PULLING THE POLYESTER OVER OUR EYES!

The artificial fibre industry is one of the biggest employers in the North. But this year it has ground almost to a halt, as the multi-nationals pull out because their profits aren't high enough.

Countiful, at Carrickfergus, have laid off 3,000, and at Campsie, near Derry, another 630. ICI near Larne, have sacked 2000. And last month at Antrim, Enkalon announced the loss of 1300 jobs.

There has been little opposition from the workers, who have an uncritical view of their trade union leaders. John Freeman explained the union strategy to oppose the bosses: "No one can criticise the company." he said on TV. "It's too late for me to question the internal affairs of a company." The redundancies have been agreed with the trades unions who have been silenced by very large redundancy payments and the usual argument about "world wide recession over capacity - fierce international competition etc."

ICI PROFITS

In 1978 ICI's profits were £621m in 1979 £613m but collapsed to £284m in 1980.

LIFE AT THE TOP

But a rather different fate awaits the executives of ICI.

Dr. Brian Smith is the ICI main board director with responsibility for fibres. He, like the rest of the top management, has been paid six figure salaries, and has bonus payments in excess of £200,000. The May 1983 edition of the Sunday Independent revealed that Smith, who lives in his own 10 bedroom home, bought large parts of his house in London for £250,000. His wife is a former social worker and a close friend of a top member of the ICI board.

The Sunday Independent has also revealed that ICI have been3,000 at an old factory in Carrickfergus, just two miles away from the company's head office.

CIVIL ORDER = PLASTIC DEATH

Since April this year there have been six deaths from plastic bullets. Scores of people have been seriously injured including fifteen year old Paul Larri who is in a life support system and Kevin McAuliffe aged fourteen who is still unconscious after being hit on the back of the head by a plastic bullet on May 19th and is likely to be paralysed for life.

STATE OF SIEGE

The Loyalist State since its beginning has always seen itself as a community under siege. Throughout its history it has had to be defensive in maintaining its existence by any means necessary through the B Specials, RUC, UDR or UDA.

DON'T BE VAGUE-SHOOT A TAG

The hard line loyalist answer to Catholics and knowing their place is to kill some of them. The sectarian assassinations carried out by the loyalist paramilitary groups may be silently condemned by the majority of protestants, but murders carried out by the State's peacekeepers towards innocent Catholics are never questioned and are whitewashed over by the state.

Continued on inside front page
ECOLOGY is simply our relationship to the natural world ... in nature ... how we understand that relationship, how we act within it. The system we live in or cultures, decides that relationship... It decides our attitudes and responses to the natural world. So land, under private (usually family) ownership, and used for gain and profit through factory-type farming, is the key to understanding ecology. Because people do not feel themselves to be in any degree of harmony with the natural world, with the fields and the countryside. On the contrary, most people are denied any access to land, that is tilled or farmed, traditionally from father to son through family ownership. The land is NOT something we all can share in, can work together ... it is seen as the way to make money for a few, to abuse as much as possible, to sell, to increase profits, to buy more machinery.

This is the logic of private ownership. But farming has not evolved such a way by accident... It is the direct result of government policies and the development of machinery/technology. Politics and technology that see nature as something to be plundered, controlled, rolled ... as something in the service of the few. Indirectly, of course, we all get fed ... but at what cost? We shall see.

The Gov/Multi-national Connection.
Farming is more or less run by governments, who in turn carry out the wishes of large chemical companies - always it is THEIR interests which get pushed. The farmers at the other end are only too eager to follow. Pesticides / insecticides / herbicides are manufactured and pushed by big drug companies... the farmers are no longer an "ad" to farming, but a shortcut to money-making, replacing all traditional methods. Government does not to interfere, preferring taxes to real food. Agrochemicals become based on long-term distance as the millions of tons of artificial chemicals pumped and sprayed into the ground become lethal! Smaller and more lethal does have to be used every year, as insects, supposed to be killed, build up resistances ... the bigger the dose of chemical used, the greater the danger to humans, animals, the soil, food. The chemicals accumulate in the soil, and slowly build up - without notice or warning. Like radiation, the effect is additive ... maybe cancer in 10; 20; 30; 40; years time. The chemical industry persuades us to use it all we can ... they encourage calendar spraying, spraying whether the soil-borne disease is absent or not. They encourage spraying in advance of an outbreak; they encourage spraying to make vegetables look nice, irrespective of what harm it is doing. Meanwhile we are encouraged to RUC, to consume, vegetables, depending on how they look, not their flavour or goodness.

The agro-chemical industry, always claiming too much government control. In fact, where there is very little, push cancer-producing to the landowner out to make money. Slowly but surely the land is becoming polluted to the point of no return. Governments watch, always eager to destroy the danger of these chemicals, yet still in business by making into a taboo harmless things like marijuana. Of such is their logic - feeding our minds shit, full of taboo.

Realizing the accumulating dangers, and following in the footsteps of the American tech. industry, some EEC bureaucrats issued a directive ... which would require member states to avoid or withdraw certain chemical compounds. (The USA government banned DDT amongst other chemicals, but the multi-national pushers sold their drugs, abroad, particularly in Third World countries). These "restricted compounds" remain to use in both Britain and Ireland. They will not be banned, until "effective alternatives become available". A fact like saying we'll do away with smoke, when we get its equivalent on the market with a new hydrid brand name.

The chemicals work hand in hand with the new farming mentality - of big machinery, EEC meat, bigger fields, ripping up hedges, spraying for everything, irrespective of the workers' health or those that live or grow nearby ... the big sat, synthetic, approach to land they use and abuse as they are led, just because it IS OWNED.

To argue that this is needed to feed the world's millions shows just how far we have gone away from any understanding of the earth's potential, and got filled up with nonsense. EEC mountains and lakes is the new agri-business. Polluted land, harmful food, with most of us divorced from the land, becomes the modern way to ecology, just like the world government push for nuclear power, is a multi-nationalism and governments which gain at the expense of a slow poisoning of us all.

