measure of the IRA's victory would have been the extent of the climbdown which they sought to force on the British Government. Only if the Provisionals had proved themselves the stronger in the political battle with the Government could the hunger strike have been a success for them, and this they failed to do.

INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE

Another Provisional attempt to find a silver lining is to point to the widespread national and international publicity and sympathy aroused by their campaign. But publicity and sympathy is not an end in itself; it is only a means to an end. If all the support and sympathy which the IRA could muster is proved to be insufficient to force the concessions they demand, that is not a victory. That is a major defeat. What the Provisionals have done is expose their own limitations. They pulled out all the stops, tapped every possible source of support and sympathy from New York to New Delhi, struck every emotive chord they could ever hope to strike - and it just wasn't enough.

NATIONAL PRESSURE

The Provisionals succeeded to an extraordinary extent in swinging the nationalist establishment, lay and clerical, behind their campaign. The IRA pretend to believe (and undoubtedly, many of their less sophisticated supporters do believe) that

anything less than uncritical and explicit support for the war effort and its subsidiary campaigns is outright betrayal. In fact the IRA leadership must know that the constitutional wing of the anti-partition campaign maintains its respectable credentials by keeping a certain distance from the men of violence. They can argue that the way to avoid both is to avoid confrontation with the IRA. The way to avoid confrontation is to concede to their demands. That is how Fianna Fail, the SDLP and Cardinal O'Fiaich weighed into the H-Block campaign - by placing the onus for settlement exclusively on Britain, and using all their international contacts to urge a British surrender. But the combined efforts of the constitutional and unconstitutional wings of anti-partitionism were not enough to force a British climbdown.

FAILURE

The IRA used the H-Block campaign to rouse every gut-nationalist and primeval mob-instinct to prepare Irish Catholics for a tribal race war in pursuit of their war effort against Northern Protestants. But while they had considerable success amongst a section of Northern Catholics, they failed to make impact on anything like the same scale in the South. The campaign peaked after the first few deaths and public interest, particularly in the South, fell away dramatically. It was this which forced a break in the republican camp. The prisoners' relatives were more likely to intervene, and the prisoners more likely to let them, when the value of their intended sacrificial deaths became increasingly questionable.

REALISM NEEDED

Northern Catholics should now consider realistically the extent to which the Southern population is willing to commit itself for the recovery of the fourth green field. They must now realise that Charles Haughey and Sile de Valera are filling them with unreal expectations. The current debate on Articles 2 and 3 further illustrates the extent to which large sections of Southern society is disinclined to plunge gaily into civil war. And that, more than anything else, underlines the central failure of the H-Block campaign: a campaign which was intended to drag us all a step nearer to sectarian civil war.

KEMMY IN BRIGHTON

Those members of the British Labour Party at the conference in Brighton who attended a fringe meeting organised by the campaign for Labour representation in Northern Ireland had an unusual experience. They encountered for the first time a socialist from the Irish Republic who had not come to canvass support in the Labour Party for the Nationalist campaign to force the North into a united Ireland.

Rather, he stated plainly that it was the duty of socialists to oppose that campaign in all its manifestations, and to seek the removal of Articles 2 and 3 of the Republic's constitution, which provide moral justification for the IRA's military campaign.

That socialist was Jim Kemmy. He spoke to a packed meeting in Brighton, sharing a platform with Frank Allaun, MP, former chairman of the Labour Party, and Eamonn O'Kane, chairman of the Campaign in Northern Ireland. (The Campaign

exists to persuade the Labour Party to organise in Northern Ireland, on the grounds that it is the only party which could unite Catholic and Protestant workers on class issues).

Jim Kemmy pointed to the irony on the Labour Party adopting a policy of Irish unity at a time when there were signs that the Republic was drawing back from nationalism. He suggested that the Labour Party would be better occupied in supporting the efforts of socialists in the Republic who were seeking democratic social reform - a divorce law, a proper family planning service, a fair tax system and full employment - a programme which the Labour Party in Britain has taken for granted for years.

