

PEOPLE'S VOICE

NUMBER

5



OH! WRAP THE GREEN FLAG 'ROUND ME :: ::

YOU can say what ye like about Fianna Fail, but it has to be conceded that as a party they are endowed with an almighty hard bloody neck. Presently, Fianna Fail is in trouble on all sides. Under similar circumstances, the other wishy-washy vultures would hug the ropes and hope to weather the storm. But this is not for Fianna Fail. No sir! The soldiers of TACA can be relied upon to come out swinging when the going gets rough -- and invariably, they will do so to the accompaniment of the good old jingo drum.

OF all the parties in Leinster house, Fianna Fail should be the last to drag out the question of Partition. No party has been more energetic over the past 30 years in locking up and shooting up Irishmen who attempted to smash what Blaney so recently styled "the sham democracy that is the Six Counties."

INDEED, no Free State party has laboured so assiduously to sell the country to the highest capitalist bidder. But this doesn't stop them from unleashing a torrent of bourgeois jingoism when the need arises, and if the chance remains that it may serve once more to hoodwink a misguided electorate, and help Fianna Fail to remain in power.

FIANNA FAIL is the most dynamic capitalist party now in the Free State; and in its singleminded pursuance of capitalist interests over the past decade, it has succeeded in fragmenting its traditional grass roots support amongst the great body of small farmers; antagonized the working class with its proposed measures to "regulate" the affairs of Trade Unionism; and stirred up everyone in general with its Criminal Justice Bill. Now, with an election in the offing, the only thing left with which it can hope to stir up some support, is a worn out jingoism; and they have the neck to go right ahead and do just that.

OLD Finn MacCumhal Blaney kicked off this latest game of "find the sucker",



with his call on February 23, to the people of the Six Counties to boycott all parties in the election who "stand for the Union with Britain"--a call that covered a wide field indeed. He then went on to take O'Neill to task: yer man had the cheek to "sneer at what he terms the legal fiction of the claim in our Constitution to jurisdiction over the 32 Counties." And what a sacrilege that was, seeing as how none other than the LONG FELLA himself had inserted that clause to establish internationally the Irish Peoples' claim to a United Ireland."

IF the truth were told, there are more than O'Neill who look upon that famous clause as the biggest piece of fiction ever composed by an Irish politician -- and that's saying a lot. One can't help but wonder if Fianna Fail feels so strongly about it all, then why in the devil have they never raised the matter on the international forum of the United Nations? By doing so, they would at least be in the position to put a better face on their jingoism when they resort to it in times of need.

AS if Blaney wasn't enough, we then had Kevin Boland take over the ball the following week. The big guns were really booming now -- Agricultural Minister Blaney followed by the Minister for Local Government, with Blackpool Jack having his spake in the meantime. Boland really laid it on the line for the gratification of the faithful. Says he: Fianna Fail "was set up for the specific purpose of ending Partition;" and says he, dotting the i's: "the restoration of our National integrity is the reason for the existence of our Party."

And to think some of us had grown cynical enough to suppose that Fianna Fail had been turned into a private graft agency for TACA?

IT would be interesting to know where Lemass stands with all this sabre rattling. It was only on January 28 last that he told us in the Irish Press: "there was no doubt whatever that any of the statements made here in the past about Partition were tended to consolidate the hostility up there to removal of Partition rather than to weaken it." He also said that "Unity..is not a matter of territorial acquisition." But then, Lemass no longer has great interest in the needs of party politics. He has his hands full, and his pockets, with all the directorships he has to attend to.

IT is all very well to dismiss the jingoism of Fianna Fail with a shrug, and say they are only flogging a dead, or nearly dead horse. This is far from the truth. It has become far too common a thing of late for "progressives" to look with a jaundiced eye on that which is called the nationalism of the People. Half-baked Socialists, who use the writings of Communist philosophers more as a bible than as a creative political tool, dismiss nationalism as a purely and completely bourgeois disease and disdain to have any truck with it for fear of contaminating their ideological purity. We suggest, and suggest very strongly that a little more creative homework is needed on this whole question if all of us hope to contribute to the building of Socialism in Ireland. By ignoring the potential and real essence of nationalism, progressives are in fact giving a clear field to those like Fianna Fail, who, by their jingoistic brand of patriotism, can easily exploit the feelings and sentiments of the people for purely class interests.