And to change things? Clearly, the modern chemical shop is NOT the answer. It uses us divorced from the rural reality, substituting pre-packed Third World commodity rice for any personal connection with what is potentially around us. The answer comes from an urban / rural consciousness - a belief in the NEED to regain our touch of earth. And that can only come about when the old-time people who live in city batteries feel that need.

Granted, there are many spuds in Ireland where living on the land is difficult, where survival is full-time. Such small-scale farming is being done away with by Government/ECC policies. But even then, the culture of agrobusiness will play a big role.

Contr. from front page
new question on the use of plastic bullets in Britain because it would mean "inflicting injury and death on rioters.

If these deaths and injuries had been caused by the use of live ammunition there would have been an outcry. However, although these plastic bullets have been shown to kill and maim, their name gives a false impression of their lethal nature, suggesting a toy bullet. They are actually called 'baton rounds'. They replaced the rubber bullet in 1972 because of the injuries and deaths caused by rubber bullets. The rubber bullets in plastic bullet for exceeds that of rubber bullets. Aplastic bullet is a blunt PVC cylinder, 3 inches long and 13 inches in diameter. Even at a range of 30 yards its velocity is 47 metres per second and it is 65 metres per second at five yards. Also bullets are often "doctorod" with torch batteries and coins or sharpened to make them even more dangerous.

Instructions issued to the British Army on the use of plastic bullets state: "The rounds must not be fired at a range of less than twenty metres". They should be aimed so they strike the lower part of the target's body directly. The bullets are designed to 'disperse crowds' Over the past few months it is evident that the RUC and the British Army are firing plastic bullets at people when there is no disturbance whatsoever. Mrs. Nora McCabe was fatally injured when she was hit on the head as she was standing at a street corner in conversation...the streets were quiet at the time. The number of incidents where people were hit on the head demonstrates that the Security forces are deliberately aiming for the head region to inflict the most damage. Herman insists 'they are used against rioters'. Yet elderly ladies and four and a half year old boys seem very unlike rioters.

There have never been any deaths or serious injuries inflicted on the security forces in these circumstances no member of the security forces has ever been called to account for the death of or maiming of an innocent person.
NO CHINKS IN THE ARMOUR

The majority now a blind eye or are unaware of the sectarian nature of the state. With the abolition of Stormont, the direct rule regime has removed the excesses of the orange state exposed the discrimination in housing and jobs through their various reports and committees. The power of local councils to allocate houses was removed. When the Equal Opportunities Commission asked firms to sign a declaration advocating there would be no discrimination in jobs many loyalists didn’t on the grounds that to do so would be to admit that there ever was discrimination against Catholics.

Varios loyalist ideas exist about Catholics: whether to do it: they are lazy and work shy: their housing is bad because when given new homes they refuse to take them; they are dirty: they have large families due to the priests seeing them to outbreed the Protestants the Catholic religion is all voodoo and connected with the devil.

PROTESTANT WORK ETHIC

The protestant work ethic believes that through work you will achieve salvation and therein an inherent dignity in life. You are encouraged to work hard, or to be seen to be working, and you shouldn’t really be enjoying it.

WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS

They hold certain myths about their own community. They look down on the Catholics who rely on state benefits if as they were the only ones who do so. Yet daily more and more Protestants are signing on. And for years their prime industries such as the shipyard which employs mainly Protestants has been relying on massive government subsidies to keep them open. This year alone it lost £23,000,000. Not to mention the other state handouts in the form of government orders, employment subsidies, low wage supplements etc.

PAISLEY FOR POPE

The loyalists believe they are more progressive than the 'pink rotten' south. Yet they masses- b-vote for the most reactionary MPs and councilors who at every opportunity are anti-work- ing class, take the most right wing stands and do their best to ensure that any progressive legislation passed on the mainland doesn’t effect Northern Ireland.

Think of the sort of country the DUP would like to run: total control of education by the clerics (there goes the Darwin theory), abortion would carry a prison sentence for women, so would homosexuality for the lucky ones, hardship sentences for dope; and Catholics need not apply of course.

MIRROR MIRROR ON THE WALL: WHO IS THE MOST LOYAL OF THEM ALL?

The Unionists may not be the most ethical block they once were but unfortunately the fragmentation has only meant that the unionist political parties now lie between right wing and fascist. The politicians vie with each other to see who can become the ultra-loyalist and detect the slightest smell of a sell out. Any sign of drifting towards the 'bogey Ideals' 'Femi' start is met immediately with the lambeg speech and if need be the about opposition such as the U.W.C. strike, Dissloyal to remain loyal!

NOT A CENTIMETRE

With every news item mentioning their future Queen, Lady Di, especially with the 12th coming up, this has strengthened the loyalist connection and the visual opportunity to demon- etise their link with Britain by ramming the union jacks down the fascists throats.

INDUSTRIAL NEWS

In one factory the workers went on strike when the management removed the union jacks and other working paraphernalia from the work- place. They went to put them back again. In loyalist dominated factories throughout Ulster it is usual to find workers flaunting little loyalist momentos.

UNABLE TO MOVE

Daily we hear reports of redundancies in major industries, which hit protestant workers now more than ever. They perhaps feel that any green roots agitation or direct action would further destabilise the North and therefore play into the hands of the republicans. They therefore have little option but to rely on the politicians and trade-union leaders to wave the banner. And we all know what a failure that has been.

The Loyalists are held prisoners of their own making. Just after the collapse of the Unionist party some working class leaders questioned the role of their unionist masters in exploiting the working class protestants but ultimately they would have had to face up to the realis- ation of their own collaboration in discriminat- ion from which they benefited. And this they were not prepared to do.