As far as Northern Ireland is concerned, he urged the Labour Party to organise there, and help to develop socialist politics, instead of heightening sectarian tensions by supporting nationalism.

ARTICLES 2 AND 3 MUST GO

Our campaign is taking off. Socialists against Nationalism began the democratic counter-attack in the middle of the H-Block hunger strike. From the beginning of that unsavoury crusade, we had pointed out that the IRA was trying to stampede the people into a disastrous All-Ireland conflict. We went on to demand the repeal of the territorial claim and the removal of sectarian legislation.

Articles 2 and 3 claim explicit right for the Republic to rule Northern Ireland. They make a nonsense of any notion of unity by consent. If we have some inalienable right to rule the North, it follows, that we don't need anyone's consent to do so. The attempts of the IRA to put this claim into effect have led to years of bloodshed, and brought no social advances for anyone, North or South. People who do not want war must challenge this territorial claim which is the ideological pillar of those who do.

A SAN delegation led by Jim Kemmy met Garret Fitzgerald on August 19th and urged him to lead the movement for democratic reform. He is now making an effort to do so. All credit to him for his courage.

COME IN COMRADES!

Alas, we can't give the same credit to the would-be socialists. The proper place for socialists, and especially socialist TDs, is at the head of this movement. Apart from Jim Kemmy and Socialists Against Nationalism, we don't see them there. What's the problem, comrades? The dead generations, maybe?

If we give you the authority of the dead for ignoring the dead, would that help? "The dead have no rights" said George Washington, who was greatly admired by Wolfe Tone, a man of the same attitude. That should be the attitude of socialists. They should have the moral courage to stand up to Haughey, de Valera and all such bone-rattlers. Síle de Valera is content to belong to the third generation of the dead. That's her privilege.

O'LEARY SAYS ...

"The Unionists, of course, cannot be left under the illusion that their position can remain unchanged. In regard to Articles 2 and 3, I really don't think that we can change these without parallel progress from London" (Michael O'Leary; Sunday Press, interview, 4/10/1981). In other words: if the British would coerce the Unionists for us, we might recognise that the Unionists have a right not to be coerced.

SINN FEIN ABU

"Let me make it quite clear that we do not believe in abandoning our claim to any part of the full national territory" (Joe Sherlock, RTE radio interview; 12/6/81). No need for other words! Sinn Fein the Workers' Party backs the bone-rattlers.

.....

The lumber of sectarianism, class discrimination and territorial hang-ups that nationalism has left in the state must be cleared out of it, so that a new generation can develop freely, in peace with its neighbours. People who treasure any part of this lumber will be of little help in clearing the rest of it. Articles 2 and 3 are what sort the radicals out from the romantics.

PACKED S.A.N. MEETING IN CORK

Socialists Against Nationalism's public meeting in Cork happened to coincide with the monsoon season. Wednesday, September 19th was a day of fierce gales and incessant heavy rain. Despite the atrocious weather, an audience of about 150 people turned up. It isn't easy to keep people away from SAN meetings because the desire for a new, more enlightened form of politics is widespread and strong.

Seamus Rattigan, Pat Moloney and Jim Kemmy were the platform speakers. Seamus Rattigan showed how the Protestants of Northern Ireland had developed as a community distinct from the rest of the Irish people. He paid particular attention to the period of the British Industrial Revolution. The Industrial Revolution took root in the Protestant area of the north of Ireland, while the rest of the island remained pre-industrial. This laid an economic foundation for partition, because the Protestants' large-scale industries needed free access to the British market, while the small scale economy of the South could be boosted by a policy of tariff protection such as de Valera followed.

Pat Maloney spoke of the change he sensed in Cork when returning there after some years absence from Ireland, on the weekend before the huge PAYE demonstration of March, 1979. He pointed to the greatly improved organisation and growing strength of the working class in society. In order to make the maximum social advance, it was necessary to reject the fatal teaching of Connolly which is inscribed on the outside building: "The cause of Ireland is the cause of labour. They cannot be severed".

