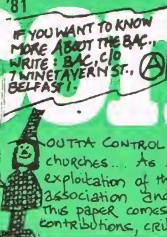


OUTTA CONTROL

News & Views of the
Belfast Anarchist Collective



OUTTA CONTROL... of the state, bosses, patriarchy, schooling, churches... 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.

UP PAISLEY!

Gay law reform which will result from the Strasbourg ruling must be welcomed especially as it involves acting upon recommendations of the government Wolfenden report of nearly a quarter of a century ago! It is of course the barest minimum and it IS needed. However it must be recognised that so called 'reforms' are often merely an effort to regularise an existing de facto legal practice and in reality effectively 'tighten up' laws not being changed. The introduction of such laws are usually accompanied by reinforced vigour on the part of a vindictive police force wishing to be seen to be enforcing the newly clarified legal sanctions. Since the passing of the '67 Act in England the number of persons convicted of indecency between males quadrupled! Talk of 'reform' overlooks the totally oppressive nature of the remaining laws against homosexuals and the discriminatory nature of law enforcement against gays.

R.U.21

The '67 Act sets the age of consent for gay men at the absurdly high age of 21 years. Society entrusts its young adults with the power over life (parenthood and marriage) and death (in the armed forces) in their mid teens yet would not allow individuals of the same age the basic right to express love for another.

Furthermore whereas heterosexuals can freely associate it is a serious offence for gays to meet one another publicly or to make any public expression of affection—even holding hands! Finally, private and public bodies, housing, newspapers, pubs, town halls, employers etc can all blatantly refuse to accommodate gays simply on the grounds of their sexuality!

Although the Strasbourg ruling establishes for the first time the rights of gays to a private life as a fundamental human right it did not deem it necessary to consider the wider implications of these rights. The contradiction seems to be that while every human being has equal human rights, some are less equal than others. The court decided not to consider the rights of male gays under the age of 21. Likewise the court failed to consider the question of discrimination (1) on the basis of residence in N.I. (11) on the point of discrimination compared to female homosexuals and het-

erosexuals, under Article 14 of the Convention which states: 'The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this Convention shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion'. The court deemed that having found Art. 8 breached—that there was no need to consider Art 14 as well. They seemed to fear that consideration of this article would raise wider issues. This would raise the basic question about rights being equal for every citizen. There is scope for bringing a future complaint on the breach of Article 14, but that could take another 5 – 6 years!

The court stated that marked changes had occurred in laws regarding homosexual behaviour throughout member states. The dissenting Irish judge feared that this might suggest that a Euro norm in the law on gays has been or can be evolved. To some extent such a Euro norm would hardly be likely nor would be desired by gays. For example to get an agreed Euro age of consent would mean accepting an arbitrary generally agreed age. What can and must be done instead is to establish the principle that there should be equal treatment for heterosexuals and homosexuals. The court ruled that it is up to National bodies to decide on an appropriate age under which young people should have the protection of the law. This should mean equal protection for heterosexuals and homosexuals. A favourable ruling under Art 14 would have meant also that governments would need to introduce anti-discriminatory laws such as in Norway.

The ruling of the court requires the British Government to bring N.I. into line with the existing laws on homosexuality in the rest of the U.K. However this does not mean that all future legislation on homosexuality will automatically be extended to N.I. The courts failure to consider discrimination, under Art.14, on the grounds of residence in N.I. means that regional discrimination can continue. Should legislation based upon the recommendations of the Policy Advisory Committee be introduced in the mainland it could be a decade or more before such legislation would be extended to here — if ever at all!

PRIESTS & POLICE

The RUC have ingratiated themselves with a usually hostile community AND struck a blow for puritan morality...

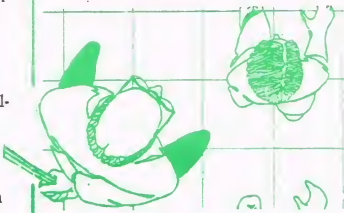
The opportunity arose recently in the Springhill area of Ballymurphy. Two young boys, aged 15 and 8, extended their play to include exploration of each others bodies. When the mother of the 15 year old learned of this, she asked the boy's uncle to take him to the local priest for advice. The priest suggested the social services.