LOYALISTS KILL NON-LOYALISTS

Any progressive protestant who are through the contradictions of loyalism will challenge the right of the state to exist through its use of discrimination in housing and jobs. They, unfortunately, are forced to keep quiet or get out of a loyalist community by intimidation. And it is almost impossible for any new generation to unmask loyalism for the manifestly fact that it is. Protestants are isolated by a sectarian mental and physical wall.

YOU ARE WHAT YOU READ

They rely on state information via TV with all its lies and distortions. Newspapers like the Belfast Telegraph and Newslettcr only serve to reinforce their position and ideas. They listen to their leaders to interpret events and show them the way. Socialist organisations have little or no way of openly selling their papers and any papers which have been issued by promi- nently working class groups like the USA have been obviously secured and inscrut.

OUT OF THE DARKNESS

Occasionally tenuous links are traced between protestant and catholic such as in the latest agitation against rent increase. The organisers have tried to stay clear of involving any politi- cians but they should lose support from one side or another. Unfortunately if the campaign should receive widespread support it only takes the orange or green card to be played to smash any joint action. (The DUP have already made moves in certain cases.)

Passing the myths from father to son

Lively young people step out of the loyalist mentality and begin to meet catholics through cultural activities. They may well reject the blondest sectarianism but this is at the expense of becoming apolitical, or a total rejection of anti-British activities because they see any opposition as an extension of the IRA camp- aign.

Some youth become 'super' loyalists and join the ranks of the various paramilitary groups. Ultimately the British state wants a bungseen solution. It doesn’t really matter to them what politicians are in power so long as British companies and multinationals can get cheap labour for their factories and sell their shity goods. And even instal a cruise missile here to protect the British 'way of life'.

THE FINAL SOLUTION

Now that the British Government and the multinationals are the main employers in the North it will be easy to apply economic sanctions on the loyalists to accomodate the catholic politicians. They just have to start by withdrawing subsidies to all industries, welfare payments etc. No longer can the loyal- ists consider standing on their own feet especi- ally with the decline of any economic backing from the native capitalists whose support they did have at the state’s inception.

The British can take a chance on the loyalist backlash, but given the depressive economic future pointed out to them they will accept some form of power sharing or integration. but how would the republicans react and are there any alternatives to this bleak future.

REPUBLICANISM EXAMINED NEXT ISSUE!
NOWHERE TO GO - BUT THE BOAT!

There's little enough for young people here, but now, the Harp Bar, the centre for punk music has closed its doors to punks. Though not because punk is dead. The punk culture has probably lasted longest here because it strongly reflects the state of things in Northern Ireland. And as most kids are on the dole, it is the easiest cultural image to adopt, as you don't need the money to buy fancy clothes.

HAVE A HARP

The owner of the Harp Bar didn't make enough profit because people weren't buying enough booze. It was a pretty place anyway. The owner, who doesn't give two fiddles as to what sort of music is put on, and quick to spot a good thing, has turned it into a Country & Western Club. Obviously he thinks the music is more conducive to people getting pissed. Anything for a fast buck.

NO ANSWER

There are a few clubs where pub owners let people run it themselves. They take the money on the door, which goes towards providing the music. Any live bands have, of course, to be acceptable to the pub owner. Ultimately, you end up working for the bar man lining his pockets.

GOOD CLEAN FUN

BJ's Rock Club in the cinema in Holywood obviously suffers from its location in attracting large crowds and therefore is unable to pay for top groups. It also doesn't have a licence, and a lot of people feel they need to get stoned to enjoy themselves, but that's another story.

DRINK UP AND FUCK UP

Apart from that, there are also the various straight clubs where you can listen all night to dead disco and fulfil your lifetime's role as a passive consumer, watching the spectacle.

NICE BOYS AND GIRLS ONLY

Many leisure activities are usually on someone else's terms, i.e. private enterprise, church, state, school. It's almost impossible to organise our own activities when all the resources belong to these groups, and you have to conform to their rules to get to use them.

THEIR CULTURE

Mainstream culture reflects and reinforces the consumer, authoritarian capitalist society we are forced to live in. Resistance culture is a reaction to it and challenges, at times, the status quo in very dynamic new ways. However, the system often has the knack of absorbing revolutionary ideas and selling them back to us at a profit. Crass find themselves constantly being ripped off by armchair revolutionaries.

HANG ON

But wait, don't despair, think twice before going to London, for soon there will be something round the corner in Belfast.

Harp Bar with instant plastic facade.

A REPLY TO A LETTER WHICH APPEARED IN OUR LAST ISSUE.

El Faro's letter provoked much controversy among the Collective discussing putting out OUTTA CONTROL. Its meat was to dispel the illusion of 'independence' within the world of international capital, and an emphasis on the capitalist nature of imperialism.

But some of us took great exception to several other statements. To say that the author is 'not confused' is to mislead people over how 'stricken as we are by the sectarian ghettos mentality' is condescending to say the least. At worst it is a regeneration of the British government's ideology, which has troops here peace-keeping battle to 'handle sectarian tribes.' 'El Falco' makes the point that the State itself institutionalized and creates sectarianism by discriminating against one section of the population in favour of another. The favoured section identifies with that State, thus furthering the sectarianism it achieves.

Apparently there is 'no longer any social reality here' i.e. life is the same as anywhere else. Nor is there any language 'any real Irish culture,' only the rule of a great and heroic past. We see that capitalism has imposed itself on most social and cultural variables, but to assume that it alone has done so completely and successfully begs several questions - what is the role of the state, specifically the Irish state and its efforts to maintain "authenticity," and why do we have a peninsular war, mass demonstrations, wholesale rejection of that authority? Surely it is because there is resistance to imperialist control, including a cultural resistance.