Jim Kemmy reviewed the state of the Irish left and concluded that to a great extent it was a prisoner of the past, although the opportunities were never better for socialists with clear heads. Capturing Northern Ireland was an obsession with many socialists, but this was an impossible and a backward-looking aim. Democratic and social reform in the South should be the priority. He believed there was a need for a new party with this priority, a party which would be democratic-socialist in character.

A very lively discussion took place afterwards. Some light relief was provided by Professor John A. Murphy (who is fairly light for a professor). It seems he is two-thirds on our side, but has to make a great show of being one-third against us. Prof. Murphy's charge that we were simplistic in our views was well refuted, and ridiculed by later speakers. Anyhow, it is unfair to expect TDs like Jim Kemmy and agitators like SAN to be as wise as Professor Murphy, who is in the Senate. He should know the distinction of functions: the Senate is supposed to be wise; the Dail and the agitators are supposed to make things happen.

**GET THE
LIMERICK SOCIALIST
EVERY MONTH**

THE STONY THURSDAY BOOK

BY SAMUEL WALSH

In this we're all the same.

The rest we hate each others guts,
Won't trust one step the next man takes
that's his advantage. Everything rots
in backward places as in the streets
of cities. The threshing done we'll size
up each his harvest, in silence criticize.

From 'Harvest' by Desmond O'Grady.

The **Stony Thursday Book 7** contains sixty-eight pages, fifty-two of which are devoted to the late Kate O'Brien the Limerick novelist. One of these pages is a list of acknowledgements, as much a devotion as the other fifty-one. Eleven pages are given for poets and their poems, and there are four pages at the end of the book for a short-story by Robert Greacen. Page fifty-four (not previously mentioned) is a typographic concretion of the Fats Waller jazz classic, *Ain't Misbehavin'*. All contributions therefore, have something to do with the written word, even the illustrations.

It is a pity that this issue of **The Stony Thursday Book** was not published prior to Arlen House's republishing of Miss O'Brien's **The Ante-Room**. It would have seemed less as if the **S.T.B.** was picking up on the wave of new enthusiasm for Kate O'Brien's work. This, by the introduction to this special issue, is not and was not the case. A feeling of sincerity runs through each contribution and the overall handling of the editorial policy.

Writing on Kate are, among others, Eavan Boland, Benedict Kiely, Michael O'Toole, (who made an excellent contribution to the revival of interest in Kate's work in an article in **Cara**, the Aer Lingus in-flight magazine) Val Mulkerns, and with John Jordan's overall contribution as guest editor, their knowledge combined puts together enough information about Kate and her work to make at least 75% of the population of Ireland feel guilty. She was neglected, but not by all. Thankfully some people never had anything but respect for Kate O'Brien.

The original function of the **S.T.B.** was the overall promotion of the written arts and the secondary one the promotion of the arts in general. It's good to see the continuing acceptance of unknown poets' work for the occasional gem it throws up.

In **Suburban Love-Song**, John F. Deane, not an unknown, finds a gory detail all for himself. "Tonight".

To-night a woman's hands, coarse red,
will slice a mackerel open, her scissors dig
into his belly, gutting him; life will slop
out in tarnished colours on her kitchen sink,
a stain will spread out along yesterday's paper.

In her poem, **Library, Section Lit Crit**, Eithne Strong is fired with constructive fission, a term used in her first offering but not mentioned in the second.

Johnat Dillon's innocence is rare. I have always felt that his roots are far deeper than many other young Limerick poets. To be able to use the occasional accumulation of words in such strange order without the setting in or uncomfortableness is praise for the love in which such lines are written. It is good, too, to see his poem **Blow In** included here.