LET there be no mistaking the fact that the Irish People, like all long established historic communities, possess a strong attachment to and identity with their own particular heritage and traditions. This is a real, a tangible and a forceful factor in their lives, which has to be related in a meaningful way to any proposals for fundamental change in the life of the community. To present Socialist Internationalism out of context with this, is not alone wrong theoretically, but criminal from the standpoint of rational political behavior. The Irish People identify themselves as a distinct national community, which they are, and their psychological response to propos-

als for social, political and economic change will invariably be in harmony with this identity. You cannot expect the people to react to an abstract international ideology -- and an internationalism which does not take into account the characteristics of individual nations, and all this entails, is absolutely abstract.

SOCIALISTS who do not take this into account; who do not differentiate between Nationalism, which is the concrete expression of deeply ingrained sentiments inculcated by the existence of separate historic communities for thousands of years, and bourgeois jingoistic patriotism, which is nothing more or less than the base exploitation of such sentiments for the benefit of that particular class; can never expect to get anywhere --and rightly so. Worse still, by such negligence, they are contributing to the continued exploitation of the People by the bourgeoisie, by allowing them to propagate unimpaired their perverse and anti-nationalist brand of patriotism.

IT is this brand of perverse class-patriotism which Fianna Fail are again peddling in their hour of need. They know damn well what they are about; they appreciate the psychology of the People, and hope to capitalize on it once again. The great tragedy is they will be facilitated in doing so for so long as Socialists fail to grapple with the problem; for so long as Socialists close their eyes to the fact that a clear difference exists between nationalism and a class-orientated patriotism.

NATIONALISM is a psychological identity with a particular nation, or historically formed social entity. Patriotism is the ideological polarization of that identity, which will obviously reflect at any given period the needs of the politically dominant class in that nation. To say that both are the same thing is ludicrous-- and to say that because bourgeois patriotism is bad, nationalism itself must of necessity be equally so, hardly does justice to the Marxist method of analysis. As we have already said, it is about time that Socialists here in Ireland got down to the task of clarifying this matter. When it is fully understood, then, not alone will we be in a better position to forward the cause of Socialism in our own country, but we will also be on the road to contributing towards the realization of a real and functioning Internationalism, as this is understood by Marxists.

CÁS

DENNEHY



NOCHT Saorstát na 26 Co. olcas a chroí le linn cás Dhonncha Uí Dhuinneacháí, .i. Denis Dennehy san Ardchúirt.

IS beag má tá aon nochtá níos léire ar fáil ar lofacht is ar fhrith-dhaonnacht an córais polaitiúla do lean ar "Bhunreacht na hÉireann" (26 Co.) (1937).

Ó tharla gur sheas an tArdchúirt le ceart an mhaoine phríobháidí (Alt 43, Bunr. na hÉireann, 1937) agus go bhfuil sé seo i gcoimhlint le Dlí an Náduir, ní mór dúinn iniúcha do dhéanamh ar cad do bhí i gceist in dáiríre i gcás Dennehy.

AR dtúis ní foláir dúinn do mheabhru ná fuil aon bhailíocht ag roinnt le bunreacht ná le dlí más i gcoimhlint iad do dhlí an Náduir nó d'órd an réasúin.

IS aoirde beatha ná an mhaoin. Is mar sheirbhís don bheatha atá an mhaoin ann. Níl ceart dá laighead ag an mhaoin féin.

IS le duine éigin an ceart mhaoine. Cuid do-dheighilte de cheart an bheatha sea an príonsabal: go mbéadh teacht ag gach beo ar thrí ní bunúsach, eadhon, bia, eadach, is dídean. Ní chothuítear an bheatha 'na n-éamais. Tig le garfach is fuacht aeir an bás d'imirt ar an duine.

