

# Outta Control

## News & Views of the Belfast Anarchist Collective



OUTTA CONTROL of the state bosses, patriarchy, schooling, churches... As anarchists we oppose the authority and exploitation of this society, and advocate one of free association and self-management. This paper comes out every four weeks and we welcome contributions, criticisms etc.

## REGINA V. REGINA'S SECTARIAN ASSASSIN

On Wednesday 10th June, RUC constable Robert McKeown stood trial for the murder of a sixteen year old, Michael McCartan. It is the first time that a member of the RUC has been charged with murder whilst on duty.

McKeown's acquittal came as no surprise to Michael's family and members of the Lower Ormeau community who attended the five-day trial. What else is to be expected when a member of the RUC comes before a court specially created to preserve the sectarian state. The crown prosecutor seemed unsure whether he was defending or prosecuting the accused and the judge, Mr Justice Jones, is an ex-British soldier, former unionist M.P. for Derry, and was a Stormont Attorney General. McKeown was brought to trial only because of pressure from the community who were horrified at the obviously sectarian nature of the crime and the police attempts to cover up for it. Protests were held on the Ormeau Road and the community organised a 'People's Tribunal of Inquiry'. Once again the Security Forces have asserted their right to kill unarmed civilians, secure in the knowledge that the Diplock Courts are prejudiced in their favour.

Michael McCartan was murdered on 23rd July 1980 about 10.25pm. He had been painting 'Provos' on a hoarding near the Ormeau Road. Three friends who were act-as look-outs for him, warned Michael of a green Escort van which they knew to be a police vehicle. The van turned up a street off the Ormeau Rd. Michael put down the

back of Dromara St. where McKeown shot him. McKeown claimed that he had called out twice for Michael to stop but neither the three boys who had been with Michael nor three others playing cards under the bridge nearby heard these shouts. Only constable McDonald reported hearing them.

It was claimed that McKeown fired because he thought the paint brush Michael was holding when he turned around was a gun. He said he had heard there was a gunman in the area and that the lighting was poor. The forensic evidence showed that the bullet entered Michael's body at the left back. The defence claimed that Michael must have turned round before the bullet struck him. Evidence from the Electricity Services showed that there were strong lights switched on at 10.20pm, on the Ormeau Bridge and at the hoarding which shed light onto the place where Michael was shot. McKeown himself admitted that when he got out of the van the light was 'pretty fair' but minutes later when he drew his gun it was 'poor'. He could not remember whether the street lights were on.

If Michael stopped and was turning round why did McKeown open fire if the boy was only doing what he had been told to do. Michael passed within a few yards of McKeown so why did he not see the paint tin in one hand and the paint brush in the other. McKeown is an excellent marksman and did not need to shoot to kill. He stated that he had heard there was a gunman in the area, and also that he thought the

## Very CRASS

Creative Recording and Sound Services offered a free flexi-disc to IPC Publications who publish, amongst other crap, a teenage romantic magazine called 'Loving'. The disc, 'Our Wedding' was on offer to the readers of 'Loving' for the price of an 18p stamp.

Needless to say they were fuming when they belatedly realised they had been conned into promoting a record by the Anarchist punk band CRASS who made the single. It is taken from their forthcoming album 'Penis Envy' which is a scathing attack on love and marriage. Released around the end of June it will be available from Just Books.

## BRITISH ARMY ILLEGAL!

According to the latest 'State Research', the British Army has been illegal since the 31st. April 1955. State Research have not found any legal measures to legitimise the Army or the Air Force since that date.

Apparently in the bill of rights 1866 it was set out that an Army Act be passed each year to legitimise the Army and to safeguard parliament against overthrow/liquidation by the monarch.

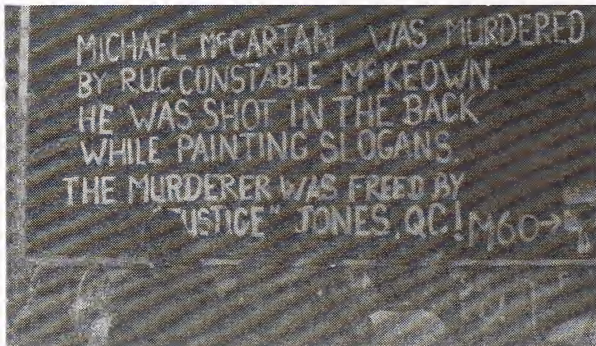
So back in good old '55 parliament obviously thought the Monarch wasn't a threat and no longer continued to pass the Army Act. But at the same time no longer legitimised its existence.

Unfortunately it will take quite a while before the implications are known, since some acts are passed which refer to/or finance the military.

But certain areas are still unclear, in the North for example it would seem that the Secretary of State for Defence can be prosecuted for any damage or injury carried out by the military in the past 26 years.

Conscientious objectors would be able to take legal action against rules designed to keep them in a force which oughtn't legally to exist.

If State Research claims turn out to be true, retrospective legislation will be the order of the day - an embarrassing day at least.



paint tin and brush. The three friends ran off. Unknown to them constable McKeown and McDonald had been observing them from the bottom of Dromara St. As the three boys left, McKeown crept along the back of Dromara St. and stood, gun in hand, with his back against the gable wall of a house fronting the Ormeau Rd. (Michael was painting the hoarding at the side of this house). Michael peeped around the corner but did not see McKeown so he picked up the paint tin and brush and made his way to the concrete path at the

white object Michael had was a bomb. He stated that McDonald had remarked that the boys looked as though they were going to high-jack a vehicle. Yet neither McKeown nor McDonald radioed for assistance.

The prosecution did not challenge the deliberately misleading statements made by the police that there was a gunman in the area nor the way the Lower Ormeau was referred to as the Upper Markets. Mr. Justice Jones accepted everything the RUC

Continued on back page

# THE COST OF CONTROL

There are many reasons why the British government maintains its hold militarily in the north, but there can be no doubt that it is in spite of the economics of the area. In fact the financial costs show to what expense it will go in order to keep that hold.

## NUCLEAR DEFENCE

The north is an invaluable communications base for the planned nuclear 'theatre war' in Europe, between the USA and USSR. The cable and radar systems, which accompany the north's strategic position (eg. to the Atlantic) have been dealt with in previous issues of OC.

## AUTHORITY

The prestige of a government and army, with a glorious (read 'bloody') imperialist past are at stake. If the army were to pull out, the appearance that they had lost, would encourage those communities in Britain who are currently challenging that same authority. Asian and West Indian communities, who came to Britain because of imperialism, are to the forefront in this challenge.

Black people in Bristol rioted last year and created a short-lived 'no go' area in St. Pauls, after years of racism and harassment from the police.

More recently, after much prediction, Brixton too exploded in anger. The scale and violence may have surprised those who 'forgot' Britain's imperialism, but it reflected the rejection of it by those who are its victims. Black people were joined in the street fighting by the gay community who also face harassment from the police and state. A certain respect was won from the usually hostile 'butch' young black men.

## SOUTHERN STABILITY

In many ways the south of Ireland is of much more value to Britain than the north. There are considerable British (as well as American, German, Japanese, etc) investments and important mutual trading. Politically the south has no small influence within the EEC, and of course there is the possibility of a future defence pact suitable to NATO.



At the present moment, any removal of troops, and responsibility for security passing to Dublin, would endanger southern stability. The anti-imperialist struggle would extend to the south, with the investments and alliances within the EEC not the only areas at risk.