Instinctively bureaucratic, they took out a "Place of Safety Order" and brought the boy to an assessment centre. Here he was examined by a Psychiatrist, who found his behaviour to be "as expected in most children of his age range", and recommended a return to home.

The social worker concerned wanted to take him home, but the RUC, who have a direct information flow from the social services, objected and charged the boy with "Gross Indecency." They fought bail, so he was still held in the centre.

To forestall the RUC, the social worker brought a civil case (on the same day as the RUC's criminal case) asking for a 'Fit Person Order', which would give the Social Services responsibility as a parent. The social worker maintained in court that they would allow the boy to return home.

The mother has been on her own ever since. She has been confined to a wheelchair for 14 years with multiple sclerosis. Her husband left her shortly after the boy's birth, so as an only child he has taken care of her all of his life — giving her baths, running messages etc.



Some of the local community have threatened the boy, should he return. The parochialism, fear and guilt of sexuality has forced some to be violent in their reaction. Because of this threat, the boy is still held in the centre. The mother

cont. on back page...

prison report

CLOTHES

The initial 28-day 'breathing space', since the Hunger Strike ended, is over. All prisoners in Long Kesh now wear their own clothes, though there is controversy still about what the screws decide to let in. One day a navy jacket is allowed in, the next it's not.

ARMAGH

But the real problem now is work. In Armagh, where the women have always worn their own clothes, Mareaid Farrell put forward the names of 4 'Volunteers' to do wing maintenance. Scott, the governor, refused to accept them. He soon announced his own choice of those who'd do that work - it was the same 4 women! Ellis O'Connor, just released, explained that he takes fits of not recognising Mareaid Farrell.

KESH

In the H-Blocks, the first 36 men to start work were involved in cleaning and maintaining their wings. But the rest of the prisoners, in groups of ten, were invited to take part in an 'assessment process' where work would be allocated. After the experience of the first 10, the rest decided not to take further part.

MENIAL

The prisoners have repeatedly suggested a wide variety of work and education acceptable to them, but the authorities have offered nothing new. A statement last week said, 'To the prisoners it is clear that the British are attempting to use these 36 men to cause dissension among the rest of us who are prepared to engage in exactly the same form of work, but who are still being punished for 'refusing to work'.

T.B.

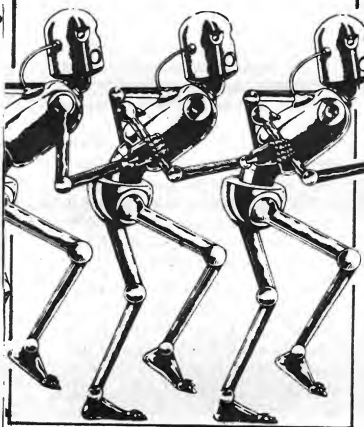
Marian Clegg has reportedly contracted T.B. in Armagh prison. She has been moved to the prison hospital, whose facilities are inadequate for even the common cold. It is vital that Marian is moved to an outside hospital for immediate treatment, and not left to deteriorate like Pauline McLaughlin, or the Price Sisters.

.....AFTER EFFECTS.....

The School

Rules.
No peace to be shattered —
Preserve the dusty relics
of Disease under the
Hard Glass Dome.
No freedom, no choice.
Orders, demands, a voice
from the bitch "at the top!"
"We tell you what to feel
Without us, you're not real.
We've had it done to us
Look — see
There's no real me.
I'm just a functioning
machine order - taker
taker
taker....."

— Breakdown in aparatus —
Sabotage suspected —



AUTHORITY HAS NO TEARS

Recently published is a pamphlet by Gerry McCrory, 'Authority Has No Tears'. Gerry is presently an inmate of Long Kesh. He has political status. He wrote the pamphlet between 1977-80, and silk-screened his own graphics for it, along with the help of other prisoners. The pamphlet consists of one large poem, which appears to be a quite personal analysis of today's society. Related of course to Ireland, but the reader can understand that it could have been anywhere.