IS tuisce ceart don bheatha ná "ceart" do fhluirse bheatha. Níl ceart ag aoinne beatha an bhoicht do chur i gcontúirt i n-ainm "cirt" mhaoine. Ní luíonn sé le réasún go mbéadh an bheatha síos do dhuine ar bith nuair tá an flúirse in airde do dhuine eile, agus nach mbochtófaí aoinne 'g a roinnt ar bhochta. Is aoirde an bheatha agus an ceart don bheatha, ná an "ceart" a n-imríonn cruatan, náire, ísliú is mócha dhóchais, agus an bás féin, ar shaoine nach lú a ndignit ná a nádúr ná dignit an té gur leis an "ceart" mhaoine sin.

NÍ hé beo gan teora é an duine. Tá teora lena bheatha, lena eolas agus lena chómhachtaí. Ní thig leis aon rud, aon mhaoin, do chruthú. Níl sé in a mhaistir air féin. Is rud do-dhéanta dhó é neaspheachas pearsanta d'aimsiú díomaite chomhlúadar daonna. Os spleách é ó nádúr,

'sé órd shlí a nádúr go bhfuil ceart aige dos na nithe a bhfuil sé spleách orra: spleách ar bhia d'fhuinneamh coirp is aigne: spleách ar éadach is ar dhídean d'fhonn garfach na h-aimsire do choimeád uaidh agus d'fhonn shaibhreas an phearsain, is éagsúlacht chlainne do fhorbairt.

Islítear dignit an chlainne atá gan dídean d'reir mar atá saol rúnda an ghra idir thuistí, agus idir thuistí is páistí, nocht faoi shúile an shomhain. Os í an chlann bunanonad an náisiúin, freagróidh sé do staid na gclanna ann. Is léir go bhfuil an t'olléaspa dhídeana ag meilt beo-rúta an náisiúin. Tá an gaimbín-eachas ag sú substaint na h-ídrochta ó'n náisiúin ag a bhunús chruthaíoch eadhon an chlann. Tá na mílte clanna faoi chosc ó'n rúndacht clainne is bunúsai toisc scannol na tithíochta: easpa dhídeana, plódu dhídeana síor-ghothram is síor-oscailt na dtronóntán.

AR eagla go n-osclofaí súile na mbocht d'fhírinne a gcás agus d'aithne a namhaid tá olcas á immirt orra ag lucht an ghaimbín. Ar eagla go dtuitfeadh mallacht is díoltas na mbocht orra féin cuirtear i leith na bunreachta, i leith na dlíthe, agus i leith na gCúirteanna, obair shalach an ghaimbín-eachais. Is cuige seo atá cora cainnte mar, "príonsabair na bunreachta" in ionaid "príonsabal" an Aicme gaimbínigh; "órduithe cúirte", in ionaid órduithe aicme an ghaimbín: "dísbeaga cúirte" in ionaid dísbeaga do lucht an ghaimbín. Do chuireadh Dennehy i bpríosún dáiríre do bhí gur sheas sé le dlí an Náduir agus i gcoinne "príonsabail" an lucht ghaimbín; de bhí gur thug sé dúshlán d'órduithe na ngaimbín-each, de Buitléar, (An Breitheamh sa chás), agus Underwood (iunéir, do chuir an dlí ar Dennehy); agus de bhí gur thug sé dísbeaga do leitheidí De Buitléar is Underwood.

DO nocht an "Breitheamh" "trua" do

chás Dennehy, ach f'shin tus deire leis é. Dob'éigean dó, dúirt sé, dlíthe na tíre do char i bhfaidm; bhí sé faoi mhóid; bhí dualgas air, agus ní raibh dul as dó. A leithéid do bharéagchrá! Ar chuir aoinne iachall air an mhóid do ghlaca i dtús báire?

Tá dul as aigé, mar do bhí dul as do ar dtuais. D'éirigh breathnigh as oifig roimhe; do bhí an dáiríre agus an coinsias ionnta siud áfach. Níl aon ag

brú coinsias an Bhuitléirigh ach a phost bhog agus "pronnabail" sincheart an ghaimbin.

NACH aisteach an mhaire do "Shaorstát" go raibh Dennehy gan dídean is é saor, agus nár aimsigh sé dídean go dlíthiúl go dtí gur chaill sé saoirse a phearsain, i gcill phríosiún Mhainseo. Nach breá mar "dul cun chinn" é Saoire gan dídean, daoirse le dídean.