The cosy relationship between the two electoral parties and the deadening control over education and morality by the Catholic Church, would be shaken.

A united Irish state, which Britain eventually wants, could only be encouraged at the same time as physically and ideologically smashing those elements advocating radical change outside of parliament. Other wise they would create havoc in any capitalist 32 county state.

## COSTS

To what financial costs will the British government go, in order not to 'lose face and authority'. To place the north in context, it has the highest regional figures for bad housing, unemployment, dependence on welfare, electricity and gas rates, most food items and alcohol for the whole of the 'U.K.'

But the government obviously cherishes our freedom more. According to research published in the New Statesman last month (May) security costs £6 per head per week, compared to less than £1 for the rest of the Disunited Queendom. The total figure this year will be £450 million. This is broken down to £326 m. for 'Law, Order and Protective Services' (mainly the RUC) and £130 m. for the extra cost of keeping the troops here (over and above the cost of keeping them in say W. Germany)

There is also the gap between what is raised locally in taxes, rates, etc. and what Westminster spends on roads, health, etc. This 'Grant in Aid' should be £326 million this year.

In addition there are 'parity payments' - the difference between what is raised in companies and workers insurance contributions, and what the unemployed and pensioners receive in benefits. This years costs are expected to approach £200 m.

So the overall cost of subsidies amounts to £1.5 billion a year - equivalent to £20 per person per week. Not included are the enormous industrial subsidies to the likes of Harland and Wolf shipyards, nor De Lorean's car plant.

The article in the NS was entitled 'The most subsidised people on earth'. Aren't we lucky? Though surely it should have been 'The most number of ...', with the above title going to the ever increasing Royal Family.

100 copies of 'outta control' (training ground mysteriously went astray between Belfast and London. The carefully cut-out address was delivered with a 'hey jimmy' Special. branch please come in in the past: ... needed ... Note that there is no conviction for their sales of the paper.

Hughes, Mc Creesh and O'Hara, those who did it wrote on the broken glass, 'UDA all the way, fuck the pope and the IRA.'!! Hope to hear from you, Dothe, Arthus, Denmark.

## 7m Pound Security Hut

"No more money"... "Last handout", ran the headlines at the beginning of the year, referring to the De Lorean sportscar plant in Belfast.

But on May 22nd, a further government loan of 7 million pounds was promised by the industry and commerce minister, Butler. This raises the total amount of public finance for the project to over £80 million.

The official justification was "a cash flow problem arising from the recent burning of part of the company's office accommodation by a fire, started by a petrol bomb".

Local people, however, maintain that only a security hut was burned and the main office complex not touched. It appears that De Lorean's huts are as exclusive as his sportscars.

The company hope to doubly benefit, as a claim for compensation is being pursued separately under the Criminal Damage legislation.

## POSTSCRIPT.

As for the Security Guard, he stood his ground and fired nails from a nail gun at the "offending" youths. When the Brits arrived, they failed to penetrate the surrounding wire mesh, so they fired ineffectively over it!

## ROMAC RIPP-OFF

The women in Romac, who make fashion and protective clothing, though, have not been so lucky. On Tuesday, 16th May, at five to four, one of the directors announced that the company could not guarantee them any more pay, after that week's payday (Thursday). Thus the company hoped to steal 2 weeks wages which it owed the women - one for the week in lieu (each weeks pay is in fact for the previous week's work), and one for the holiday pay which everyone was entitled under law.

Mc Cables, Dima Dresses, and Romac are three clothing firms, all with addresses in Queen St., central Belfast. The government receiver, Mr. Stuart, has been called in to the first two firms, and has guaranteed the workforce (predominantly women) two weeks wages when they are made redundant.

On Wednesday at 8.30 am. the 50 women workers and 4 young men (from the cutting room) decided to occupy the premises until they got a guarantee of their 2 weeks wages.

Margaret Donnelly, who is one of the longer 'serving' workers, explained that some of the women have been with the firm for 24 years, and were disgusted at their treatment.

The government, she said, also share responsibility. A receiver was not sent in, but they expect a liquidator to descend once the women have been kicked out; and he will have no authority to guarantee their wages!



The women's union, The Garment Workers' Union, have so far failed to make their protest action official, though, when pressed, could offer no reason for backing out, other than claiming to be 'having talks with the management'.

The shop stewards, though, including ones from Mc Cables' other firms, have given strong support and were present for the all night sit-in.

Other sources of support were from the women of Dima Dresses who collected £17 for the first night's food; and the women from O' Hara's bread shop in Queen St. who made a collection and sent over some food for their tea.

Dear Friends, ... Last week there was a British Navy boat in Arthus. This resulted in a broken window in the Bookshop/Cafe, the wind, now with big pictures of Bobby Sands, Belfast, June '81 - Rumours abound about 2 Tests currently being people up for the Drug Squad, it's your job to find out whose side they're on.

# TORNESS REVISITED

Since 1979, when about 4,000 people gathered at the construction site of the proposed nuclear reactor at Torness, 30 miles east of Edinburgh, attitudes towards differing forms of protest have remained much the same — hardening and polarising in some cases — although since then the numbers have decreased dramatically.

During the second week of May, around about a hundred people gathered at a campsite one mile from the construction site. Events during the week of action included a Womens' march and rally, which was quite well attended, in Edinburgh, a local residents' rally which attracted about a thousand people. Some people managed to make a landing from the sea onto the construction site, occupied several cranes, draped anti-nuclear banners from the tops, and leaving after negotiations with the site security personnell(e).

About 30 cyclists and 200 non-cyclists met at the construction site gates, sat down, got up and moved onto the road and off again all under the paternal guiding hands of the local constabulary. Eventually they left and some moved on to occupy a row of cottages (at that time owned by the SSEB, who were in the process of selling them to a local farmer who had plans to demolish them and move on to greater things) directly beside the reactor-site perimeter fence. Both the demonstrators and the police realised the potential of a sustained occupation, and after regular visits to the cottages (checking on numbers and plans), the police moved in en force (about 50) to evict the dozen or so people who had intended to stay indefinitely. At 4:30 the following morning the cottages were but a pile of rubble.

Many things warrant further consideration, and high on the list of priorities are the changing police tactics, and our counter tactics.

The same cop has been orchestrating police manoeuvres at Torness since 1979, obviously enjoying the opportunity to play with the protesters. I don't know what happened in '78, but the events of May '79 were rather an embarrassment for the forces of law n' order, with 3,000 people breaching the outer fence, and a further 400 smashing-and-a-wrecking within the inner compound (after pulling down a hundred feet of fence before the cops' very eyes and noses).

The 1980 police tactics changed: fewer people turned up, and the police were there in force, force being the key word. Determined to make amends for the previous years security fiasco, law and order laid into the demonstrators at the slightest excuse, arresting 28 people.

This year, the police excelled themselves. They displayed what seemed to be a reasonable presence, having pre-set themselves limits of what was acceptable and what was not.

The rate at which they have learnt to *contain* demonstrations allowing people to sit down, stand up, decorate themselves, shout, sing, dance and fizzle out amazes me. Sadly, most people seemed to believe that the police actually are reasonable people, not realising that the cops were happy to let us burn ourselves out, at the same time being ready to immediately move in to suppress any directly effectual action. The "police are people too!" train of thought prompted some to make tea (yes, seriously!) for the police in an open-mouthed attempt to confuse them as to where their loyalties lay — christ.

