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News & Views of the
Belfast Anarchist Collective

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The Tribunal heard evidence relating to the legal case for political status, the effect of its removal on the women political prisoners on health, sanitary and medical conditions, on pre and ante natal care, and evidence relating to physical attacks on women prisoners by male warders. Both written and verbal evidence was presented; ex-prisoners and relatives of prisoners were present and gave verbal evidence.

Below is the statement of findings presented by the judges to the final session of the tribunal:

"Since January 1980 there has been a sharp escalation of harassment and unprecedented punishments, deliberate systematic physical and mental torture meted out to the Women political prisoners in Armagh Gaol, which included the curtailment of toilet and washing facilities."

"While waiting for their dinner in February 7th the women were attacked and brutally beaten by a squad of approximately 40 male and 20 female warders. They were denied food and water for 24 hours and refused all access to toilet and washing facilities."...

The stopping of uranium exploration and eventual mining in Ireland is now taking new and many turns. The past 6 or 7 months have been spent trying to get across the message about uranium—its dangers, nuclear connections, and rip-offs by the mining companies in THEIR interests alone.

Such education has been most successful in Donegal, where the task of making mining 'unprofitable' for the mining companies the government, the EEC, is well under way. People in Donegal have never felt a close affinity with the central government in Dublin, and what they dictate to them. Donegal in the 20th century is one long story of local people being ripped-off, cut off, and abused....that's why they are reacting so strongly to the latest and potentially most dangerous rip-off. While central government ignores the potentials of fishing, turf, etc., yet subsidises the mining companies in their search for uranium, the feeling is clearly—NO WAY!!

The feeling is strong throughout the county and explains why local villagers have moved on the drillers from about their homes, as has happened a few times this month in the Gweebarra Valley area; why local professionals have formed themselves into committees; why hundreds of people have been on the march (Lettermacaward, March 30th); and why the machinery and offices of Irish Base Metals and Munster Base Metals have been sabotaged.

The mining companies have said nothing throughout....they see propaganda as a problem for central government and the local gardai. But the meetings, the marches, the sabotage,—the whole feeling of the area is so against them, that they are being forced to act, if they want to continue their exploration work. They have ignored the people and are only now beginning to realise their blunder. So now the state rushes in with a new propaganda drive...the Nuclear Emergency Board has been ordered to go to the 'gave case'. Fortunately it's too little, too late but it'll be interesting to see how it goes.

The Undertones have released their second single, 'A Wing', deprived of all their personal belongings, and since that time it has been impossible for the women to wash and keep themselves clean. Tissues sent into the prisoners by their families were not accepted and sent out again by the prison authorities. "As a result of this degradation, the women prisoners decided to protest through refusing all co-operation with the prison authorities until the privileges due to political prisoners were granted."

In the six weeks following, the protesting prisoners have been locked in their cells for 23 hours a day and the cell windows have been boarded up. Consequently, the women were obliged to spread the contents of their chamber pots on the walls in order to avoid sitting and lying in their own excreta. "A particularly cruel form of suffering has been imposed on these women. During menstruation insufficient numbers of sanitary towels have been provided and the women have been forced to leave used towels on the floor."

"From the wide body of evidence presented to us by the mothers and fathers of the young girls who have been in Armagh Prison over the last few years, the tribunal is convinced that the doctors responsible for medical care have been criminally abusing their profession through continuously denying all and pregnant women medical attention for both minor and extremely serious ailments."

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ABORTION

Abortion has come into the limelight in Northern Ireland with the recent defeat of the Corrie bill and the announcement by the Belfast Womens Law and Research Group that they were setting up an unofficial committee of inquiry into womens feelings and experiences on abortion. Together with contraception, free, safe abortion on demand gives women the choice of planning their families, how many children they want, whether they want to have children at all.

DO WE EVEN WANT THE 1967 ABORTION ACT?

The law in Britain is a much more humane one than here, where the maximum penalty for procuring or helping to procure an abortion is life imprisonment, but it does have a lot of drawbacks.

Over half the abortions performed are in private clinics where women have to pay upwards to £100, even though they are entitled to one free on the National Health Service. Abortions are an exception on the NHS because the 1967 Act did not guarantee that abortion facilities would be set up. It merely gave a freedom in law for the medical profession to choose whether they wanted to perform abortions or not.

This has led to differences in the regional areas of Britain. Birmingham being a well quoted example. Because of the influence of SPUC, it is almost impossible to get an abortion......in one major hospital in Birmingham only 2 abortions were carried out on the NHS in one year. With the political opposition here, the Church, and the backward views held in society where women are concerned, it is conceivable that many parts of Northern Ireland would be like Birmingham, and that if extended, the 1967 Act would do nothing more for women than save them the cost of the boat fare to England. Under the 1967 Act a woman still has to go and ask two doctors for contraception, how much more difficult to ask for an abortion ........