In poetic form Gerry manages to give a criticism of modern-day issues like women's rights, the family, sectarianism and the cops and the State. Although it takes a lot of concentration to understand the poem fully, it is well worth it, if just to get an understanding of what many prisoners are thinking.

It costs 40p and is available from 'Just Books', 7 Winetavern Street, Belfast.

Rafferty Released

The RUC's attempted frame-up of James Rafferty fell apart 2 weeks ago. Their two star witnesses, neighbours of Rafferty, admitted they were pressurised into giving identification evidence against him by the RUC. One week later Rafferty was freed. Four RUC officers are currently awaiting trial for assault against Rafferty back in '76, when he was tortured in Omagh Barracks. The RUC's latest apparent bungling might reflect a deal whereby if they let Rafferty go, the officers, too, might get off.

As the coming RUC trial will be the first of its kind, we patiently await ULSTER justice!

GAYS FOR SELF-DETERMINATION!

Brixton gays and Irish gays in London were among the many banners on the 300 strong Troops out delegation to Belfast on August 8/9th. One of the reasons for a gay presence on the delegation was to show support for the most oppressed section of gays in Ireland — those under army occupation. It is bad enough facing the outright hostility of the churches without the added brutality of the state forces dominating every aspect of your life.

Throughout Ireland gay people are denied the right to exist. We are told at school how sinful and evil we are. The mass media subjects us to insults and abuse, constantly pressuring us to think and behave in heterosexual terms. We are disowned by our families and friends. Homosexuality, like contraception, abortion and divorce, has very little place in the established code of morality. The medical profession attempts to treat us with hormones or aversion therapy, with disastrous results. In the eyes of the law we are criminals, deserving of long prison sentences. Is it any wonder that so many gays end up committing suicide?

A number of gay groups have been set up in Ireland over the past few years. They have endeavored to relieve the isolation of homosexuals and to challenge the institutions which oppress us. David Norris brought a case against the Southern government last year on the grounds that its anti-gay laws were unconstitutional. Typically, the case was lost, but at least the subject was brought out into the open. In the North, Jeff Dudgeon, from the Northern Ireland Gay Rights Association, took the Westminster government before the European Court of Human Rights to force it to extend law reform to Northern Ireland. The court found against Westminster, but the wrath of Ian Paisley and the connivance of Cardinal O'Fiaich ensured that Ulster would be saved from sodomy.

The failure of these cases raises the question of the usefulness of demanding reforms from the state. NIGRA, by recognising Westminster's alleged right to legislate for six counties of Ireland, has completely alienated itself from most nationalist homosexuals. It has only shown them contempt by stating that the British army ought to remain on the streets and by not questioning the whole nature of Unionist misrule.

Law reform was possible in England and Wales during the '60's because it was a time of economic growth. There was a boom in industry, and the state had enough confidence to ease its inherent repression. Throughout the western world a Womens movement as well as a gay movement began to question the whole sexist, patriarchal system. The role of religion, the family, the media — as a means of preserving power and privilege — came under scrutiny. Abortion and homosexual law reform became symbols of that era.

But during the '70's the tide began to turn. The economic boom gave way to stagnation. The state responded to progressive demands with more repression and the family and religion, as traditional methods of social control, were given a new lease of life.

The nuclear family operates as a mini-state — a state within a state. The father maintains his power often through violence. As well as physical violence he often uses emotional blackmail. Because women are dependant on men they are forced to satisfy mens needs before their own. A woman's role is to be locked up in a box called "home", performing domestic service, cooking, cleaning, raising "his children". She is expected to look attractive to him and satisfy his sexual desires. The state behaves as a father figure to many of us — it gives us money to survive one day and plastic bullets the next.