Some of us are not sure of what 'great and heroic past' he's referring to, but struggles such as the hunger strike, the street battles and demonstrations against overwhelming military and media-odds are 'heroic' if he insists on the term, that the methods, organisation and culture have elements of reaction to common sense social movement of rebellion, and is partly explained by the intensity of exploitation and repression, and partly by the small presence of revolutionary groups. On prisoners, 'There is absolutely no reason whatsoever to assume that one side will be likely to be more sympathetic than the other to anarchism.' Apart from the conclusions of analysis, we have found by experience that the prisoners who contact us, and who adopt anarchist positions, are those from the 'republican side.' We remain open to all approaches, as is evident by our Book Scheme, which is open to all prisoners. Finally, the constant use of the term 'Ulster' reflects a continuing respect for the ideas of the UDA. 'Ulster' refers not to the 9 counties, but to the arbitrarily-paid-off 6, which were big enough to prove viable as a state, but small enough to ensure a loyalist majority. It was used by those who became disillusioned with Britain's commitment to a sectarian state.
HUNGER STRIKE:
TRUTH THE FIRST CASUALTY

The following letters were smuggled out of H Block 5, Long Kesh, in Northern Ireland. The prisoner who wrote them wants to explain the real background to the protest, which has of late culminated in the hunger strike — Six people have already died, and the government have shown no sign of changing their pig-headed attitude which they unashamedly display in so many aspects of their policies.

In Britain there exists great confusion about the prisoners struggle. Primarily, there is little opportunity for them to make available the facts behind the protest. The National press — 'The Times,' 'The Star,' and 'The Sun,' etc. serve only to reiterate the dogmatic and uncompromising statements made by the government in the House of Commons, the prisoners being portrayed as 'organised criminals' with 'criminal insanity suicidal desires.' Such distortions, lies and myths can only continue in the absence of information on the realities of the prison situation and life in Northern Ireland — The intimidation of having armed troops and police on the streets, arbitrary arrest 'special' laws, non-jury courts, torture during interrogations... silence cannot continue for much longer.

Comrades.
This letter comes to you from H Block five, Long Kesh Concentration Camp, North-East Ireland. I write with genuine pen to urge you to voice your solidarity with this prison struggle to end H Block; the continued atrocity. We have made our stand, firmly entrenched in the uncompromising truth that we are not and never will allow ourselves to be called criminals.

I realise that for you it is difficult to understand this struggle not having a proper representation of the facts at your disposal, and as the controlled media wields savagely the dagger of Brutus in a blatant character assassination of the Irish liberation struggle. I appeal to you to seek out the real facts so much disguised and distorted by the counter insurgents within "the powers that be!"

Our protest embarked in 1976. We refused to wear prison garb, demanding the return of our rights as political prisoners — political status. Violent brutality, treachery and hypocrisy have been the catalysts that dictated the escalation of our resistance erupting finally into the horrific and bloody climax of the two hunger strikes.

Four of our comrades now lie coffined and murdered, but they are not the first victims of this fanatical conspiracy, four members of our solidarity committee were assassinated for daring to oppose the gauntlet reasoning of the British government in the political arena, many other assassinations failed, the most ruthless being that of H Block campaigner and martyr Miss Bernadette McAlisky.

The first hunger strike of October ended when our five demands were met in the flexible wording of a 30 page document which would have allowed for an "internal settlement". This suited us, and with hunger striker Sean McKenna having only a few hours to live we all breathed a sigh of great relief, only in just a few weeks time to be dealt a vicious and sickening blow by a dirty and grotesquely experienced fighter — Treachery!! — in the form of backtracking and renegue, this is the atmosphere in which it was hammered home that we must hunger strike again, this time to the death with no eleventh hour designs to defeat us.

We took the initiative to end the no walt/no stop out protest; in a bid to encourage the "step by step" approach of what we had thought was an "internal settlement!"

Then it became apparent that the controllers of this prison with whom we were, through our spokesman Bobby Sands, negotiating with wanted one thing — absolute conformity.

So in the face of this intransigence, under duress we took the only course open; Hunger strike.

Therefore the atrocity of H Block lies firmly on the shoulders of the British governments, all the deaths and injuries are from their hands, coupled with those who encourage their foul reasoning in this issue. British despotism.

By you expressing your solidarity now in the many forms and methods open, you can help to achieve for us our rights. By helping us to secure our five basic demands and saving our comrades lives, you can bring about an end to yet one more tale of injustice — Thankyou.

PRO H.S, L.K.R, P.O.W.

"My position is in contrast to that of other prisoners, I am a political prisoner." — Bobby Sands R.I.P.
4th July, 1981.

Comrades,
I write in the hope of enlightening you and encouraging your solidarity to bring about an end to the corruption of criminalisation and the return of our rights as political prisoners.

The H Blocks were designed on a parallel with Stuttgart prison in West Germany, they are unique isolation units. The prison regime in Long Kesh where the H Blocks are located are corrupt and ruthlessly bigoted, the counter insurgency conspiracy of criminalisation was released early in 1976 with waves of petty crime by small time thugs recruited by British intelligence. While the building of the H Blocks continued half remission was introduced, cutting the number of Special Category prisoners down rapidly. Here is the first hint - why build more jail compartments when the jail population was now easily manageable after the introduction of half remission? So, we have men back on the streets, the spates of robberies and burglaries continue. Next comes the screaming headlines - "Republican Godfathers" - "Chicago style raids of republican dens" etc... The illustration begins to take shape. So too do the hideous interrogation centres raise their grotesque limbs and start with sickening haste to deliver victims back (via the Diplock non-jury courts and fabricated and grossly inadequate evidence) to the "new Maze", only this time as criminals and not special category prisoners. Many of the men released on half remission soon found themselves back in jail again, serving longer terms for alleged offences, similar in nature to their first conviction with one difference, due to expedience their sentences had in some cases doubled.

Resistance began early, the very first Republican prisoner sentenced after the removal of political status on March 1st 1976 went on the blanket - because he refused to be criminalised, and so the world's greatest prison struggle began: reaching its brutal climax when four men, Francis Hughes, Patsy O'Hara, Raymond McCreesh and Bobby Sands MP died on hunger strike - because they refused to be criminalised!!