What *might* have developed into a piece of direct action was stifled almost immediately by bad planning and the cops who pounced on a group of people leaving a van in the hills surrounding the reactor site. All roads in the area were under direct observation, to the extent of the police parking a caravan at a key observation point in the hills. The heart breaking facts are that apart from the 'low-intensity operation' being badly propagated, some of those taking part seemed to look on it as a game of 'cops and robbers'....(real live cops/toy town robbers). One person who made good an escape told me how she was amazed to hear, whilst hiding under the nose of the constabulary in the shadow of a bush, laughter, jokes and fun & games coming from the ranks of those lifted. Apparently conversation bordered on dangerous. I, in all my naivety, believed that it was a serious attempt to make an attack at the roots of some very violent technology. Obviously the prevailing 'holiday' atmosphere indicates that some thought otherwise.

To my mind, direct action is not a subject for amusement — It is a form of protest that desperately (especially in view of the increased tightening up of state security) the state has made it's plans and we must make ours.....Incidentally, who noticed the Brits driving past the campsite gates, thought about where they were going and what they were going to do? Next year they could be doing security at Torness....or did you notice the RAF flying low over Barns Ness as if straddling the ground with bullets — I hope so.

Tactics must differ in accordance to the situation. I always feel trapped (and previously have been) on a small, vulnerable picket. Outside the construction site gates a woman grabbed my arm (doesn't happen often!) and demanded that I sit down. I made my objection that to sit would be to place ourselves in a vulnerable, immobile position, aside from being an entirely unnecessary act at the time — they sat. That incident is indicative of the preconceived approaches to stereotyped protesting that seems so prevalent in Britain.

The conclusions which I have drawn from Torness '81 are the same as those forwarded (but as yet not followed up) by many people after each yearly protest — We must choose our **own** ground, our **own** unannounced times, and our **own** tactics — not by playing in the court of the state with predictable methods of protest.

## VANDELEUR'S FOLLY

Just out from Co-op Books is the 56 page booklet on the famous Ralahine cooperative.

The first part of the book deals with the situation in the 18th. century in Ireland. Small tenant farmers were at the complete mercy of the landlords, they had to starve to pay the rent. Every landlord employed managers and overseers who treated the farmhands in a most disrespectful manner. The book gives interesting accounts of how the tenants were treated and how some of them organised themselves into secret societies to teach their "masters" a lesson. But there was also the mass action of the people like marches etc. which seemed to cost them a lot in lives and pain. Daniel O'Connell, that well known of Irish bourgeois opportunists, is given an interesting mention in how he used the Irish peasantry and forgot their needs when he got what he wanted. This caused great revulsion amongst the peasantry

who turned to their own methods and obtained more radical results. The country was on the verge of social upheaval and this spelt danger for the landlords and their kind.

A Co. Clare landlord by the name of John Scott Vandeleur was very distressed at the situation especially when his manager Daniel Hastings was shot through the head and killed. The book describes how he decided to put an end to the agrarian violence. He realised that stringent penalties etc. for offenders were useless. So in the end he worked out a scheme whereby he could buy the workers off. Influenced by a lecture tour on co-operatives in Ireland, he decided to establish a co-operative at his estate at Ralahine in Co. Clare. It seems that he did this purely out of self interest. The workers didn't actually take over the estate but merely ran it for him. Actually, this was the interesting thing about the co-op, it showed that the peasants could run their own affairs and have more say in things that concerned the estate. But of course the book points out that Vandeleur still had control of the estate, and everything in it belonged to him. In the event

of his departure or death, the co-operative would collapse and the tenants would have to go back to the tenant and landlord system. In actual fact this is what happened — Vandeleur lost all his money gambling (which was strictly forbidden by the rules of the co-operative) and fled from his debtors. The people had been conned by the reforms that they had accepted from the landlord, not having created their own change.

The book rightly draws a parallel between the landlord giving the peasantry 'revolution' on a plate, and the Southern Govt. of today trying to encourage co-operative type schemes that would be run in their interests. An example is the Workers Participation Act (State Enterprises) of 1977, which gives the impression of increasing workers control. Ralahine — Land War and the Co-operative is available from 'Just Books', 7 Winetavern St, Belfast. Price of the book is £2.00. N.B. James Connolly's 'Labour in Irish history contains an interesting chapter on Ralahine entitled, 'An Irish utopia'.



# THE HUNGER STRIKE CAMPAIGN IN DUBLIN

After the death of Bobby Sands, there was a feeling in Dublin that all hell would break loose. It didn't and even with the deaths of three more hunger strikers, all was still calm. The strategy, which up to then had failed, was continued. Liberals and reactionary elements were still pandering to and the campaign was to be kept respectable. Any criticism of this strategy was unwelcomed and suppressed to a certain extent.

## THE DEATHS

After Bobby Sands died, vigils took place, and despite the anger, there were silent marches. Rosaries were said. There was a small riot on the night of his death and a few windows were broken and cars set on fire. It was loudly condemned by the National H-Block Committee. The industrial action was relatively successful on the day of the funeral and a large crowd attended the vigil outside the GPO. Speeches told us to stay calm, have respect, and remain dignified.

Francis Hughes died. There was a large riot because people could no longer sit back and watch. Outside the British Embassy the Gardaí were stoned — some rocks may have hit the embassy. They reacted viciously. People were batted indiscriminately.

The next night three petrol bombs were thrown in O'Connell St., and a large crowd of a couple of thousand were batted again. Dublin City was full of cops. They were going to scare people off the streets no matter what the cost. During the week of the riot it was announced that two thousand more cops were being recruited — how convenient for the state. In all of this the NH-BC never said anything. The cops were even praised, while those who fought on the streets were condemned, and it was claimed they were just using the H-B situation for their own ends. There were cops in the H-B office every day and they knew more about activities than the people who were fighting for the prisoners.

Joe Stagg, who had worked for years for the prisoners was asked to resign from the committee because he allegedly incited people to riot.

After these disturbances, the H-B Committee banned all night-time demonstrations, despite the unwillingness of people to attend silent vigils and stand and be bored. At the previous riots even some of the stewards took part in the show of anger.

After Raymond McCreesh and Patsy O'Hara died there was little action. The vigils and meetings were small and the days of industrial action were failures. People had disappeared off the streets.

## A REACTION

With the situation getting worse, a group of people, who were frustrated and concerned about the other prisoners formed themselves into the South City H Block Group for Action. This group was not centred around any one 'extreme left wing group', but was made up of people from various political and action groups who had been fighting consistently for the prisoners. The group aimed mainly at getting street activity going again. It also wanted to draw attention to the brutality of the cops which up to then had been ignored by the NH-BC. This group wanted to work within the NH-BC, and was not interested in forming an alternative to it. It worked on the basic principles of autonomous action groups and the national policy of the campaign to destabilize the south.

## MARCH BANNED

It had organised an evening march and had distributed leaflets at the pre-election national rally in Dublin, advertising it. After this rally it was approached by the NH-BC and the 'republican movement', and told to call off its march and disband ... or else! The NH-BC had passed a motion condemning the march and circulated it to the action groups thus ensuring the failure of the march. The election was used conveniently as an excuse to have no street activity so as not to alienate the middle class voters. Although the candidates have been successful what will happen next?