GPs, family planning services and community nurses and midwives. It is possible that these could be expanded to include a day care abortion clinic too.

Abortions carried out by vacuum aspiration under 10 weeks are not a medical problem. It is straightforward and one of the safest surgical procedures known (safer than having your tonsils out). Abortion takes 10 minutes and is done under local anaesthesia and the woman can generally go home on the same day.

A woman decides to go ahead and have the child, she has to struggle with the prospect of poverty and low wages. In this social context, abortion is not a choice, it is a necessity.

IDEALLY......

It would be great to see the development of womens self help clinics, to advise and help women to be free from the guilt that dispels the ignorance women have of their own bodies and the awe in which they view the medical profession. With only the beginning of a womens movement in Ireland and such views held in society that abortion is an imperialist plot to control the Catholic population, this seems light years away. Any legislation passed in the future on abortion in Northern Ireland, will mean the same economic exploitation of women's bodies and the same passive roles of women having abortions. It will still be the poor women who can't get an abortion easily, who didn't get contraceptive advice and supplies, who is still struggling to feed and clothe her children adequately.

DIDS C S K AR ABORTION

The RUC are annoyed, the press are confused, and the rule is proved by the exception - Edward Brophy, the 'fair' man for membership of the provos, was last week acquitted of the La Mon bombing.

His case was unusual for 3 reasons - the amount of publicity, the severity of the charges against him, and the fact that he got off!

How many men in Long Kesh and women in Armagh have gone through the same experiences as Brophy, both at the hands of the RUC and the no, no evidence courts?

The RUC are annoyed not only because they didn't 'get their man' but the way the case was highlighted has proved embarrassing for them. The severity of the charges against him, and the fact that he got off!

Many men in Long Kesh and women in Armagh have gone through the same experiences as Brophy, both at the hands of the RUC and the no, no evidence courts!

Justice Kelly must be glad of the RUCs occasional incompetence (at framing people) which allows him to acquit the odd case (as he had to do 2 years ago with Jimmy Forbes of Strabane) These overshadow the hundreds of cases where he's sent hundreds of people down, and would you believe it shows how far he is!

Footnote: The "Economist" claims that there are no juries in N.Ireland because nobody would sit on them!! Of course it's because the juries would be Labour and any juries would be Labour and that's why they would all say "not guilty!"

"EVERYBODY WAS THEIR TRAVE-BUT SOME ARE ON SOCIAL SECURITY AND CONCEALED IN THE SAME GARB."

Followi ng the growing trend of lefties keeping their politics separate from their work i.e. Tariq Ali writing for the right wing Daily Telegraph, Paul Foot's column in the Daily Star and Vennessa Redgraves exist in films we have our own home grown variety. Eamonn McCann is the well known Derry Marxist and TV hack is sub-editor of the Sunday World whichisuess moat of the histrion compare as the most trivial, shock horror probe, red under the best sexi Sunday paper in Ireland.
Alongside the British military boot, we all have to contend with their economic boot which is currently jumping up and down on top of us. In February, Reg Prentice, Min. of State for Social Security, announced the appointment of 1000 new officers to tackle fraud and abuse...and how they were to 'save' £50m. of the £260m. to be 'lost' over the coming yeat. A few queries...where do the figures come from...and what will the new officers really be doing?

It seems that the DHSS officers work on the basis that just as large department stores lose between 1% and 2% of sales, the DHSS must lose likewise. 1% of DHSS expenditure (at 250 billion) rounded up, it becomes £260m. The last figures given were in March 1979, when 'irrecoverable' overpayment through fraud was £3.9m. and guess what...the same period of bureacric errors amounted to £13.2m! (puns things in perspective, doesn't it?!) At present the fraud detection hot squad (special investigators) save three times their time...or so Pretnc assures us. Eh, he claims. But these new officers are not necessarily 'special investigators', 600 of them are going to be 'Unemployment Review Officers' who will look into claims and decide whether or not the claimants are entitled to claim...or stop it all together if they consider 'claimants fail, without justification, to find work'. They can initiate prosecution proceedings to cover any cases where these are warranted...although the threat is enough to get claimants off their books. The DHSS do not give figures for UNDERPAYMENT...the Child Poverty Group estimate it at £344m. per year!!!

The new officers are to be found in the new fraud officers and Liople Relatie engineer, 170 of each. The LRO job is quite simply to get hold of people (usually deserting fathers) who are considered to be 'dependants' and receive benefits, a category open to the solicitor, from them. Women are usually put under a lot of pressure to make statements etc....to help prosecute the deserters! The DHSS tell them they must get them to pay the benefits rather than the SS. Yet again, there is no fraud involved. The other new staff are fraud officers and 100 special investigators. These are the ones who rise with the dawn to sit outside the homes of claimants to spot any man coming out as far as the DHSS is concerned, a woman who has just 'lived with him'.