You must realise that there is no moral justification for the atrocity that has occurred due entirely to British government inflexibility, intrusiveness and sick fanaticism. There is no moral justification for the removal of political status. This talk of a school for guerrilla warfare is all nonsense. We could train and educate ourselves in the use of war materials and develop politics under any circumstances, and the blanket has taught us a more important lesson - endurance. We educate ourselves on the blanket, it is not foolish to imagine that we will not do so under different circumstances.

The establishment says to our claim for free association that it would mean hundreds of mes running about doing what they want, which is ridiculous because each segregated wing of a H Block holds a maximum of 50 men only!! and thats a fact. Understand now political status was not removed because of any moral reasoning, but simply as a means to alienate those engaged in the freedom struggle for the people. Any other excuse is mere fabrication. Criminalisation has been stalled in it's track, crippled by the solid resistance in these blocks, but the British government refuse to admit defeat, and while we continue to encourage a solution by our willingness to negotiate, the British government murder by intransigence continues to spew forth corpses.

The Brits must leave Ireland, the Irish people must be returned the right of self determination. You can, by expressing your solidarity, help Ireland to achieve these rights by joining the massive siegemound we have erected to collapse the continued atrocity of H Block: Thankyou.

"Freedom, equality and peace"

Wenceslaus,

PRO H.S.

For additional information on Ireland contact:
Minding the Children

The vast majority of working mothers have to make their own childcare arrangements privately, whether it is all day for the under-fives or after-school care for their older children. Many children are looked after by husbands, relatives and friends; a handful will be attending one of the five day-care centres in Northern Ireland and over 50% will be formally looked after by childminders. Childminders are the largest single group of people working in the home and are, with one or two exceptions, women. Their job has little status within society and is very poorly paid. Most often their wages come out of the mother's wage (about 60% of average male wage) and childminders know that they cannot ask for more because it is not there to be given. As women, we are given virtually no recognition of the importance of child-rearing which is combined with all the domestic chores, and many men do not recognise it as a job at all. This is a view commonly held about childminders as well, some have even thought that childminding was reprehensible (a view not held about the 'nannies of wealthy children), even though recent studies* have shown that many of them put lots of energy and effort into their work, teaching and enjoying the children, and they may spend up to half their wages on expenses such as food and drink, toys, equipment, wear and tear, etc.

Since WW2, more and more women have been working outside the home and the increase is greatest amongst married women with young children. The depression is biting deep, and it is now a financial necessity to have two wages coming into the home each week to avoid poverty. There has been no corresponding increase in childcare facilities. The dilemma is that there are fewer and fewer jobs around, and with female unemployment rising 3 times as fast as male unemployment, not only are working mothers being forced back into the home, but some are likely to become childminders themselves, just as the need for them is dwindling.

In some areas of the U.K., childminders have come together to set up local support groups where ideas, toys, equipment, play materials can be discussed and exchanged - isolation can be broken down, and links with children's centres and drop in centres can be made.

The need for flexible child-care is an essential choice for all mothers and children, whether it be for a couple of hours a day in a playgroup or all day in a creche or with a childminder. It is a topic which has not received the attention it deserves; seen by the State, within its laissez faire attitude, as a cheap alternative. We have to be aware of all the possibilities and choices open to women and children, with an emphasis on what children want as well. Older children don't always want to be thrown in with the babies, for example! Nor do we want to be exploiting other women whilst keeping our own family solvent!

*Further reading: Women mind about the Minders' Welfare Group, Unit 9 Poland Street, London.
Only six months after Ronald Reagan assumed the office of President, feminists in the U.S.A. are finding that they are having to reassess their position and take a hard look at both their resources and their strategies for the future. By the end of the 1970s they might have been forgiven for taking a breathing space. American women had achieved a great deal in just over ten years in terms of education, legal and work opportunities. Vast amounts of funding had been used in feminist research in setting up alternative action programmes and in shelters for the victims of rape and battering. Feminists, although still fighting on issues, felt secure in what they had gained so far and some women were already complain ing that the energy had left the American women's movement; too many women were now content to sit back and enjoy their gains.

Unfortunately though they were to see these gains as very short lived. Things were changing in the USA during the 70s, the most important being the prestige of the USA itself in the eyes of the world. Gradually through the decade the nation that was used to high standards of living, to denying the existence of poverty within its boundaries, to having the largest say in world affairs, found that despite all efforts, inflation was rampant, the dollar wasn't buying so much anymore, unemployment began to affect the white middle and working classes in a significant way whereas before only blacks and portu ricans or mexicans had been affected. The third world wasn't doing what it was told anymore particularly the oil sheik who put prices and caused even more problems. Finally in Iran, Americans were being held to ransom and there was nothing the USA could do except feel the eyes of the world watching and laughing at them. This came as a tremendous shock to many Americans used to being regarded as the biggest and the best. In particular it upset many of the members of big business there who felt that their 'once great nation' was losing hold of all that it had achieved.

This mood began to pervade American politics and the questioning, why? left the stage open for those who could put forward a strong, plausible answer to the question...where have we gone wrong?

American has always been a society of huge divides and also one of a very strong conservative tradition. During the 1960s the ultra right wing out of favour in the period of civil rights reform and liberal thinking had managed to pour much of its energies into the Vietnam war effort but once the war ended they were left with tight organisations and groupings but really no where to go. It is at this point that the right wing begins to turn its attention to home and to American politics and starts to build up networks and alliances. By the end of the 70s the "New Right" as it came to be known under the umbrella of the National Conservative Political Action Committee (NCPAC) came to represent a wide coalition of structured lobbies at Congress, research foundations, fundamental religious bodies and single issue campaigns such as the Right to Life Committee, the Gun Lobby, the Daughters of the Revolution, the pro nuclear lobby and many others. Their message was pure and simple—America had once been great and could easily be great again...how? By ending all wishy washy liberalism of the 60s and 70s, by ending 'government handouts' (ie welfare) to those who wouldn't work, by building up defence, by moving against groups who were undermining the true American values of traditional morality and most importantly the family. In other words, to move against the poor, ethnic groups, feminists, homosexuals, people arguing against nuclear power...all these had helped or colluded in the downfall of America. Their message contained the potent myth that was swallowed whole by many white (often working class) Americans, and in cases, blacks as well who believed that the restoration of the old would bring about a change in their situation at this time.