Religion serves as a tool of the ruling class in propping up this system. By telling women to obey their husbands and slaves to love their masters, the patriarchal, class nature of society remains intact. If sexuality weren't restricted to husband and wife, if women had control over their bodies, their lives, they would be on the road to economic independence and patriarchy would begin to lose its grip. The "holy family" serves the ruling class (A) as a consumer unit and (B) by reproducing more workers to be exploited.

Gay people represent a threat to the "moral fabric" of society. This is why we are rejected by our families, harassed by the state, ridiculed by the media, discriminated against at work and beaten up by queerbashers. Law reform doesn't get to the root of the problem — it merely makes cosmetic changes to the ugly face of patriarchy. It facilitates the development of a commercial gay scene whose only function is to exploit us.

British imperialism works hand in hand with the churches to keep the Irish working class on it's knees, women in the kitchen and gays in the closet. Gay liberation is therefore about the destruction of patriarchy, of capitalism and of imperialist domination. For this reason sexual politics has to be central to the anti-imperialist revolution. That is why we say GAYS FOR SELF DETERMINATION!

Padraig O Flathimh and Robin Gibson.

SIDE LINES

APART - alternative political social action

TONY ALLEN - alternative political social action

SUM - film about hospital

SAT 14TH 1-5PM: \$125 (if unemployed)

THE WOMAN IN THE MIRROR... \$1.95 (new test beds)

SIDE LINES

A CENTRE A CENTRE

Last Saturday saw the opening of the "A" Centre in Long Lane, of North Street in the City centre.

On the bill for the day were several bands, a cafe, books n' badges, a film (The life of Brian - previously banned by the City Council and publically denounced by the DUP).

The opening of the building provides the opportunity for a breakthrough in Belfast, young people seeing little else to do than to be ripped off by the abundant "amusement arcades," record shops and the like. It is hoped that participation between those using the building will be the key to future developments - Unfortunately such desires were not respected by the "forces of law & order," who maintained a presence outside the building throughout the day...what a shame it would be if people were to be drawn away from the usual rip-off merchants who have a stranglehold on all forms of so-called entertainment in the City.

Perhaps not surprisingly, most of those attracted to the centre were punks...possibly drawn by the circled "A" used as an emblem for the centre. Should be interesting to see if any real affinity with anarchist practise develops in the days ahead. But don't think that the building was created for the exclusive use of punks...it is there for anyone who wants to contribute to the general happenings.

The building itself is spacious, with different activities going on simultaneously, meaning that people could wander around and decide what they wanted to do, or where they wanted to be. It is hoped that future developments will provide more than enough stimulus, without punks feeling the need to resort to sniffin' glue for "kicks," and for us all to be able to enjoy ourselves without feeling the need to artificially induce feelings of freedom.

In the future we would like the present



activities extended to include theatre, discussion, possibly craft workshops, times devoted to themes such as culture and oppression, reggae, feminism, etc etc...but above all the emphasis will be on participation from all those who use the building. Difficult but not impossible to make a break from the stereotyped passive consumption scene and to move on to greater things.

Anyone with ideas, skills, crafts etc which they would like to put into practise should contact: "A" CENTRE c/o Practise Books, 7, Winetavern St, Belfast 1. Ph: 25426.

SQUATTING IN AMSTERDAM

It is 11am on a Saturday morning. We arrive at a squatted hotel, by a canal, in one of the most exclusive areas of Amsterdam. Already 40 or 50 colourfully dressed squatters have gathered there. A group of people, 3 men and 2 women, want to squat a house, and the rest of us have come to help. People are loading chairs, tables and material for barricades onto a van. The sun is shining.

There is a last minute hitch, the house we are going to take is on a busy shopping street, and we have just discovered that a strange event, a mass jogging marathon, will be passing the house all day. Probably the street will be crowded with police and spectators.

We decide to try it anyway and set off, about 70 of us by now, to the empty house a few streets away. Sure enough, the street is crowded, and police are directing traffic. We line up in front of the door, all 70 of us, and pretend to watch the joggers, clapping and cheering as loud as we can. The police smile back at us, suspecting nothing.