Good stuff from Alexander O'Brien, Art O'Conghaile (with what seems to me amazing translations of Biblical names and place-names into Irish), Desmond O'Grady, Martyn Burke, and Hayden Murphy. The young poet who is talked of in Cyril O'Ceirin's poem in Irish, will - and I don't blame him - dance on all copies of that poem. Congratulations to Cyril to his continued consciousness in bringing poetry in Irish to a public in a magazine such as this. All those notes and references which he constantly uses are a poetry in themselves.

Butterfly is indeed a strange name for a hefty schoolboy with black hair on his wrists. Robert Greacen's short-short story of

the same name makes it clear that most of us at sometime have met a "butterfly" and experienced similar emotions as the story-teller.

Since its creation, **The Stony Thursday Book** has cut a course that passes no-one an apology, and rightly too. Up to issue 6, new steps were taken, not only in editorial decision, but in national projection. This was a magazine published in Limerick and read nationally. I can't help feeling that it has become, a national magazine read only in Limerick. There is a settling of dust. Maybe issue 8 will break back again to the line of the first six issues.

DEMOCRATISE EDUCATION!

Dr Garret Fitzgerald has strangely omitted education from the scope of his reform proposals. The educational system in the Republic is funded overwhelmingly by the state but is controlled overwhelmingly by one religious group, and divided on religious lines. Since the state paid the piper it had a right to call the tune. If a Government wanted to take steps to democratise the educational system and change its religious exclusiveness, it would not require a referendum to do so.

It is all the more amazing that Dr Fitzgerald has nothing to say on education when he claims that he wants a state built on the principles of Tone and Davis. Thomas Davis had come into conflict with the main body of the nationalist movement of his time because he stood for non-denominational education, while Daniel O'Connell and his supporters wanted exclusive Catholic education for the Catholic community. Davis supported Robert Peel's Bill for non-denominational university education in 1845; O'Connell opposed it. This conflict made such a deep impression on Davis that he said he was afraid a Catholic Ascendancy was trying to take over from the Protestant Ascendancy and he didn't want to assist in such an outcome.

Despite the participation of people like Davis, O'Connell's movement had been seen by the vast majority of Irish Protestants as an attempted takeover of their whole way of life. O'Connell himself said in one of his letters that if the Union were to be repealed, "the great masses of the Protestant community would with little delay melt into the overwhelming majority of the nation. Protestantism would not survive Repeal ten years". The later nationalist leaders were never as outspoken as that. But at the same time as they told the Protestants there was a place for them in the Irish nation, they co-operated in building a system of religious apartheid that began with the education of children.

The two universities in Dublin had been symbols of the apartheid in Ireland between Catholics and Protestants. Trinity College had remained a Protestant University, though Robert Peel had wanted to turn it into a non-denominational university for Leinster. UCD had begun as the Catholic University, set up by the Catholic Church in opposition to Peel's colleges. At the present day the Archbishop of Dublin no longer had a ban on Catholics entering Trinity and the denominational character of the universities had become blurred. But in primary and secondary education the divisions were still sharp and clear. The majority of parents nowadays were not afraid of their children being contaminated by children who differed in religious background from themselves.

If a friendly relationship was to be developed with the Protestant majority in Northern Ireland, the first thing necessary was to respect their right to reject political unity with us at present. The so-called aspiration in Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution, which was an aspiration to take over the territory they lived on and implied to them an aspiration to take over their way of life, was an insult to their integrity. It was a fact that they had a prior attachment to Britain, but even if they hadn't they would have no confidence that their community would flourish in an all-Ireland state. The experience of the Protestant minority here could not give them confidence in that regard, since it had declined from about 12% of the population at the time of the Treaty to about 4% now.

THE CORPORATION

FROM SHAWN-A-SCOUB

THE BARD'S PASTORAL

I do not say that all are bad
 In this bad generation;
 But 'tis a fact they're running mad
 In every sense and station.
 The poor are made with poverty,
 The rich are mad with riches;
 The women are mad with tyranny,
 When they're let wear the breeches.