Saorstát? ----- Daorstát!

DUBLIN POSTMEN'S Fight For Worker RIGHTS

The following statement was received for publication as we were going to press. The pressure of time does not allow for comment on the situation it deals with -- this will follow in the next issue.

DUBLIN POSTMEN'S UNION.

AT Sherriff Street parcels office on the 7th February, a typical case of victimisation by the Department of Posts and Telegraphs was carried out with the collaboration of the scab-led Union, the Post Office Workers' Union: the Secretary of the Dublin Postmen's Union was sacked.

THE reason given by the supervisor for the dismissal was "unsatisfactory working"; despite the fact that this man had an impeccable record on the job for 14 months, and had never once -- until his dismissal -- been spoken to concerning his working ability.

EVER since the D.P.U. came to be a force to be reckoned with by the Department and their loyal servants in the leadership of the P.O.W.U., there has been an incessant and concerted campaign of intimidation, harassment, and sackings of members of the D.P.U. In the light of all this, it is simply ludicrous of the Department to attempt to inflate into something gross a tiny incident that occurred when the Secretary of our Union, having received his notice, pulled a supervisor's hat down over his eyes.

THE campaign against militant postmen won't stop at this. The D.P.U. won't be intimidated by this or any further action by the Department. The D.P.U. will continue to fight for decent wages and conditions for temporary postmen. It will continue to assert their right, enshrined in Article 40 of the Irish Constitution, to join a Trade Union of their choice.

WE will not be browbeaten from our adherence to the principles of Trade Unionism set out by Jim Connolly and Jim Larkin.

ISSUED BY THE DUBLIN POSTMEN'S UNION.

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DIRTY PAINT

THE FEDERATION OF BUILDING Contractors and Allied Employers, when confronted by their workers in pursuit of pay increases, will shout "blue murder", and give them the usual moan of small profit margins. How then do they reconcile their claim of low profits with the high profits sought by painting contractors in Cork recently?

WHEN THE COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT of Cork Hospitals sought tenders for the internal and external painting of one of their hospitals, they received the following prices from four painting contractors; - £974; £1,483; £1,596 and £2,934. In fact the contractor who submitted the lowest price was in danger of losing the contract because he didn't submit a bond; but this was resolved when he agreed to undertake the job without payment until the work was completed and passed by the architect. When the enormity of the price difference in the tenders was questioned by the committee, and a suggestion made that the contractor who submitted the lowest bid was employing non-union labour, the Chairman, Canon Powell, assured the committee that all the workers were union members, and that the same contractor had previously done work to the satisfaction of the hospital authorities.

WE ARE WELL AWARE THAT UNDER THE tender system those who submit the higher bids would normally fail to land the contract. But surely this whole affair tells us more than this? It certainly gives us an insight into the margins of profit contractors set their sights on. If, for instance, the £974 contractor hadn't submitted a tender-- and let's face it, when he did he

calculated for a profit -- wouldn't the contract have gone to the next lowest bidder, which would leave the hospitals' committee some £509 the poorer. Even in our society, where the labour power of workers is exploited for the undisguised motive of profit to the employer, it takes a brass neck for a contractor to submit figures 50% to 200% more than the lowest tender, and then tell his workers, when they seek a wage increase, that profits are too low to allow it. Hell, you don't have to be a mathematical genius to see that the contractor who priced his work at £2,934 must have included the price of his ticket to the moon!

IT IS WELL TO REMEMBER ALSO THAT all work done by contractors isn't by the tender system alone. In fact there are times when it is busy in the trade, and individuals or committees have "Hobson's Choice" as to who they can get; and judging by the above prices, unless they do business with the £974 contractor, they may well get fleeced.

MAINTENANCE WORK PROVIDED BY local authorities is also known to be very profitable work; so much so that only recently the President of the National Association of Master Painters and Decorators of Ireland, attacked local authorities for the employment of maintenance staffs. In other words, it's not what's good for the local authorities that counts, but the loss of profits to the "MASTERS."