Behind our backs, Hans is smashing the two Yale locks with a hammer and chisel. He is nervous, and it seems to take ages. Then suddenly the door is open and people are rushing in. The van pulls up and a chain of people pass the gear through the door. The door is shut, and barricaded, then comes the loud banging of hammers, as bedsprings are nailed across the windows. A big banner flaps out from the roof - One more house has been liberated!

That was the first squat of the day, by evening we have successfully taken four - If the house is empty and unfurnished, and not rented to anyone, or being redecorated, the police cannot legally evict you - Unless they can find out your name. A strange law! We barricade every house securely - so that the police or landlords' men cannot get in within the time it takes to call out the local squatters to defend it. In a few months a new law will make it much more difficult to squat.

The following Tuesday there is an eviction at the Groenburgival, we have been expecting it, rumours have gone out that the special riot police have been seen. Informers have told us that they will come at dawn. The inhabitants of the house have barricaded it with steel plates, and bars, wire mesh, trap doors, bedsprings, barbed wire etc - They know that they cannot hold the house - the idea is to make the eviction as difficult as possible.

At 4am they send out a general alarm - through the squatters telephone network (those without phones are knocked up out of bed). Hundreds of sleepy eyed squatters start arriving, and barricade the area, overturning cars, tearing up the cobblestones.

At 5:30am, 1000 riot police arrive, in armoured trucks, complete with dogs, riot gear, tear gas, motorbikes, horses, bulldozers and helicopters. The barricades are set alight and abandoned as the police smash through. But it takes them three hours to break into the house, by that time large crowds have gathered and are held back by the riot police. Dozens of police in disguise mingle amongst the crowds, but small groups, especially the Anarchists roam around stabbing the tyres of the police vans and smashing windows. That night we march around the city barricading streets, chasing police cars and smashing windows of banks and speculators. The house is lost, but the next day 2 more are squatted...

Squatting in Amsterdam is now a major problem for the authorities. 50,000 people are in need of housing, there are about 10,000 squatters. The main motive is to get a roof over your head, but it is more than that. The squatters are a strong community, against authority and control of all sorts. They have their own squatted pubs and cafes and cinemas, their own illegal radio (done one evening a week by an Anarchist group, one evening a week by women, etc.) their own theatre, music groups and newspapers from various areas. Squatters aid groups, squatters depots etc. All this activity is done quite voluntarily by various groups living together in squatted houses. Most of the squatters are in council houses but in the past few years about 300 houses in the main 'speculation' area of the city centre have been taken. Many of them are huge monumental canal houses, worth hundreds of thousands of pounds. Also empty offices, factories, schools, churches, a swimming pool and even an old prison have been squatted! The squatters transform these buildings, mainly into living space, paying out of their own pockets. There is a voluntary levy of about £1 a month, which is used mainly for printing costs.

Contrary to the newspaper reports, squatting is not highly organised. The city is divided up into areas, in which the squatters organise new squats and actions, which are discussed at meetings, but nobody is ordered in any way by any squatters authority, because no authority (or any infiltrating political parties) are accepted. There is a strong Anarchist and feminist current within the squatters movement.

The squatting within the city, and the increasingly radical resistance of squatters and their supporters, has led to the passing of a new law in the Dutch parliament, prohibiting squatting, which will come into operation by the end of this year. In order to contain the expected riots the occupants of the old squats will be given one year to find new housing, which of course does not exist. Squatting will certainly go on in Amsterdam, but the atmosphere is growing more tense by the day.

From 'Tulips' in Amsterdam

REJECTION

"Severe sentences demonstrate the community's rejection of drug taking," said the Judge at Belfast's Magistrate Court as he passed a sentence of 3 years on someone unfortunate enough to get busted for cannabis possession.