Oh, Earth! how beautiful thou art
 In all thy scenes external!
 And nothing there but Man's dark heart
 Partakes a shade infernal.
 Thou'rt like a wicked woman's head,
 The wasp-hive of the devil;
 And Honesty can win no bread
 Among the thieves that revel.

One worthless, base, pernicious weed
 Will make a thousand flourish
 From its corrupt and baneful seed,
 That no cold blast can perish;
 While in their 'midst the buds of worth
 No sustenance can gather,
 But ere their beauties grace the earth,
 Choked, starved, unseen they wither.

This life is all one chain of facts
 Made up with contradictions;
 The darkest or the brightest acts
 May take the shape of fictions.
 The scales of virtue, vice, hate, love,
 'Gainst each are poised with treason;
 Yet He who holds the beam above
 Can only know the reason.

All human nature is the same,
 But differs in the feeling
 That steels the heart to Virtue's claim,
 And Truth's sincere appealing.
 By self tact we disagree,
 And from each other waver;
 As fruit upon one parent tree
 Has not an equal flavour.

The woes and sorrows of this earth

by Michael Hogan

Are not the Lord's creation;
 The demon Self has given them birth
 In every rank and station.
 If to be good, not rich and great,
 Were mortals' sole ambition;
 How truly blest would be our fate,
 And nobler our position.

Lessons on iron may be carved,
 But vain is their advising,
 For thousands may be shot or starved,
 While one is moralising.
 A man may feel an honest thought
 Without an honest action;
 But whether right or wrong 'tis wrought
 He'll not escape detraction.

The envious, low, ignoble, dull,
 And base in blood and spirit,
 Keep their foul hands for ever full
 Of dirt to fling at merit.
 The mean are always impudent,
 Ungrateful and complaining;
 The knavish always eloquent,
 Designing and disdainful.

Man's true nobility of soul
 Is never learned in schools,
 Where one keen cunning master head
 Can make a thousand fools.
 When Nature does not touch the heart,
 An ice-house 'twill remain,
 In spite of all that learning does
 To polish mind and brain.

Oh, Selfishness and Bigotry,
 And Ignorance sublime,
 Will your black sceptre sway our Isle
 Until the end of time?
 When will the light of Common Sense
 Our common reason rule,
 That we may see each canting rogue
 Who studies to befool?

In every rank Corruption's bud
 By Slavery is kept nursing;
 I look down at the honest mud
 To keep myself from cursing;
 And tho' its heaps the sideways fill,
 And loathsome looks its feature,
 'Tis honest yet, and cleaner still
 Than filthy human nature.

The country is starched with schools,
 Not for true lore's selection;
 But English-grammar-boors and fools
 Are moulded to perfection.
 The young men from their manhood shrink

To mean self-adulation;
 The Frenchified young women stink
 With sickening affection.

THE BABE'S EPITAPH

One day Death turned, an auctioneer,
 And the devil acted as clerk,
 And they put up for spiritual bidders here
 A ravenous human shark;
 "Who wants a dead bargain!" the Devil cried,
 Whose conscience was cold as a well!
 "Keep him yourself!" Death gruffly replied,
 "And reckon the interest in hell!"

PATSY SHYLOCK'S EPITAPH

Here lies hungry Shylock whose life was a novel
 In the slums of where's lane where his soul loved to grovel;
 His heart was so perished with penury and greed,
 That the worms which fed on it died of the feed.
 The poisonous gas from his ashes up coming
 Might blast a whole harvest and usher a famine;
 Wherever his covetous ghost has been driven,
 Give him cash in a dung-pit and there he's in heaven.

A time for change

Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution are an insult to the integrity of the Protestant majority in Northern Ireland. They are not a legitimate aspiration to unity. It is legitimate to aspire to unity by the free consent of the majority in Northern Ireland. But it is certainly not legitimate to aspire to take over the territory they lived in whether they liked it or not, and this is the content of Articles 2 and 3.