HOWEVER, IT WASN'T LONG BEFORE they got their answer from the workers through their union the A.S.P.D., whose executive council in a statement said:

**get these leeches off your back
by working for a socialist Ireland**

"Many members of this union are employed by local authorities either on their maintenance or direct labour units. These authorities offer good employment on a permanent basis and our members have always worked efficiently and honestly in return. Having regard to this and other factors as well, we would like it to be known that we will resist any attempt by the NAMPDI to undermine the employment of our members in local authorities for the furtherance of PRIVATE ENTERPRISE.

"THE N.A.M.P.D.I.'s AGREEMENT WITH the Federation of Building Contractors and Allied Employers of Irel-

and, that builders will not employ painters direct, and which was concluded by means not at all clear, is now something that the decorators would like to see extended to local authorities. Local authorities will be asked to repel any attempt by decorators to extend this pernicious agreement."

WE SUGGEST THE N.A.M.P.D.I. would be better employed trying to devise a system that would replace the archaic method of tendering for contracts. Are the four tenders recently submitted for the painting of a Cork hospital the decorators' idea of competition?

Capitalist Lackeys Rant and Rave

IN recent months, the capitalist lackeys of Leinster House have attempted with their usual Red-baiting tactics to smother Socialists in a welter of muck throwing. No doubt, but when the ruling class, fearful of the inability of its gutter press to discredit Socialist trends, decided to scrape the lackey barrel for stooges, they certainly brought up the scum. The tactics adopted by these political pygmies have long ago been committed to the dustbin of history, along with American McCartyism. True, where they have dropped these tactics, they have replaced them with more subtle ones; but this only goes to show how politically antiquated the Morans, Dowlings, Crowleys, Childers and Barretts are.

IN fact it can be said they have truly lost touch with the People, particularly the working class of our cities and towns, who have in recent years shown great interest in the writings of Marx, Engels and our own James Connolly. This is not to say that the ruling class are unaware of the failure of this approach. Events in Dublin, where the muckrakers failed with their slanders and innuendoes during the housing agitation, certainly must have brought home the failure of their approach. It remains to be seen how the ruling class will drop their lackeys, as they always do, and what new approach they will take. Certainly, the situation in the Six Counties, where they dropped the old Orange Card

for the O'Neill "moderation", has many lessons. The Barretts, Morans and the rest could end up on a limb, like their counterparts Craig and Co. Stranger things have happened.

AS an instance of how unimaginative and stick-in-the-mud their approach is, and for the benefit of young socialists today, we reprint Stephen Barrett's rantings against the unemployed movement way back in June 1957. Speaking on the Finance Bill in Leinster House, he said:

"YOU will find, within the next few months, in many constituencies, that a party described as the Unemployed Party, will importune itself on the public, pointing out the failure of the Government and in some way try to encourage strife. I have reason to believe that agitation is not coming from this country, that it is not being fomented by Irishmen, but by so-called Irishmen who have been sent back here from England.

"I KNOW personally of at least two men who came back here from Britain and have resided here without employment or without signing on at the Labour Exchange, and who are here purely to foment strife among the working classes of this country.

"THERE is in process of evolution at the moment a new Communist assault on this country, there is a conspiracy to

point the finger of scorn at all forms of native government and that is being inspired by elements farther removed from us than England."

WHAT crap! Compared to his recent speech in Leinster House, it's hard to detect change. Looking at 1957 in retrospect, the government of the day had the good sense--from a capitalist viewpoint --to ignore Barrett; and predictably we hadn't any strife. He must have

thought then, and no doubt thinks still, the workers to be great fools to provide him and his ilk with infantile opposition, so that they can be crushed easily. When the workers of this country assert themselves as a united force to seize freedom, then the muckrakers will get the opportunity to line up against the majority; if they have the guts. History has shown capitalist lackeys desert their posts when the crunch comes.

CORK PLUMBERS CONDEMN A.S.W. LANDLORDISM!

WHEN SAOR EIRE exposed the scandal of an eviction by the Cork branch of the A.S.W. in the last issue of this paper, we called upon the Trade Union Movement and the Labour Party in Cork and through out the country to clarify their position on it. It was our feeling that this was necessary for the welfare of labour forces generally. To date, only one union, the Plumbers' Union of Cork, has given an official statement on it. The Labour Party has stayed very quiet indeed; notwithstanding the fact that the A.S.W. is affiliated to it; and so have the great majority of unions.