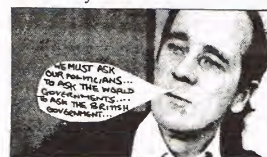
## CONTRADICTIONS

Why did the NH-BC react in this way? Well firstly they are still pandering to the liberal elements in the South, and still trying to build a 'broad based' campaign. To do this the campaign must be respectable. Property must not be attacked and force must not be used. When will they realise that these people will never support us. Those who do support the campaign now do so only because they are anti-imperialist. Its contradictory to say that you can support the prisoners without supporting the anti-imperialist struggle. These people have not supported us in over ten years of struggle and naive to expect them to do so now.



But there are also contradictions within the 'republican movement' itself — which in effect now controls the NH-BC. Anti-imperialism implies anti-capitalism, but this is not evident from their record in the south. They do not want property attacked nor do they want southern cops attacked. (Actions that were planned for the night after Frankie Hughes' death were vetoed by the republican leadership). Basically they

want the south as stable as possible so that they can use it as a safe military base... Even though the southern state is collaborating openly with the 'British War Machine', the republican movement don't see it as a target in its anti-imperialist struggle. Related to this is the fact that Sinn Féin are a political party who effectively want to control the struggle. Anything that they do not directly control is a threat to them.



Thirdly, to a large degree, there is an attempt to separate the H-Block struggle from other struggles that are going on. The kids from Dublin inner-city were loudly condemned when they rioted, for allegedly using the issue. But the NH-BC (in all its respectability) could not relate the shit housing, bad schools and lack of jobs to the criminalisation of the prisoners in the H-Blocks. The source of both problems is capitalism/imperialism and the state (usually the cops) to these kids are the enemy and should be attacked at every opportunity. Everyone decides what their methods will be according to their situation and resources. These kids only know one way of fighting and they should not be condemned for using it in support of the prisoners.

## THE WAY FORWARD

If we are to stop more hunger strikers from dying we must realise that we must use direct tactics. Politicians suit themselves and will only do things if we really get the shits up them. Its up to us all individually to adopt this attitude. The structures are there and be used.

think it must be said that now there is more room for action in the south. This is not to put down the people in the north and what they have done. Riots and civil disturbance can be continued up there, but they have almost become institutionalised, with the security forces having a lot of practice in containing them. In the south civil disturbance would be of greater effect. The cops have had less experience of it.

But our main strength lies though in industrial action. This backed up by civil disobedience could bring the southern government to its knees. People have come out and could come out again. But organisation and coordination is needed. Every workplace needs to be canvassed — a one day stoppage for the next hunger striker who dies, two days for the one after and so on till people are out, till the hunger strikers win. Workers and unemployed in the north could form flying pickets and come down to the workplaces in the south. These ideas have been voiced before, but its time the action groups, and the trade union sub committees began the work

McCartan Murder contd. from front page said, disregarding contradictory evidence from Michaels friends. In fact when the boys were giving evidence he showed an utter contempt for them, shouting irritably at them to speak up. Yet when McKeown was giving evidence under cross-examination, Jones was ever ready to agree with him and even supply answers. He seemed to have his mind made up already; insisting that neither of the policemen was seen Michael painting when this had not been proved and, when examining McKeown's black Walther pistol, he announced that it was shiny ie. similar to a whitened paint-brush! When McKeown was unable to explain how he would describe the shot, Jones again helped out. 'It was a snap shot', he offered, and McKeown repeated it.

After the trial, people of the Lower Ormeau, angered by the verdict gathered at the waste ground where Michael was shot and painted the following statement on the hoarding 'Michael McCartan was murdered by RUC constable McKeown. He was shot in the back while painting slogans. The murderer was freed by Justice Jones'. Slogans such as 'McKeown is guilty', 'RUC out' and 'Jones is an ex-Brit' were painted on the walls. People walking home were harassed and threatened by Brits. During the night the hoarding was defaced and almost torn off the wall with 'UVF' daubed over walls.

No member of the security forces has ever been convicted of murder in the last twelve years. Michael McCartan's name joins those of Majella O'Hare and John Boyle whose

killers were also acquitted and returned to duty after a sham trial.

The killers of Carole Ann Kelly and Julie Livingstone, by plastic bullet, will never be identified. Robert McKeown is back on duty. He is armed and dangerous.

## SPANISH HUNGER-STRIKER DIES

Juan Galende died from pneumonia on the 80th day of his hunger strike in the infamous Madrid prison, Carabanchel. He had been in a coma for ten days.

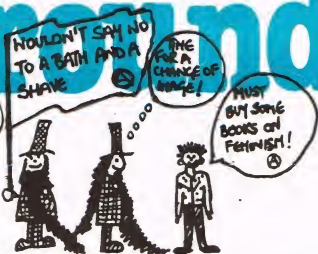
The hunger strike, over prison conditions, is continued in several jails by members of GRAPO (1st of Oct. Anti-Fascist Revolutionary Group).

BETTER THAN MOST ANARCHISTIC PUNK 'CULTURE' MAGAZINE. "EXCELLENT.... DON'T LIKE THIS BIT.... MMMM... VERY GOOD."



## OUTTA CONTROL ANARCHA-FEMINIST NEWS

OUTTA CONTROL OF THE PATRIARCHY  
TALE DELEGATE JUST BEEN RECALLED



## STRIKES, PICKETS & OCCUPATIONS



As the economic recession deepens all Maggie Thatcher can tell us to do is tighten our belts—as if there is any room left to tighten! The unemployment figures in Northern Ireland have been soaring bringing increased poverty and depression, on top of which significant cuts in public spending, in housing, social services and health care have brought many people to their knees. Of all the groups affected none have been hit more so than women—they have had to carry the burden of unemployment and public spending cuts.

Firstly women are most likely to be unemployed—they work in the most vulnerable sectors of industry, the service sectors, catering, nursing etc, and many women workers do so on a part time basis—and part time workers are always easier to get rid of. In the home they are coping with lower wages, rising costs, poor housing and when governments talk about cuts in welfare they mean that women will now have to look after the sick and the disabled who can't have hospital beds the elderly who can't have homehelps, and the children who can't have nurseries, as well as their husbands, sons and daughters who can't find work.

It is no wonder that the use of tranquilisers has been rising at an alarming rate in Northern Ireland for many

women its the only way that they can cope with the realities around them. Over the past week three groups of women workers have taken action (sometimes along with men) and have refused to accept the decisions of others.

### STITCHERS

Women who work in the clothing and allied trades in Northern Ireland have been feeling the pinch of unemployment for some time now, and for many the result has been poverty for their families as often their wage is what keeps them just above the poverty line. In times of recession, women have always been hit first and hardest of all workers.

Women stitchers are sitting in at the moment in Romac and in Crawford and Harte to demand assurances about their holiday pay and wages. This situation has arisen because of the closedown of two other firms owned by the same company—Dima and S.O. McCabes. These two employ 50 people between them making garments and they have informed workers after a receiver had been called in that the firms will close down next week.

Incensed by the short notice and by the precarious nature of their jobs, women in Romac and Crawford and Harte decided to sit in until they had assurances that they

were getting their weeks wages and holiday pay.

The owners of the firms maintain that both are viable but the workers union, the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers is not so sure given the number of stitching firms which have closed in the last few months. As yet the sit in has not been given official recognition.