Ronald Reagan, the one time actor, moved onto the stage to play the greatest part of his entire life shrewdly realising that the NCPAC had resources in terms of mailing lists, access to TV through the various TV preachers that 100 million Americans watch every week, and in time and energy which he could use, but, if they acted independently in his favour then their spending would not be counted as part of his campaign expenses and so he could not be accused of overspending on his government fixed allowance for the Presidential campaign. Undoubtedly, the NCPAC's help was one of the crucial factors in the campaign but it was helpful given with strings attached. Not only would Reagan be expected to braodly agree with their ideas he would also be expected to support the various single issue campaigns within the NCPAC group ing—and he was to fulfill these promises. Reagan was elected by one of the smallest polls in American history. Almost 48% of the voting population registered a protest both at the choice they were faced with on election day and signified their refusal to have anything to do with the sham by not voting. On a minority vote Reagan became President and immediately set about rewarding the NCPAC for all its help.

In January he announced one of the highest increases in the defence budget since the second world war—he also increased the amount of nuclear weapons the USA had in particular he restarted the research into the neutron bomb for the future. At the same time he announced major cuts in welfare and in government funding immediately affecting the poor, the sick the elderly and all other agencies, eg: consumer affairs, shelter for victims of battered women's centres, legal advice by limiting severely if not shutting down entirely their work.

He publicly supported the gun lobby even though he was shot himself. Two days after his inauguration (which cost $11 million he invited anti-abortionists into his office to pledge support. At the moment he is attempting to cut federal funding for all sex education programs run in public schools. The backlash then is well underway and American feminists are beginning to real at the losses of hard fought battles.

The abortion issue provides a good illustration of their situation. In 1973 feminists took a case to the Supreme Court over abortion. They claimed that the fact that abortion was illegal in some states of the USA was inherently unequal as it put women in an inferior position to men in terms of their freedom of action—it was therefore unconstitutioinal. The Supreme Court found in their favour and so all the states had to repeal anti-abortion legislat ion immediately. (The USA system of government is complicated. All government comes from the Constitution written in 1776. It is the law in the USA. Govern ment is divided into three branches, the Congress—it legislates, the President—car rys out legislation and foreign affairs, and the Supreme Court—guardians of the Constitution. Each of the 50 states also have their own governments who have the right to make laws for that state alone. To clarify the situation then, when the Congress legislates new laws, they do NOT automatically become part of the constitu
HERSELF ALONE
by Seamus Finnegans

directed by Julia Pascal

It was a strange experience, spending a week in London escaping the 12th celebrations, to go into an Islington pub at lunchtime and find oneself living through a play about the lives of three Belfast women, all born the same year as me, and educated by the same order of nuns as I was.

The play concerned one day in the life of the women, Bridget is happily living in London with a man she has a good relationship with; Patricia, a teacher, also living in London, is planning to return to Belfast to take part in ‘the struggle’ whilst Fionnuala paces her cell in Armagh Jail, defiant and bitter. Through dialogue, monologue and appeals to the audience, their lives unfold. The bare stage, with only one chair as prop, becomes transformed into an arena where the claims of nationalism and the counter claims of feminism confront each other. It wasn’t always an equal match, due to the playwrights presentation of the situation, but it was thought provoking and it certainly raised many fundamental issues.

Patricia, frustrated by the indifference of the British, their liberalism a mask which barely disguises their chauvinism and contempt for other nationalities, cried out in anger that she could no longer live in the heart of the enemy. Not only was she, a member of an oppressed country, living in the imperialists’ capital city, she also felt her psyche to be different, her whole manner of relating to people, of expressing herself. An analogy could be made (but wasn’t to the experience that many women have in relation to men. Both have been colonised/oppressed. But Bridget, while accepting much of what Patricia feels, argues that it is impossible to go back, to return to the dead weight of the Catholic Church, forced to conform to the image of Catholic womanhood, pressured into marriage and regular church attendance. Her choice is her survival as a woman. The paradox is that an Irish, ex Catholic woman, she can live more freely in London than she could in Belfast. In the meantime, Fionnuala serves her sentence in Armagh, on lock up as part of the penalty for protesting her right to be treated as a political prisoner. As one would expect she is uncompromising in her Republicanism. The audience is made to feel uncomfortably aware of the reality of ghetto life, of the material reasons why someone would choose to devote their life to armed ‘warfare against the British state; Finne-

gan, a Belfast man, uses the character of Fionnuala to bludgeon his obvious(ly liberal/left) English audience into a recognition of their guilt because they are members of the oppressing race. It’s a nationalistic diatribe and it angered me. It appeared to say that international solidarity was a myth, and that racial differences were overwhelming. At one point Fionnuala lashes out against English feminists for not expressing support for her, declaring that ‘my sisters are the men in Long Keel’ because they were united in military struggle while feminists were concerned with the unimportant question of the universality of women’s oppression.

I had the feeling that if the play was performed in a more political setting—for example, at a woman’s conference, or at a meeting on Ireland—it would have provoked an angry response from people who would (and quite rightly) have refused to be guilt tripped in this heavy handed way. Perhaps Finnegans chooses his prey carefully? But despite everything, the play has some important things to say, and we could all benefit from discussing its content. However it would be a brave person who would put it on a venue where we could see it!