NO doubt, these people hope the issue will be conveniently forgotten if it is ignored for long enough. Well, we can assure them that this will not be the

A Chara,)

The first knowledge I had of an eviction having taken place in the Carpenters' Hall was when I read about it in your paper. I was, however, aware that relations between the caretaker and the A.S.W. Executive were rather strained, and that they were anxious to get rid of him as a tenant.

WITHOUT getting involved in the tedious argument of this man's right as a tenant, and his obligations as a caretaker to the people with whom he entered into contract, the important issue, as I see it, is the arbitrary means employed to terminate that contract. There is no law more obnoxious, more revolting, more completely devoid of justice and charity on the civil statute of this country, than the law which permits evictions. It is this and worse than this, because of the punishment it extracts for a breach of contract--a contract so trivial as only to permit a roof over the head of a family. The penalty extracted for this violation is more severe than for the most hideous crime, because it demands retribution from every member of the household down to the youngest infant. "All are put out on the street together."

THIS penal enactment is of 18th century origin and structure, designed to protect the despotic landlord from an outraged tenantry, a tenantry who in many cases today, by an evolution of power, is operating the very same penal code to crucify his neighbour -- in this particular case, his fellow union member.

THE EXECUTIVE members of the A.S.W. in Cork City are honourable men and good trade unionists. Some of them carry the scars of many a battle with the employers for the rights and dignity of their fellow members. They are also accessories to this act of criminal folly; an act that must never be repeated. The price paid for unity and free association is great, so great in fact that it leaves no room for autocracy. But this can only be maintained by the full participation and constant vigilance of every union member.

SANCTITY of the FAMILY

CAPITALIST STYLE

IN DEALING WITH THE CARPENTERS' Hall (A.S.W.) eviction in our last issue, we mentioned the scant regard there really is in Capitalist Ireland for the sanctity of the family. We return to this matter of "family sanctity" again, to give our readers yet another case where the family has been torn asunder by the capitalist system we live under, here in Ireland. The following case is by no means an isolated one, and it is our intention in future issues to highlight many similar cases.

EARLY LAST YEAR THREE FAMILIES, the O'Callaghans, Moores and Minihanes were served with notice to quit their homes at "The Maples", Frankfield, Douglas, Cork. To settle an estate it had been decided by the owners to sell "The Maples," and naturally, vacant possession would inevitably bring with it greater profits. So Irish landlords, disregarding the sanctity of three Irish families, sought the aid of the capitalist court, and in Aug. '68, the Moores and O'Callaghans were evicted; but fortunately for them, the Corporation rehoused them. The other family, the Minihanes, who had also been served with an eviction order, moved into a small caravan as a temporary measure.

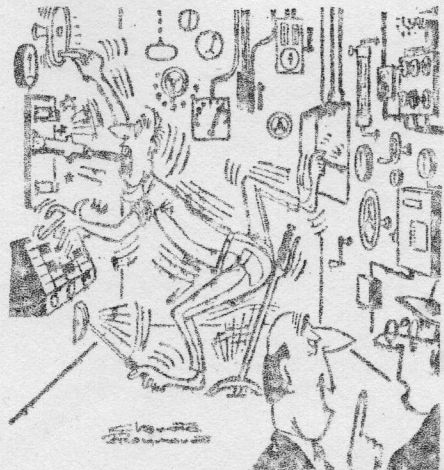
TODAY, OVER SIX MONTHS AFTER THIS upheaval, the Minihanes still live in their little caravan at Ballycureen, off Kinsale Road; and "The Maples" remains vacant and unsold. Here is a case of people who lived in a house all their lives, and who now find themselves cooped-up in an area less than the size of an average sitting room or kitchen in a Council house. In this small area, three boys aged 13, 17 and 18 years live with their mother; here they must eat, wash, sleep and try to relax. Water must be drawn from a well over a mile away. Their sanitary arrangements are anyone's guess.