### PURDYSBURN NURSES

While the government is busy cutting jobs, complaining of wastage, many workers are finding that they are working twice as hard making up for understaffing. This very issue has prompted the threatened strike by nurses in Purdysburn Hospital, where severe understaffing is causing problems for both staff and patients. The COHSE spokesperson in the hospital—the union that represents most of the staff there—said that the patients are receiving no psychiatric care at the moment as all the nursing staff can manage to do is to keep the patients quiet, (that usually means administering large doses of drugs). For example on one three hour shift, one nurse was expected to take care of 39 patients on a ward, some of whom were diabetic, epileptic, and some needed special care! Another nurse received hospital treatment after being attacked in the special unit for violent patients—when staffing was not up to the required minimum. As well as this skin complaints have developed in patients from lack of baths again due to poor staffing.

Understaffing has always been a problem but because of recent government cuts overtime in the hospital was axed 7 months ago which only served to make the whole situation worse. This treatment has been the same in many psychiatric hospitals and indicates the priorities which the government has—the mentally ill come very far down the list because often they cannot speak out for themselves. Similarly the government has always come down hard on nurses knowing that they tend to put their patients first and so are less likely to take strike action. A mass meeting and walkout is planned for the weekend but they will continue to provide emergency cover on the wards during any action they may take.

In the same hospital a woman died at the end of May from drug abuse—when two drugs were prescribed simultaneously which reacted together fatally. It was described as 'unfortunate' that the doctor who prescribed the drugs was

Continued on back page

# SUPPORT FOR ABORTION

On June 6th the Abortion Law Reform Association organised a meeting in London on abortion in Ireland. They invited speakers from the Dublin-based Woman's Right to Choose group and the Northern Ireland Abortion Campaign. ALRA believed that by organising such an event they would be able to express their solidarity with Irish women, and open up a public debate in England surrounding the issue. About 100 people attended the meeting most of whom were concerned with the abortion issue either through ALRA, the National Abortion Campaign, or the various counselling agencies. Some Irish women living in England also came along. Despite though their declared interest in Irish affairs, and the plight of the Irish people, the organised left and most of the feminist groups were conspicuous by their absence - Irish women's rights over their own fertility is perhaps too trivial a subject for them to raise.

The meeting opened with a short introduction from a member of Alra explaining the purpose of the meeting, and then I spoke on behalf of NIAC. I began by outlining the social/economic setup in Northern Ireland and giving a short history of the state. I went on to talk about the dominance of the churches here and how they can affect everyday life. After describing the law as it stands in N.I., the failure of the Stormont government and then successive British governments since direct rule to extend the 67 Abortion Act here, I catalogued the hardships of women faced with unwanted pregnancy - travelling to England, facing the backstreet, or some abandoning babies shortly after birth - all have been the realities of women here.

I talked about the setting up of NIAC and the opposition that it faced and the possibilities for the future. In summing up I indicated the ways in which British feminists might help their Irish sisters in their struggle—by lobbying MPs, educating people about the situation here and by support in all forms.

The speaker from the Woman's Right to Choose group pointed out the situation in the South and reminded those present that women in Ireland didn't even have access to contraception. She outlined the setting up of her group and of the counselling service they provide to help women go to England for abortion. She could not see any change in the foreseeable future as abortion was a difficult subject to raise because of the alliance of Church and State in the South, but she added that safe, legal and easily available facilities in the North would significantly ease the burden of all Irish women as coming up to Belfast would be considerably easier than going to England.

After the speeches the meeting was opened to allow questions and discussion. This part of the meeting was very lively and stimulating. Many of the audience expressed amazement at the



plight of Irish women and of their own lack of knowledge—many were determined to publicise the situation at as best they could. Questioners wanted to know if any of the political parties in Ireland supported abortion and the support generally for women's rights.

Some of the speakers came from outside Britain—and spoke about the situation of women in Canada, USA, Spain and Italy, and these comparisons were very useful especially for the Irish women as they indicated possible future strategies in Ireland.

At the end of the meeting a collection was taken up which yielded £60—this was divided between the two speakers to take back to their groups. All in all it was a fruitful experience allowing bonds of support and solidarity to be firmly established and incidentally it was the first time that NIAC and a Woman's Right to Choose group had actually met!

## MAEVE

Last weekend saw the preliminary showings of the film 'Maevae' at Queen's Film Theatre, before the film goes on to be shown at the Edinburgh and Cork festivals. Most of the film is set in Belfast, in a working class Catholic ghetto with occasional sorties to Ennis and a glimpse of the highlife in London.

Basically it is the story of two sisters the elder, Maevae, who left Belfast at the beginning of the present trouble...she was confused and felt suffocated by what she saw around her... and Roisin, who stayed and still lives with the parents. Maevae comes back on a visit to her family and much of the film is made up of childhood memories of school, of her father, of sectarianism, of the early troubles, interspersed between present day

realities of life in Belfast. Although slowmoving at times, the portrayal of life in Belfast is the film's best feature. The cameraman has set up the shots well and I was left with a hauntingly real and uncanny view of places, incidents, family relationships and sectarianism as it happens every day, and not the sensationalist headline material so typical of most documentaries, films, newspapers, and journals - it is worth seeing the film for that.

On the other hand, the film was presented as a feminist film, and the last of the showings was for women only. I was surprised at this for at no time during the making of the film was there any inkling in Belfast that this was the case, and certainly no contact was made with any women's groups here. I think that this is evident in the film as it fails abysmally at portraying feminism, or its role in the present situation. It is a film written by a woman, about two women, and as such is very sympathetic, but as soon as feminist issues are raised the film tends to become tedious, detached, and coarsely done. When Maevae argues with her ex-boyfriend the discussion is a crude and simplistic feminism versus the national question one, which does a dis-service to both points of view. Maevae went away to England and has come back a feminist in theory at least, when we see her life in England she has not been involved in anything with other women, presumably her feminism came from books (which listening to her dialogue confirms). She wants the space to be on her own and believes that England can give that to her, - basically though she just doesn't know what she want ... and so she hardly presents a positive view of feminism in Britain, Ireland or anywhere else.

One is left with the feeling that women in Ireland are not challenging these things already and that our struggles can be written out of the script.

It is hoped to bring the completed film back to QFT for a public showing after the autumn. The film does generate ideas, and if you have the chance to see it do so. With luck and some money I hope that Irish feminists will want to make their own films and videos... though lets hope that with grants of nearly £100,000, the amount it took to make Maevae, the pieces will reflect a feminist view of Irish women and their lives.



# HIDING BEHIND PETTICOATS AND PINAFORES

GAINING GROUND  
HERSTORY

## The forgotten history of the Ladies' Land League

In great contrast to the centennial celebrations which commemorated the formation of the Land League in 1879, its sister organisation — the Ladies' Land League — which was formed 100 years ago, on January 31st 1881, has received no mention at all. The justification for its recognition in our historical annals is nonetheless overwhelming. Not only was the Ladies' Land League the first political organisation of Irish women but it can also be argued that without the support of the women, the Land League, far from triumphing, would have suffered a humiliating defeat. If the women had not taken over after the imprisonment of the male leaders, the British Government would have had no reason to concede to any of the League's demands: it was, by that stage, defunct as an organisation with its leading members in prison and growing demoralisation of its supporters becoming a serious possibility. All this was to change, as a result of the tireless work of a group of women, whose contribution deserves more than official oblivion.