Fianna Fail and Fine Gael have attacked each other with equal justice for instituting sectarianism in public life. Nobody has attacked the Labour Party and that omission should be remedied. Labour should have stood for non-sectarianism and defended the rights of religious minorities, but they had never done so. They did not oppose the prohibition of divorce and contraception, or the outlandish Censorship Bill passed in 1929. When they changed their own Constitution in 1936 a commitment was included to a Workers' Republic, but when the Hierarchy gave their verdict that this provision was not in line with Catholic doctrine it was afterwards removed.

If there is any form of politics which could provide common ground between Catholics and Protestants in Ireland, it had to be socialism. Any form of nationalism aggravated the division, because the nationalist movement had moulded itself for over a century on the religious division of the people, despite some non-sectarian rhetoric. Nationalists were hung up on territory, but socialism put people before territory. When James Connolly said that "Ireland without her people means nothing to me", he expressed the true socialist attitude which had a

deeper implication for Irish politics than he himself realised. It was unfortunate that Connolly had made the grievous error of thinking that Ulster Unionism amounted to nothing more than religious bigotry and did not separate himself from the nationalist movement by recognising that this community had the right of self-determination.

It should be possible for all socialists now to recognise the extent of Connolly's error. Instead many of them were coming forward in defence of Articles 2 and 3. Another way of saying what was said in those Articles was: "Ireland without her people means everything to us; we must have the territory, whatever the people think".

The Labour Party, as socialists, ought to be in the forefront of the movement for a non-aggressive, non-sectarian state, instead are in the rearguard, if they are anywhere at all. Michael Leary had expressed views on the territorial claim which seemed to be quite compatible with Charlie Haughey's. He had said it would not be possible to repeal the territorial claim unless the British paralleled this by expelling the people of Northern Ireland from the state where they wished to belong. This was not the attitude of a principled democrat. Michael Leary personally did not believe that trying to pressurise the Unionists into a united Ireland led anywhere: this was clear from previous speeches he had made. But he had no confidence in the people. He did not believe he could get away with telling them home truths. Instead of trying to drag Dr Fitzgerald back the Labour Party should be trying to push him forward.

OF PAUSES AND PRICES

BY JOE HARTNETT

There is no doubt about it but the advocates of a pay pause are having a field day. Daily we are bombarded with statistics as to why a wage freeze is necessary. Mentally, we are being prepared, at the very least, for wage increases well below the inflation rate. The reason for this barrage of propaganda which emanates from such usual sources as the Federated Union of Employers, the National Economic and Social Council, the Government, etc. is that we are once again in the National Wage Agreement season, the time of the year when union and employer representatives sit down in the glare of publicity and speculation to work out an agreement that invariably leaves the wage and salary earner chasing the cost of living - and not catching up with it.

The case for a wage freeze or wage restraint is attractively if simplistically put. The alleged benefits to the nation are enormous - lower domestic costs, making our products more competitive than imported products, thereby creating more employment, with the likely consequence of lower direct taxation and increased social welfare benefits for all. All very desirable and praiseworthy aims but as likely to happen in a free-for-all situation as in a wage freeze or restraint climate.

Since 1970, when the first National Wage Agreement was imposed (it was not democratically accepted but was rushed through by the ICTU, who panicked under the threat of incomes legislation by a Fianna Fail government), in every subsequent wage agreement the twin pipedreams of getting inflation under control and creating new employment have been the carrots waved in front of union members.

Inflation is now running at more than 20% and is expected to reach as high as 24% next year. Unemployment is 132,000 and expected to increase even further. Some sources have forecasted an unemployment figure of 300,000 within the next few years. The balance of payments deficit is expected to be £1,300 million by the end of the year. This crisis has been caused by our politicians in running an economy of a little over 3 million people, one-third the population of London.