AND WHAT ABOUT THE FATHER OF THIS family? Unable to get public hous-

ing, and the caravan being too small to provide sleeping accommodation for all, he was obliged to rent a room for himself over two miles away. Here then is the return Mr. and Mrs. Minihane have got from our society -- enforced separation of man and wife after long years of marriage. Already, they have seen their eldest children emigrate, and shortly may well see their 17 and 18-year-olds do the same.

AS LONG AS WE HAVE A CAPITALIST system here in Ireland, we will have rack-renting, bad housing, evictions and consequently, broken homes. Capitalism, unlike Socialism, does not interest itself in people, but rather their exploitation, which in many cases means throwing them out on the streets. We say a plague on all those who evict our people from their homes, be they Irish or foreign landlords.

AS WE SEE IT, WE MAY ALLEVIATE THE situation by agitating and demonstrating on the streets in an attempt to pressure our City and County Councils to provide houses. But as they are curbed themselves by the system of which they are a part, they cannot solve the problem. Only by working for Socialism and finally smashing capitalism, in all its forms, will the people find happiness and dignity in this land of ours.



"We used to have 12 men before this war automated."



THE OLD CON GAME GOES ON and ON

MANY suggestions were advanced to justify this latest election; the most widely propagated of which had the "moderate" reactionaries under O'Neill bravely battling for the good of the community against the "old fashioned sectarian" reactionaries led by Craig and Paisley. Connected with this, you had the issue of O'Neill's leadership of the Unionist camp.

THERE is, of course, a split of sorts in the Unionist Party, but this did not in any way precipitate the need for the election. What did was the growing militant opposition to the ruling class generally, which developed from the spontaneous upsurge of October last. This was the dangerous phenomenon which had to be contained at all costs, and in the final analysis, the best gambit readily available to do this was an electoral contest; which could be expected to redirect the political spotlight back to parliament, and away from the streets, where it was clearly concentrating with alarming regularity.

THE Stormont circus has just finished the latest of its periodic tours through the countryside, where, like the Roman circuses of old, it served to divert the interest of the masses from the real issues, by providing high-class entertainment. Like all such events, the election carried colourful billing and extravagant promises. Few run-of-the-mill shows could compete with such billings as "Protestant Gladiators in mass battle with Catholic sub-citizens;" "King Kong O'Neill fights to the death with the ferocious Hun, Paisley;" "Sad-faced Eddie wrestles with the British Lion;" and for good measure, "New crowd-tamers go through their paces" --a good performance winning them an appointment to the permanent retinue of players. It was all very entertaining, as it was intended it should be. But when the final curtain had rung down with the counting of the votes, as usual the promoters were the only real gainers.

THE cause of the election stemmed from the threat posed to the ruling class by a polarizing mass opposition. Disagreements on how this threat should be met, and indeed on what it actually represented, caused a rift or "split" in its political arm, the Unionist Party. But this difference of opinion was but an effect arising out of the main danger and it did not give rise to the need for an election. By posing this effect--the split in Unionist ranks--as the main issue, the ruling class succeeded to a great degree in confusing the situation; at least for long enough to enable them to reconsolidate their position.

WHEN all is said and done, one of the greatest achievements of the election is that it succeeded in giving the capitalist rule a much needed breather to repair a gravely eroded position. Many commentators have said both before and after the election, that it was irrelevant -- an exercise in futility. This is true in the context of the fake issues

which predominated in all its associated propaganda; but it is far from being true in the sense that, as a political circus, it did succeed in breaking the tempo in the development of the mass opposition already referred to; and by so doing, created a situation wherein a new mass challenge must, for all intents and purposes, start again from square one. In this light, the election was far from being an irrelevancy to the ruling class.

IT is not suggested that the election solved the agitational problem for the ruling class—merely that it succeeded in giving them the first round, by enabling them to regain the initiative strategically. The war still goes on, but let us assess its results so far.

AS already pointed out, the tempo of mass struggle was interrupted—a critical gain for the ruling class, in view of the vulnerability of demonstrations as a political weapon; a factor arising mainly from the emotive nature of their driving force. A campaign based on mass agitation can never be taken to accommodate itself readily to the tactic of being turned on, off, and on again by its leadership. This is not so, and for reasons which should be apparent.