The Land League had been formed in 1879 as a pressure group with the joint aims of reducing the exorbitant rents farmers were forced to pay, and to eventually win over ownership of the land for the farmers. It was a time when famine threatened yet again to engulf the country, but on this occasion the Irish leaders were determined to fight back and win some measure of land reform. Support was immediate and enthusiastic as the campaign gained strength. Farmers were instructed to pay rent only at 'the point of a bayonet' and those who were evicted for non payment were promised financial support by the League. Through the boycotting of landgrabbers it was hoped that no one would touch the farm of an evicted person, so forcing the landlord to eventually take back the original tenant. Thousands joined the League in a desperate effort to fight landlord power; the mood was militant and tactics rough: there was maiming of cattle, destruction of crops, shooting of landlords. By August 1881 Prime Minister Gladstone had been forced to introduce a Land Act in the hope that this would defuse the campaign. But the Act, by ignoring the landless, excluding those in rent arrears and failing to provide for any land redistribution, was too little and far too late. But the Government was not going to concede any more: to ensure that the agitation collapsed, its leaders began to be arrested. By October 13th, even Parnell had been lodged in Kilmainham Jail and on October 20th, the Land League was officially declared to be an illegal organisation.

## "Anna Parnell would have worked the Land League revolution to a much better conclusion than her great big brother"

It had been obvious for some months that the Government would eventually resort to such a measure. The crucial question was whether the leadership would tamely submit and by so doing acquiesce in the suppression of the most powerful mass movement Ireland had ever witnessed, or would they be able to devise some means whereby the struggle could be continued, despite the anticipated coercive laws. The solution was obvious, if unpalatable—to enlist the help of women. Most of the men were highly dubious of this 'most dangerous experiment', fearing public ridicule if they were to be seen relying on women. But they had little choice and time was running out, as Michael Davitt forcefully argued. Either they immediately form a Ladies' Land League as an auxiliary organisation, or they accepted defeat. Davitt went further: not only was women's involvement not a last, despairing gesture, he felt their participation could intensify the struggle, that the women could be 'more dangerous to despotism than men'. Andrew Kettle, once he had met Anna Parnell, found himself in full agreement. Considering her to have 'a better knowledge of the lights and shades of Irish peasant life, of the real economic conditions of the country, and of the social and political forces which had to be acted upon to work out the freedom of Ireland than any person, man or woman, I have ever met'. His conclusion was that 'Anna Parnell would have worked the Land League revolution to a much better conclusion than her great big brother'.

A Ladies' Land League had already been formed in New York the previous year by another Parnell sister, Fanny, who was a highly regarded nationalist poet. Delia Parnell, the mother of the Parnell children, was its president and branches were formed in many other states to raise money for relief in Ireland. Anna, Fanny's younger sister, aged 28, now returned to Ireland to take up the work of organising Irish women. The day after the formation of the Ladies' Land League, Davitt was rearrested and on his journey back to Portland Jail he comforted himself by specialising about this mighty 'power' that Forster, Chief Secretary

for Ireland, would now have to reckon with.

For their part, the women were determined to ensure that they would be politically effective. It was an unprecedented opportunity for women to stake a claim to be considered as political equals and they wanted to succeed. Anna was quickly urging women to learn to depend only on themselves, to do things for themselves and to organise themselves. No more were they going to rely on male support. In her memoirs *'The Land League: Tale of a Great Sham'* Anna makes it plain that she believed the Land League could become the vehicle by which landlord power would be destroyed and out of that victory she looked forward to the arising of a mass movement of men and women which would have the power to win national independence. She did not believe in piece meal reform and for the next eighteen months, as the guiding spirit of the Ladies Land League, she attempted to mould the campaign into a 'programme of a permanent resistance until the aim of the League shall be attained'.

An organisation overhaul of the Land Leagues records was their first task, once they discovered the chaotic disorder of the headquarters. It was impossible to tell how the campaign was being conducted around the countryside as branch records were either out of date or non-existent, so the women devised their 'Book of Kells'—which was a record of every estate, including information on rents, the character of the landlord and the spirit of the people. Davitt later praised it as the most perfect system that could be imagined. An executive of 21 women was selected, with a reserve of women ready to take the place of anyone who might be arrested.

Women organisers toured the country, organising relief, attending eviction scenes where they urged the people to stand firm against the landlords and arranging for the building of huts as shelter for those who did suffer eviction. Branches multiplied as women responded to the call: by the end of 1881 there were over 500 branches of the Ladies' Land League. Not surprisingly the women activists were condemned by the Catholic Church and sneered at by the press. Archbishop McCabe thundered against those who



LAND LEAGUE CRUELTY.

Unionist propaganda poster denouncing the Land League and its use of 'the Boycott'.



upon. Parnell promised to influence the agitator and in return the Government undertook to amend the Land Act and release the prisoners. Forster and Cowper resigned in protest at these concessions.

## an "open organisation in which the ladies will not take part"

Parnell and Davitt met on May 4th. Davitt was jubilant at the victory that had been extracted from the Government and praised the work of the women. Parnell retorted that as far as he was concerned they had done much harm and had to be disbanded. If they were not, he threatened to leave public life. But months of negotiation followed before the final dissolution of the Ladies' Land League; months in which the women were the pawns in a political intrigue between Parnell and some of the more radical members of the Land League who wanted the land campaign to be continued and who therefore voted for the retention of the Ladies' Land League. Only when Parnell finally agreed to the formation of a new organisation — the Irish National League — unblushingly described as an "open organisation in which the ladies will not take part"—did they drop any pretence of wanting to ensure that women would continue to have the right to be involved in political activity. For their part the women saw no reason to remain in existence: once the men were released from jail, it was obvious that they would again take over the leadership. Women lacked the right to vote or to hold office and were therefore unable to challenge the influence of the politicians. For Anna Parnell, this was also a time of personal

tragedy. Her beloved sister Fanny had died suddenly in July, and news of her death, combined with physical exhaustion, precipitated a nervous breakdown from which it took several months for her to recover. All along, she had distrusted the sincerity of the men, believing their militant words to be mere rhetoric. She did not want to be part of a movement which deceived the people, content to stop short of full scale land reform. She was also hostile to parliamentary wheeling and dealing, believing liberal promises of support for a Home Rule Bill to be mere fiction, and Parnell's subsequent move towards parliamentarianism a sell out of national aspirations and a denial of the growing power of the mass movement.

Before she died in 1911, Anna became a supporter of Sinn Féin and she was enthusiastic of Inghinnidhe na hEireann, formed in 1900 by Maud Gonne because she found that no nationalist organisation would admit her as a member. Tim Harrington, the President of the National League, bluntly told Maud that women were not permitted into the organisation because past experience had demonstrated that women 'could not be controlled'.

There are many reasons why Irish men would prefer not to acknowledge the existence of the Ladies' Land League, not least because of the shameful way in which the women were swept aside once they were no longer needed. These women pioneers defied a British State as intransigent and inhuman a State as the one we face today: defied an hypocritical Church, worried about the 'modesty' of women who fought alongside a desperate people but which turned a blind eye to the prostitution, the conduct of the British soldiers in the streets each night and the thousands upon thousands of Irish women who had been evicted from their homes; and they defied popular pressure in stepping outside of their traditional roles as women, in order to defend the rights of the poor and the dispossessed.