Does anyone seriously believe that there will be any great improvement in the above statistics by wage and salary earners accepting a wage freeze or wage increases, less than the annual inflation rate? Certainly, there are people making a good living out of trying to convince us that a wage pause is good for us. But how seriously can one take the pronouncements of bodies such as the National Economic and Social Council, which recently called for an eighteen month wage freeze on all incomes but those of farmer's and the "Three Wise Men", a supposedly independent body of three economists set up by the government to suggest a pay rise that would keep our produce competitive?

Under pressure from the government, this trio reduced their original estimate from an increase of 9% to 6½%. These bodies are involved in mere academic exercises, the findings of which are used for propaganda purposes by the advocates of statutory wage controls. These economists choose to ignore the fact that while wage earners are not starving they are finding it increasingly more difficult to make ends meet because of frequent and seemingly uncontrolled price increases in basic foodstuffs, as well as the regular ritual increases in ESB, CIE and mortgage rates.

We have yet to hear an economist, or an employer, or government minister call for a price freeze. Why does the ICTU not engage in a similar counter-propaganda exercise by commissioning a team of economists to regale us with the advantages of a price freeze? It is certainly no more outrageous a suggestion that the proposals for a wage pause that we are being constantly bombarded with.

There is no serious attempt to control prices in this country. The recent 5% increase in VAT confirmed this. It would be very difficult to find a consumer item that increased in price by just 5%. Manufacturers used the opportunity to add a little for themselves while blaming the VAT increase. The **Limerick Leader**, long champion of wage restraint, increased its price from 25p to 30p. If it had only applied the VAT increase, the new price would have been 26.2p.

In a free enterprise society it is simply not possible to control prices. You can pay lip-service to controlling prices by establishing a Prices' Commission and nominating some well known union leaders as members of the commission. But the only thing it is possible to control and regulate is wages. Most trade unionists would agree to a pay freeze if there was a similar freeze on prices, but that is not possible in a political system where profit is the primary motive.

Some years ago **Foir Teoranta**, the state rescue body which intervenes to try and salvage companies in financial difficulties, published a report which at the time got scant publicity. It pinpointed inefficient and inadequate management as being the cause of the vast majority of company closures. The Irish Management Institute was one of the few bodies at the time to give serious consideration to the report and it set up special training courses for managers to try and remedy the defects highlighted by **Foir Teoranta**. Again recently, both the National Board for Science and Technology and **Foir Teoranta** criticised the quality of Irish management. The director-general of the Institute for Industrial Research and Standards condemned Irish industry because "the general level of quality management is mediocre".

Unemployment and inflation are most affected by two factors over which workers have no control - ineffective and incompetent management systems and little or no price controls. Certainly, wage increases do affect prices but their effect is grossly exaggerated. **Vivian Murray** of the Irish Goods' Council seemed to subscribe to this view recently when he challenged the theory that excessive wage increases threatened our international competitiveness.

Pay pauses or wage restraint will do little to bring down inflation or unemployment. Calls for such are merely scapegoat tactics designed to keep down wages and divert people's attention from the more fundamental measures which are required to make Irish industry competitive. Also, someone should introduce Irish industry to the concept of marketing. Many companies regard marketing as a luxury rather than as an essential part of industry.

While trade unionists have no control over inflation, they have control over whether or not they should be compensated for inflation. This has not happened over the past few years. They have been duped into signing some documents which have cut their living standards. Indeed, the main beneficiaries of wage restraint are the very profitable companies, which could pay more under a free-for-all system. But we do not necessarily have to have a free bargaining situation. Simply wage increases to compensate us for the present savage inflation.

We live in a free enterprise society in which the only thing a worker has to sell is his labour. We should therefore ensure that we get the maximum wage increases possible and not be diverted from this aim. And it should be said that National Wage Agreement offers some protection to workers in small and weak industries (sometimes after appeals to the Labour Court). If there is to be another agreement, this protection must be expanded, and we must also ensure that there is scope for greater productivity bargaining with the scope of a new national deal.