IN ADDITION, the election enabled reformist elements implicated in the Civil Rights campaign an opportunity to extradite themselves from a potentially revolutionary situation, without having to relinquish their positions of influence in the movement itself. This was yet another gain for the ruling class.

HAD the election not taken place, and taking into account the escalating nature of the agitation prior to it, the reformists would have been forced by the pressure of events to openly take a stand which would have unmasked their inherently reactionary position. This development could, with reason, be expected to see the influential reformists replaced by more radical personnel; and with their demise would dissipate the covert bourgeois influence they exercise. It should be remembered that even prior to the announcement of the election, the reformist leadership of the Civil Rights were strenuously manoeuvring to defuse the crisis—but timely intervention of the People's Democracy movement at a critical juncture, succeeded in maintaining the momentum of the general agitation.

A THIRD gain for the status quo relates to the electoral success of leading figures on the Civil Rights. They now sit in Stormont, and can be expected to manipulate with even greater success the future unrest in a fashion which will

facilitate the usual bourgeois tactic of procrastination. The fact that they were elected by a Civil Rights vote expedites this enormously. Already, we have heard them voice concern that "politics must be taken off the streets." Of course; because when practiced in the streets, politics have proved too damned explosive altogether for the peace of mind of the middle class. Regardless of the concern these people have shown towards the plight of the exploited population, and irrespective of the "anger" they have expressed on ruling class "mismanagement" they still remain an integral part of that class. Their main desire is to see capitalism rectify the abnormalities in its system, which tend to make it far too vulnerable. But whenever the class lines are clearly drawn in any conflict between rulers and ruled; these reformists will, indeed must, cast their lot in with their own kind.

IT may well be said that while all of this is undoubtedly true, nevertheless, it goes too far to suggest that the bourgeoisie are so diabolically clever as to rationalize their political actions in this way. In other words, the game wasn't planned this way; it just so happened that it came out like that. Luck, no doubt!

THIS is a comfortable approach. But the hard fact is the bourgeoisie have been waging the class war for a few hundred years now; they have acquired much experience in its needs, much expertise in its promotion, and they haven't held on to what they still hold through luck. When it comes to the art of manipulating people with the election gimic, you can be sure the real issues are not those which get the most prominence. On the contrary, that which is of least relevance invariably receives the greatest coverage; a tactic based on the premise that since it is good to have the people fighting amongst themselves, it is imperative that the matters on which they do fight are as far removed as possible from the centre of political sensitivity.

THIS is the old con game at which the ruling class, from years of experience, are past masters. We saw it in operation in the Six County election, where in the end many did not know what precisely they were voting for; and those who did, found the circus did not have provisions through which they could assert their views. The election was called to "straighten out" things alright; but its promoters didn't go so far as to say in whose precise interest this straightening out was to be done. Ah! but sure isn't that the rub in all elections promoted by the bourgeoisie?

* * * *



A REBEL SONG

By James Connolly

Come workers, sing a rebel song, a song of love and hate;
Of love unto the lowly, and of hatred to the great.
The great who trod our fathers down, who steal our children's bread;
Whose hand of greed is stretched to rob the living and the dead.

CHORUS

Then sing a rebel song, as we proudly sweep along;
To end the age long tyranny that makes for human tears.
Our march is never done with each setting of the sun;
And the tyrant's might is passing with the passing of the years.

2

We sing no song of wailing, and no song of sighs or tears;
High are our hopes, and stout our hearts, and banished all our fears.
Our flag is raised above us, so that all the world may see:
'Tis Labour's faith and Labour's arm alone can Labour free.

3

Out from the depths of misery we march with hearts aflame;
With wrath against the rulers false who wreck our manhood's name.
The serf who licks his tyrant's rod may bend forgiving knee;
The slave who breaks his slavery's chain a wrathful man must be.

4

Our army marches onward with its face towards the dawn;
In trust secure in that one thing the slave may lean upon.
The might within the arm of him who, knowing freedom's worth;
Strikes home to banish tyranny from off the face of earth.

Title: People's Voice, No. 5

Organisation: Saor Éire

Date: 1969

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