## SOUTHERN ELECTIONS What did they do for women?

*The Women's Political Association which promises to promote any woman who runs for an elected public position irrespective of her politics is well pleased with the results of the '81 election in the South. There are more women TDs now than at any time previously. (eleven). But what do they represent or who do they represent? Only one of the women TDs elected said that she saw it as an important part of her role to raise and push issues of importance to women such as family planning, law reform, child care etc. Liz Noonan, the lesbian feminist who ran in Dublin, was refused promotion by the Women's Political Association, showing up what their commitment to women really means. She ran on a radical programme covering the needs of women at work, the rights of lesbian mothers to keep their children, an end to discrimination on the grounds of lesbianism and she also canvassed in support of the H Block prisoners demands. The campaign was useful from a propaganda point of view, raising issues never before raised in such a public manner. However, it would be encouraging illusions in the election system to see it as anything more than that. The financial obstacles to competing with the big money parties were very obvious and show up the fallacy of the notion that everyone is equal in the 'democratic' process. She got 357 votes, more than many of her supporters expected, but the main value of the campaign was getting new ideas across to people on the canvass, speaking to people at their doors about*

*the issue of lesbianism for example and personalising the issue by bringing them face to face with a woman not afraid to declare herself a lesbian.*

*The Fine Gael party laid its respects to the women's movement in the most traditional and insidious way by effectively offering a (low) wages for housework programme. They promised women £3.00 a week per child and tax concessions to those who stayed at home. Although Fianna Fail spent thousands of pounds advertising in the papers showing that tax concessions would be at the expense of the wage earner, most of the political commentators agreed that this Fine Gael tax promise was the single most important factor in pushing up their vote so dramatically. The net result of a wages for housework policy is to institutionalise the individual woman in the home and to confirm her role as one of domestic servant and full time child minder. The anarchist alternative is to socialise housework and child care, involving all members of the community and allowing women to fulfill all the roles open to them rather than being seen only as wives and mothers. This involves spending money on community based nurseries and creches, communal canteens etc, rather than offering women a sop to retain the status quo. So in answer to the question—what will the new TDs do for women?—the answer is nothing. Women will have to get together and do things for themselves.*



## ARMAGH

Terrified of a repeat of last week's sudden release of prisoners from the 'Crum, the RUC packed the court in Armagh town on Tuesday when Shirley Devlin, an ex prisoner, Breige Ann McCaughy and Eileen McGonigle at present serving sentences in Armagh Gaol, appeared before the court.

They are suing the Secretary of State for assault and brutality which occurred on 7th February, 1980. The women prisoners told the court how over 30 male screws walked in at lunchtime along with Scott the Governor, who proceeded to tell them about a cell search.

Shirley Devlin made the point that there had never been male screws involved in these searches before, she said that the women were moving towards the association room when the male screws grabbed them, dragging them across the floor, punching and beating them.

The Judge, Frank Russell then took the decision to continue the trial until 6.00pm, that evening. He probably thought that he would not be putting the women out too much and it must have cost a lot of tax payers money to keep such security on. The case will probably continue for another few days and we can expect the usual verdict.

# Memories of Mountjoy

Over the past years a few minor changes have been made in Mountjoy prison, for instance, the present matron; though strict, is better than the last one, but changes like most of the day to day things inside are trivial and only given importance because there is nothing else happening inside. Thus small things can mean a lot. One of the first things the present matron did was to re-allow matches and lighters. These had been stopped several years back when a MALE prisoner in St.Pats set fire to his cell:ie: nothing to do with the women. This means that prisoners who have any of the daily allowance (10 weekdays, 20 weekends left can smoke at night.

The medical services are appalling. The story of the anorexic was bad enough but what the junkies go through is perhaps worse. Roughly 20% of the women in the past 12 months are on heavy drugs when they come in they are cold turkeyed. If they are lucky they get an aspirin and that is all. There is no provision for treatment of any kind either physical or psychological....we have reason to believe that the new psychologist might change that but it remains to be seen. As for other illness treatment is minimal to say the least. Most women in for sentences over a month experience irregularities in their periods which can take the form of periods lasting up to three weeks or arriving every two weeks. Because the doctors are all men and very unsympathetic, few women will go to them about such things and just suffer, some become anaemic. If it is raining during the exercise period there is no fresh air for the day and perhaps for several days if the rain comes on consecutive days at that time.

The heating in the winter was virtually non existent for the two winters that I spent in there. Thus not only are you freezing all day long but if you are studying at night you have to do this in bed as it is just too cold to sit up. I got chilblains on both hands, both winters and many women had them on their feet which made walking painful.

At least 90% of the women prisoners in Mountjoy are illiterate and there are completely inadequate facilities for them to learn to read and write.

Fire precautions are pitiful. No one can remember there ever being a fire drill. All mattresses are foam and highly flammable and give off toxic fumes. There was a fire cell death in Limerick prison in 1980 (a man) and the coroner's verdict riders on the necessity of proper fire precautions. In Mountjoy Female there is one extinguisher in the corridor and one fire hose. The hose was disconnected two years ago because it dripped all the time and left a mess. Easter 81 there was a fire in a cubicle used for storing shoe polish, STs, cleaning materials etc (highly inflammable materials). The women were taken down to the recreation room for a while and then herded back into smoke and fume filled cells and locked up for the night. The women in cells near the cubicle could

not even see the doors of their cells clearly from their beds (a cell is approx 10 feet long) windows in the cells open roughly 4 1/2 to 5 inches if you are lucky! One of the women locked up at this time is a severe asthmatic. During the fire there was total chaos and hysteria in both prisoners and jailers. All except one jailer. What would have happened if that one had not been on duty and the fire had been bigger? It should be remembered that this fire took place not too long after the Stardust fire tragedy in Dublin where 48 people died. The material in the mattresses in all cells in the Republic (including police cells) is the same as what was at the Stardust. At night all cells are double locked and after 9pm the keys are transferred to the officers mess for 'security'. If there was a fire after 9pm the keys would have to be brought back and in that space of time nothing could be done to rescue women in the cells.

## CENSORSHIP OF MAIL

This applies to all prisoners but is used particularly against long term prisoners. Letters with political content will be stopped particularly if the writer does not visit as well so the prisoner comes to believe she has lost friendships. The rule of ex prisoners not being allowed to write or visit is really cruel for many of the women, most of whose friends have been inside.

Limerick prison is used for female political prisoners and non political prisoners. From all accounts it is worse than the 'Joy because there is absolutely no work or school or anything to break the monotony. Prisoners who cause trouble in Limerick are occasionally transferred to the 'Joy and vice versa. Also if the 'Joy gets very overcrowded. At these times prisoners are given no warning they are being transferred and neither are their friends and family so visits and letters are lost. When sent back to the 'Joy again no warning is given so people go all the way to Limerick for visits only to find the prisoner is back in Dublin.

It is most unusual for prisoners to give birth in prison nowadays: non political prisoners are sent to hospital. This was not the case for Rose Dugdale. Much was made in the media about the special birth cell. This was all lies. She had her son in an ordinary cell and the light was so poor screws had to stand around with torches for the doctors to see. In Mountjoy some of the pregnant women are encouraged to go to prenatal classes in the hospital, but not all. The criteria for this privilege is hard to understand, not appearing to be based on any logic. But then that is the same with practically everything in there! In fact this pure lack of logic is one of their strongest weapons because you never know what is going to happen next.

## THE NEW WOMEN'S PRISON

Work has begun on a new women's prison at Wheatfields, an area on the



outskirts of Dublin between Ballyfermot and Clondalkin. It has accommodation for sixty women. Until it was announced Mountjoy was always half empty; since then the 'Joy has been packed to full capacity. Obviously this is to convince the public of the need for a bigger prison. Its not that more women are being convicted, but that less are given probation or suspended sentences. In fact all the prison statistics are crazy. For example if you take an annual prison population of say 100 you can be sure that 50% or more are women doing several sentences in one year. The recidivism rate is very high with women spending several months inside and the same ones going in year after year.