There are some interesting comparisons...tax fraud, for instance, is £50m. of £3000m. The DHSS has over 5,500 officers engaged in fraud and abuse investigations, while the inland revenue have 260 officers. And of these, 17 are junior officers (special investigators) to cover the whole county. Eh, all these investigations will save 500,000 people from being prosecuted 184 people. With unemployment here being so high, we can expect more than our fair share of state snoops!

The Electricity Service has acquired some new 'special investigators' as well...the British Army. Involving in a number of incidents of turning electric supplies off on behalf of the Electric Board in W.Belfast!

THE REAL SCROUNGERS

Our society operates from the top down....its not an unbreakable law of nature, but rather it's what happens when a few men own and control the means of our existence. And we, in turn, mirror their hierarchical structures. The few develop their own agen­cies and structures to stay on top, directing the future paths....and always at our expense and the detriment of the mean of our existence. The very top of that structure is the TRI-LATERAL COMMITTEE

But first, a bit of history....

Following World War 2, the US were clearly the leading Western economic country, with ½ of the world's imports and exports. Every place in the world had to trade, with all international trade regulated in the interests of US capitalist through the IMF, World Bank, and various international trade regulations. Others benefited accordingly in the 'golden years' of 1945-1977, especially W.Europe, Japan, and those countries integrated into this system by US capital and US forces...Iran, Brazil, S.Korea, Mexico. Things went well for US industrialists and bankers, though as the world market declined in the 1970's, so did US agen­cys and structures with the US, W.Europe, Japan and China...kept the US going. The first meeting of the FTRC in 1972 was at Rockefeller mansion near New York, and established that the founders of the scheme were an anonymous group of US businessmen.

The new world government was born, and another unknown who was asked to join was J.Carter, who soon made it to the top. Such was the procedure throughout the US, W.Europe, and Japan...it was the big capitalist school for deciding who was to be in power, and what policies to be followed....whether matters of wealth, power, finance, arts, entertainment- THEY DECIDE OUR futures!!

The TC meets from time to time to review past strategies and keep themselves firmly in control in the future....their last meeting was held in Toshiro Mifune's art director, London. This March 23-25. It got little press coverage all discussions secret, but the guest list included leading W.Europe, Japanese bankers, industrialists and future politicians including Kissing, Coca Cola chairman...Japan's minister of external affairs, FTZ, and Garret Fitzgerald! Many of its members development. When the TC steers members to positions of power, they may become like British Foreign Secretary Carrington, US Secretary-of-state Kissinger, or Irish T.D. Michael O'Kennedy! The new world tech­nocratic govt. exists, and we didn't even know they were having a tea party here, and the condition in H-Block and Armagh.

Keen, who have been convicted by no jury or tribunal on allegations that they conspired as political by the Emergency Provision Act 1978, be given political status and that all political prisoners be immediately released.

"We are unanimously in solidarity with their continuous struggle to free Ireland from British Imperialism, and we find the British Government guilty of criminal oppression against the Irish people."
from NAMIBIA to BELFAST

Sitting in Belfast, it's very difficult to see beyond the purely physical aspects of imperialism...troops, guns, prisons.....but the women of Namibia are not to it than that. It's not just getting rid of one of the capitalist government—it goes deeper and ultimately MUST involve changing our whole way of life. It must mean the end of the multi-national destruction of the resources of this and other countries in the interests of Western consumerism and profit.

One such struggle is going on in NAMIBIA.

During the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries, Southern Africa was just another playground for British colonial control—replacing local ways and cultures in the service of the few sitting at home. In 1900 Britain 'gave' Namibia to friendly imperialist Germany, who, in turn, slaughtered any local resistance to control the agricultural land and the mineral wealth, for the benefit of the many (capitalism) was well on its way.

Following the division of the spoils after World War I, S.Africa, with British 'aid' took control of Namibia and a new era was born. The state and employers regulated all labour, forcing small farmers off the land, zinc and diamond mining increased, and the West's capitalist greed greed for minerals. No unions, no strikes, and barbed wire compounds as part of their 'contract'. The riches of Namibia became vital for the apartheid economy of S.Africa.

All such events came with the shake-ups following World War II...the United Nations were given the go-ahead to get on with it--to end its independence. But Namibian diamonds, tin, copper fish, gold, uranium, and most of the 'contract'. The riches of Namibia became vital for the apartheid economy of S.Africa.

In 1966, the UN Security Council began to talk about the rights of the people to self determination. The S.African and multi-national choices for govt, interests in the nuclear industry, and the S.African and multi-national interests in the uranium industry became more important than the people of Namibia who are suffering and dying. The mining companies in Namibia are the mining companies in Ireland—R.T.Z., Minatome, Amax, etc., in Namibia, they are here. The same shareholders, the same machinery. Fighting imperialism in all its many forms must include a new way of developing resources, a new style of living, and not just swapping imperialism for one another.

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