But the "community" (whatever that means) doesn't reject drug-taking...in fact, society exists on drugs of one sort or another. What the Judge was trying to hide was his total compliance with the wishes of the Drug Squad and in particular their big chief - George McBride - who recently shed tears because "...the likelihood of being given a custodial sentence for drug taking is remote". So severe sentences do not demonstrate the community's rejection of drug-taking - but merely the fears and frustrations of the DS who are helping to create the problem in the first place. And "severe sentences" are sure to follow when those caught are "unco-operative...", who don't implicate others (usually their friends).

HARD DAYS AHEAD

At a recent conference in Dublin on the Irish economy a grim future was predicted for all. The conference was organised by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) whose basic function is to carry out research into various aspects of the Irish Economy and make recommendations to the government. The ESRI is supposedly independent and its independence was stressed in the Taoiseach's speech to the conference. But basically it's only interested in making capitalism work more efficiently. It never challenges the basis of capitalism and its exploitative nature. But even for an institute such as this the main conclusion of the conference was that there will be little change in living standards over the next decade, and poverty and hardship will be experienced by many.

UNEMPLOYMENT

There was also a lot of talk about unemployment. This is not surprising given that at the end of September the number of people officially unemployed was 131,800. This marked an increase of 3,000 over the figure for August and is the largest monthly rise in nearly a year.

At the conference it was predicted that by 1990 unemployment could be running at a rate of 25% with 300,000 on the dole. These people will be expected to live on the poverty line. As was pointed out in the last Outta Control, inflation is now running at 20%. The recent increase of 3% in the dole did not compensate for this at all.

SOLUTIONS?

Unemployment poses a real threat to the Irish state (and other states too). Fitzgerald recognized this in his speech to the conference when he said that 'endemic unemployment will seriously disturb the stability of our society'. To him and his government it is vital that the unemployment problem is dealt with.

It seems that the old solution to the problem, emigration, is now being used as a safety valve. The 1981 census has revealed that emigration has been increasing since 1979.

Judges act accordingly when you don't play their game...hence 3 years for cannabis. (This particular case also showed the Judges attitude towards the solicitor - A Long Kesh graduate suspected by the RUC of aiding the mass break-out of Republicans earlier this year. Just how severe the Judge was can be seen when it is compared to another case the same week when a UVF man got what could be a seven year sentence for the murder of six people...he'll be out in 1988 if he remains a "Free Presbyterian"!!

The media treatment of it all was as expected...the "Irish News" (via Mr Tom Samways, well known for his alcohol drug abuse) equated drug taking with every heinous crime imaginable...while the "Belfast Telegraph" went to great lengths to broadcast the wisdom of DS McBride and threw in all the cannabis horror stories that some obscure US Harvard researcher could think up. How wrong can they be! Cannabis is not addictive (to say it leads on to Heroin addiction because 99-9% of heroin addicts say they started on cannabis contains as much common sense as saying every alcoholic started on milk).

...It is not dangerous. It is a mild relaxant which can help blot out the grind of Belfast life and leads our thought process towards more creative and imaginative avenues. No wonder the Courts, the police, the media get hysterical, they are renowned for neither their imagination nor their creativity.

But the unemployed can become a threat to the state itself (as Fitzgerald recognized) and need to be controlled. This explains, to a large extent, why the new government are continuing to recruit the 2,000 cops which the last government claimed were badly needed. The present government have put a ban on any new recruitment to the public service except for these cops. This helps to emphasize their importance.

FIGHTING BACK

As the unemployment problem is getting worse people are beginning to realise the necessity of fighting back. For this reason the Dublin Unemployment Action Group has been set up. The group is made up of unemployed people themselves, and recognises the importance of them taking up the fight.

The group wants to end the situation where unemployed people are expected to live on the poverty line. It hopes to start a campaign for free buses for those on the dole, and wants the Electricity Supply Board's workers to refuse to cut off those who cannot afford to pay their bills because they are on the dole. Also the group want to provide some kind of cheap entertainment for the unemployed by holding gigs etc. It also runs an information service for those claiming benefits.

In the speeches at the conference there was a lot of talk about pay restraint and increased taxation. Workers are being asked to make sacrifices and accept a lower standard of living to solve a problem which has been created by the bosses and the government.