## SPAIN

Nearly 200 postcards have now been sent off to the Spanish Minister of Justice demanding an amnesty for all those women on trial for having or being involved in performing abortions., and calling for safe abortions to be legalised in Spain.

The response to the postcards was much better than expected, many were taken within two days, and it has been decided to print our own postcards for safe, legal abortion in Northern Ireland as part of a propaganda strategy planned for the autumn.

If you want to protest about the Spanish trial the address is Ministerio de Justicia, San Bernardo 45, Madrid 8, Spain. Some postcards are still available in the bookshop. Others can be obtained by writing to National Abortion Campaign, 30 Camden Road, London NW1.

not at the inquest to answer questions. It was declared that the doctor was unaware that a combination of the two drugs was fatal - despite the fact that in the past few years medical journals had carried reports to that effect.

The woman Clare Campbell was admitted to Purysburn suffering from post-natal depression and died three weeks later. If doctors spent more time talking and listening to their patients instead of using them as guinea pigs or keeping them quiet with drugs Clare Campbell might still be alive.

#### BALMORAL TESTING CENTRE

As part of the Civil Servants dispute over pay, eight women from the Vehicle Testing Centre at Balmoral Road, came out on June 12th—the first of a series of pickets and token strikes leading up to an all out strike at the end of the month. Workers at the centre voted 21-6 for an all out strike.

Work has been disrupted at the centre no appointments are being made, no post is allowed through, nothing is being collected and PSV forms for lorries and large vehicles are not being processed. The women have been fairly successful in stopping the large goods lorries from entering the centre—they estimate around 75% successful, those who did force their way through belonged to small businesses. The T&GWU have already come out in support of the strike.

Disruption at Balmoral Road is likely to continue and the campaign will continue throughout the North's 15 centres with a proposed telephone ban. The women are demanding a 15% improvement with an underpinning minimum increase of £10 per week. The British Government has refused to negotiate or allowed the unions the right to go to arbitration. On top of that the Government is cutting 75,000 jobs over the next three years—that's around 3,000 in Northern Ireland putting more workers on the dole.

## Short changed?

*Ever wondered why your doctor, if he/she was in favour of contraceptives pushed the pill at you and nothing else? Ever wondered why so many female sterilisations happen and fewer male when vasectomy is a much simpler and safer procedure?*

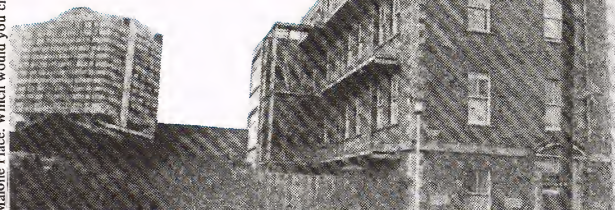
*So did we—but we thought it might have been pressure on the doctor of time or lack of knowledge....but we may have been wrong.*

*It seems that the Health Boards (who pay doctors per patient, per visit, per prescription) don't pay a fee for any contraceptive prescribed EXCEPT the pill. Consequently if a doctor spends time telling you about diaphragms, sheaths or IUDs s/he won't get paid for it—writing a prescription for the pill then becomes a lot easier and a lot more lucrative.*

*Similarly, a doctor referring a woman for sterilisation receives a fee BUT not if he refers a man. So next time you consult your doctor about contraception ask him/her if the above is true and ask them what they are doing about it.*

## Malone Place closure

The new clinical atmosphere of the City versus the more homely atmosphere of Malone Place. Which would you choose?



If you plan to have a baby in Belfast, then after 30th June you will almost certainly have to book into one of the large maternity hospitals in the area—the Royal, the Jubilee, the Ulster Hospital or the Mater. Home confinements are extremely rare and when the last small maternity unit closes another area of choice for pregnant women will go.

Malone Place Hospital, which, despite, its name is located not in the wealthier suburbs of the city but at the end of Sandy Row, was a general practitioner maternity unit. The service it offered enabled a woman to be supervised throughout her pregnancy and confinement by her own doctor, with the actual delivery being done by the midwives who staffed the unit. Any woman booked into Malone Place was able to go along and meet the staff who would be delivering her baby, a fact that reassured many women. The size of the unit (32 beds) and the attitudes of the staff ensured that women felt relaxed and confident about the care that they were going to receive. "A home from home" was how one woman described it.

However over the past few years the numbers of women using Malone Place had declined, making it particularly vulnerable to public spending cuts. This decline was partly due to fewer GPs being interested in obstetric work but also because many women were not informed that Malone Place was an option open to them, one woman stated that "my own doctor was very reluctant to refer me to Malone Place and gave various reasons that implied it wasn't the safest place to have a baby, particularly a first baby". He informed her that "if anything went wrong she would never "forgive herself". Given that many GPs may have shared that view, its not surprising that numbers using the unit dropped off. Women and doctors who did use Malone Place though had complete confidence in its services and safety and obviously any woman whose pregnancy indicated potential problems was not booked in there.

The views of this GP reflect an attitude that safe healthy deliveries can only take place in highly technological surroundings. Yet the majority of childbirths are normal and whilst no one would deny the neces-

ity and desirability of having technological back up for those women and babies who need it, the increasing use of medical intervention in normal deliveries has caused many women to question some of the practices in the larger maternity units. Procedures like the artificial induction or "acceleration" of labour can, in themselves cause complications at the delivery stage. These processes coupled with the increasing use of foetal monitors often make the whole experience of childbirth more painful and distressing for women. Increased pain means an increase in the demand for pain relieving drugs like pethidine, which can affect the baby.

A growing body of opinion believes that technology should only be used when appropriate and as a back up to assist the skills of the midwives and doctors, not to replace them.

In this context, many of the women who opted for Malone Place did so because they wanted to experience a birth that was allowed to progress naturally, in a situation where they knew the staff around them.

Compared to Britain, women in Northern Ireland already have fewer options than their sisters who can choose between various schemes when it comes to childbirth. The domino scheme for example, allows a woman to be supervised throughout pregnancy by a doctor and midwife and she only has to go to hospital for the actual delivery and can return home within 24 hours. Home confinements are much more common than here, and there are GP units still in operation. These options, though have been fought for by women and by those doctors and midwives who recognise that childbirth is not an illness requiring medical interference and who believe that women themselves should be allowed some degree of choice and control over the process of birth.

The administrators who decided to close Malone Place made finance the basis of their decisions rather than any consideration of its services in other terms. The fact that women weren't consulted for their opinion surprises no one—after all, we are only consumers of the NHS!

**ADDRESS** Association of Maternity Services, Secretary, Mrs.A. Taylor, West Hill Cottage, Exmouth Place, Hastings, Sussex.

## Meetings

The last Unity Meeting took place on June 6th—the theme was nuclear power. The turnout was very small and so it was decided to discuss the subject at a future date (probably the September meeting) and to get the banned BBC film 'The War Game' for that discussion.

A Bookcollective meeting took place on 30th May and it is hoped that a book, with the

theme of 'changes' in Northern Irish womens lives over the past ten years will be out by Christmas. This will be possible because the collective hope to publish it themselves as opposed to going to a commercial publisher. So far the content is wide ranging—if you would like to be involved in any way contact them c/o the Womens Centre. For further details of all womens meetings contact the womens centre...18 Donegall St., Belfast. Tel: 43363