PLAN OF ACTION?
IRISH WOMEN SPEAK OUT
A Plan of Action


Anyone interested in discovering what are the main problems facing women in Ireland today can find most of them voiced in this book, which is a report of the Women’s Forum held in Dublin in November 1980. The two day conference was attended by over 1000 women who discussed issues ranging over health, education, violence against women, employment, feminism, women in rural areas and women in conflict situations.

The book attempts to summarise both the factual information presented by speakers, together with the comments and views aired in the workshops - not an easy task as anyone who has attended a large conference will realise. It is the range of views that I felt to be one of the book’s strongest points, for they show that increased numbers of Irish women, not just feminists, are becoming more aware of the problems facing them, and more vocal about what is needed in terms of legislative, social and economic change.

This conference was planned as a follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Women, held in Copenhagen in 1980. The Copenhagen Conference recommended various measures for all governments to take to eliminate the discrimination and inequality that take place within the family, and at national, local and family level by implementing a programme for change. In theory, this progress is then monitored at international level, as all governments are required to produce reports to the U.N.

The Irish Women’s Conference received government funding, and, in the closing address, the then Minister for State, Department of Labour expressed on behalf of the government, his keen interest in receiving the National Plan of Action from the Conference. I wonder how he’d react to the following recommendations that arose from the Workshops:-

‘An end to the Catholic Church’s control over education in Ireland’

‘A national programme of education covering sexuality in general and lesbianism in particular, to take place in schools, community and health centres’

‘Encourage and facilitate the establishment, particularly in local communities, of plans for the systematic development of child-care services and facilities.’

Each Workshop produced lists of radical, far-reaching demands calling for divorce legislation, sex education in schools, alternatives to prison, repeal of the Family Planning Act and more.

The problem is that a set of demands don’t constitute a plan of action, however ‘correct’ they may be. There was no discussion on how women can work for the changes in society that they want.

While the book is interesting, because it is Irish women speaking out, it doesn’t deserve the sub-title, a Plan of Action.

YOUNG PEOPLE - WRITE ON!

Your poems, stories and drawings wanted for a new book of your work to be published later this year. Send them of any length and any subject, with your name, age and address to: Young People Writing, 1 Wopewoan St, Belfast BT1. Tel: 21426 (day)
THREE
MONTH
STRIKE
AT E.B.S.

One hundred and six workers, members of ASTMS, have been on strike since April 29th at the Educational Building Society... Nine branch offices in Dublin, one in Cork and the head office are included. The majority of the striking workers are young women. It is a long and bitter dispute, and it will have a long way to go before the workers. They are seeking parity with the Irish Civil Service Building Society which would mean an average salary of £10.84 per week.

The EBS are refusing to concede the claim which would cost them in the region of £92,000 per year. In the 12 months up to December 1980 their profits went up to 14.7% to £2.5m, their assets stand at £231.6m and they are ranked at the 12th biggest financial institution in the country. So who believes that they can't afford to pay? They thought nothing of spending £18,500 on potted plants for the head office or of giving a gift of £2000 to the Garda Boat Club.

The EBS are attempting to maintain their usual service by using non-union staff, many of whom were recently given promotion in return for staying out of the Union. They are also trying to pressure strikers back to work — in Cork the striking branch manager is being threatened with foreclosure of his mortgage.

So far there has been little movement in the dispute even though the workers have been out for over 3 months now. Recent talks with management produced nothing acceptable to the workers. Two conciliation conferences have resulted in no more than an offer of parity with the Irish Permanent, which would mean virtually no extra money, but would be tied to an increase of four hours on the working week.

The strikers had a very successful march through Dublin a month ago, to highlight the fact that they were still out on strike. Over 200 people took part in the lunch-time march through the city, and workers from other building societies joined the march in solidarity. In June a very social good was held for the strikers in a Dublin pub and was supported by trade union activists, H-Block activists, anarchists and socialists. It raised £60 for the strike fund, but apart from that it gave the strikers a boost to know how many people supported them.

The strikers are appealing to other trade unionists and members of the public for support. Collections have been organised in other building societies, but with the strike dragging on so long many of the workers are suffering financial problems. They ask people not to cross their picket lines and that mortgage repayments be held back until the strike is settled. They also want postal workers to refuse to deliver mail to the E.B.S., and some progress has been made on that within the postal office.

Meanwhile, however, the strike goes on, and there is no sign of the management coming to a decent settlement. One of the strikers said: 'We seem intent on beating us. We therefore need lots of solidarity and help from other trade unionists in order to win. No one of us wants to be walking up and down here for months. We need to start collections everywhere we can and involve members from other unions with ideas on how we can win.'

The Strike Committee can be contacted through Mary Devine, c/o E.B.S. Strike Committee, A.S.T.I.M.S., 38 Lower Leeson St., Dublin 2.
s COSMIC SOCIALISM

The Central Library is one of the few places in down town Belfast that actually welcome children. There they have their own space, plenty of reasonably good books and illumination. It was, of course, very much under the control of the women workers, but a far more all the same from the authoritarian nature of most primary schools. Now we hear that this autonomous space is to be done away with, the 'kids section' shutted into the back of the adult section where quiet and howdon is the highlight of the day. The women are angry... the person responible for the shop is the apyed named Mrs.Crawley... in all his wisdom he has decided to replace the kids space with a business reference section. The workers in the different departments are isolated. There is no solidarity to tell Mrs.Crawley to fuck off. Crawley does what he wants and has the reputation in the professional library circles as having more power than sense. Crawley is employed by the Education and Library Board who know of many of his antics but are content to let him continue in charge. Crawley has been known to physically threaten some of his staff... the arch patriarch. Twelve years ago library staff went on strike basically because of him. Crawley saw to it that those involved in the strike got demoted and went out somewhere else. The those who supported him got promoted and remain his assistants always at his beck and call. The workers have already had a half day strike over the issue... Mr.Crawley's plush office is just up the stairs. Are there 60 kids who would like to spend the afternoon there?
PARALLELS

This article continues the discussion on the recent rising in England.

Last month's article was written collectively with an Irish feminist who had lived in Liverpool until recently. The following has been written by a London anarchist on the rising in Brixton.

control. Various shades of political organisations (not involved in the riots nor instigators of them) have sought to capitalise on the situation after the event, but never in the main been met with the scorn that they deserve. Countless media personalities and politicians have walked the streets looking for good copy and each way the people lose out and their voice goes largely misunderstood or ignored, or re-interpreted to serve various vested interests.

In the aftermath of riots, when all areas are tense — seemingly waiting retribution of various sorts, or seeking to make something out of saw found confidence — police raids and arrests have created unsan and unrest leading to all social acts of mugging and threats between various distinct sections of the community. In some cases, minority groups feel more vulnerable and unless steps are taken quickly to improve community and understanding the situation can only get worse.

From this brief outline, we can begin to draw certain parallels between recent events in England and some in Northern Ireland. Similar patterns of spontaneous rising against an occupying force emerge. Details of weapons used - bricks, petrol bombs, sticks, barricades, make twin lists. However, it should be noted that the enemy in Northern Ireland is a much more directly identifiable one, and its power far greater, its weaponry more sophisticated and tactics seasoned with practice. Indeed, the campaign of resistance to the enemy in Northern Ireland is fought consistently on many fronts as it has to be, and riots are often an unco-ordinated expression of frustration and anger rather than concerted attacks by blacks on whites in Brixton, with the group is singled out for attention if it appears to be more privileged or part of the system of oppression. Unequal opportunities in employment exist in both England and Northern Ireland and the growing numbers of attacks.

England and Northern Ireland as do factors of deprivation in housing and low incomes. The Irish, at war against what is regarded as a foreign occupation, have a long tradition of the use of violence to ensure that their voice is heard. Violence, and often only violence, has been effective in achieving progress. Violence is a reflection of the failure of politicians and all those who seek to control our lives. Brixton, Belfast, Bristol, Toxteth, have all shown the determination of some to rebel against and to resist a common enemy. No one can predict what the likely outcome of general rebellion would be, but it is unlikely that people having tasted first progress and gained confidence on their streets will rest content to sit in apathy from now on and not take long term decisions for their own lives. Riots is a spectacle - it draws attention to a minority of a community who exhibit anger, courage and determination in the face of crushing odds. Concentration on the spectacle in the streets, however, ignores the existence of those whose streets are being defended and who feel powerlessness and without a voice behind closed doors, largely forgotten, and for whom the prospect of taking on, unmind, an armed police force, is frightening. Pictures of the riots show largely young and male participants. Those people on the fringes of disturbances and who take advantages of the disorder to loot shops and other premises, can be seen as coming from wider sections of the community, and feature the young and old, male and female, black and white. There are signs, on both sides of the sea, that people are moved to take what they need instead of waiting for or allowing an authority to make decisions for them. Anarchists certainly have a great contribution to make in the creation of a new life, once demands are fulfilled and once freedom from occupation is ensured.

UNITY MEETING

The August Unity Meeting took place on the 1st in the Women's Centre. The first part of the discussion centred mainly around the current issue of the women's newsletter, Women's rights. Was the newsletter for women only? Should it be on the public? Should articles be published in other newspapers such as the abortion article in Scope, without the knowledge of the women's movement or reference to the fact that it had first been published in the newsletter? Women's groups outside Belfast who were present at the meeting had not received any copies of the newsletter. Obviously these are testing problems, magnified by the fact that the newsletter was out of date — reference was made to the rape crisis group on this point — and had not been a true collective effort. It was decided to send out the remaining copies of it to women and groups on the mailing list and anybody wanting a copy should contact the women's centre in the next week. The subject will be an ongoing discussion but one positive point made was that the discussions that took place at the unity meeting could be further elaborated and debated in the newsletter, for women only, and that articles could be made public every so often — say every six months.

The book on Irish women was discussed and articles invited for consideration. The idea for a women's music workshop was mooted and women from the Rathcoole group suggested a more social atmosphere for women to get together—a party being arranged for September. The last part of the discussion was on the role of the centre, for further details of the above and of the lesbian feminist group contact 16-18 Donegall Street. Tel 43363.

Recent riots in many parts of London and other English cities are leading some people to draw parallels between the developing situation there and that of rioting in Northern Ireland. I will, for the purpose of this article, be using Brixton as an example of the situation in England; this being the area I feel most qualified to write about, as I have been involved in the work of a Bookshop there.

Riots in Brixton have had, exclusively, a spontaneous beginning, usually as a result of a particular incident involving over policing on the streets, or following examples of police harassment. There is no doubt that the massive force of police deployed in Brixton (ostensibly to try to cope with a soaring crime rate), is a source of great anger and frustration within the community there. Not only are the sheer numbers seen as an unnecessary harassment, but also the methods of questioning and intimidation have led some people to describe the area as one of occupation by a force that is neither trusted or wanted. The riots are certainly not racial in nature, nor are they in any way engineered by outside tacticians, as some media commentaries would have their public believe. If one was pushed to describe the nature of the riots, assuming that one could narrow it down any way, the nearest one could come to would be to say that they are, broadly, anti-authoritarian. People, in clashes, with the police, are saying that they want control of their own streets and are gaining the confidence generally to rebel against all which oppresses them. All places or people seen as authoritarian can be the subject of attacks in the rebellion that follows. Lootig has been seen partly as an attack on consumerist values and as an attempt to get essential goods which many people cannot afford. Unemployment, bad housing, creating social services and racial discrimination, provide an underpinning of the conflict, but no single factor can be called the root cause of rebellion.

Police tactics in riots can be seen to have developed quite quickly and a familiar pattern of isolation dispersal and ultimate containment has followed, plus familiar series of raids and arrests in attempts to continue the process of intimidation and