There has also been talk about early retirement for those in the civil service. It is reckoned that this scheme could result in the creation of an extra 10,000 jobs in 1982. This does not come near the 17,000 that will be needed every year between now and 1991 if unemployment is not to rise ANY FURTHER. Anyway, retired and old people get a raw deal in this society. They are left to fend for themselves and survive on the pittance of a pension.

cont. from front page...

wants to move to another area to enable him to return, but her landlord, the Housing Executive, is reluctant to help. They say her present house was adapted for her at great cost, and another one is too expensive.

Another example of the insensitivity of Belfasts establishment (and thats putting it mildly) was the refusal, until the repeated and prolonged appeals by the boys solicitor succeeded, to move the court to a ground floor. The mother had been unable to attend the first three preliminary hearings because of this.

The RUC has made sure it was seen to help the local community by charging a 15 year old boy. This was especially important in an area where the local people normally see the RUC as oppressors.

Those who have threatened this boy and his mother are the ones who are sexually distorted. Such a violent, puritanical and neurotic reaction to sexuality is an indication of the success of the Christian Churches.

Next Question...
When is A civilian
Not A civilian?

"Civilian searchers in Belfast's central commercial zone have received instructions from the RUC not to allow young mods into the city centre.

In recent weeks, young mods, individually or in groups have been wandering around the town, meeting each other and growing in numbers to 200 plus. A big problem for the RUC and their efforts to keep the large store owners happy, and to ensure that the "right sort" of consumers can consume without having to think.

Of course there have been a lot of inter-gang feuds which have scared a lot of people... but it is difficult to justify the "they should be locked up attitude" which most people immediately adopt, which serves to give strength to the RUC'S heavy hands. Examples of toxteeth and Brixton show that peoples needs only get noticed when the frustration of day to day drudgery becomes visible to all. Maybe the newly opened "A" Centre in Long Lane will provide a space for young people to use their time constructively.

The "legal" situation with "civilian" searchers is that if you permit them to search you they have no right to deny you access to the city centre...however it looks as if this is changing fast, and it is becoming more apparent that the city, and particularly the fenced off commercial zone does not belong to us.



Gaining Ground

OUTTA CONTROL ANARCHA-FEMINIST NEWS

The right to vote, or equal civil rights, may be good demands, but true emancipation begins neither at the polls, nor in courts. It begins in woman's soul. History tells us that every oppressed class gained true liberation from its masters through its own efforts. It is necessary that woman learn that lesson, that she realise that her freedom will reach as far as her power to achieve her freedom reaches.

EMMA GOLDMAN 1911

Abortion

LOBBY AT WESTMINSTER



After the success of Geoff Dudgeon's case in Strasbourg for homosexual law reform last fortnight yet another liberalisation of social legislation will have to be extended to Northern Ireland, following reform of the divorce and domestic violence laws, even if the Queen of England did forget to mention it in her speech. The Strasbourg case has added a new dimension to the whole question of abortion here. It was claimed that as citizen of the United Kingdom a gay person was denied the same rights as gays living in the rest of the U.K. The parallel with abortion is obvious. A woman with an unwanted pregnancy cannot have an abortion here except in the most extreme of cases, be she certified or pleading insanity, the foetus is genetically malformed, she has had German measles or been in contact with them early in pregnancy or she is likely to die if she continues with the pregnancy. Not that abortion can be obtained on demand in Britain either but the passing of the 1967 Abortion Act has enabled women to obtain abortion for social reasons either on the National Health Service or through one of the charitable clinics.

The Northern Ireland Abortion Campaign has been organising for the last two years to have the 1967 Abortion Act extended to Northern Ireland as a minimum requirement in its fight for abortion on demand. Legalising abortion is seen as the only obvious and rational course of action in the short term....in the present socio-religious climate in Ireland we are not going to get anything better for sure! As part of the Northern Ireland Abortion Campaign, two women from Gaining Ground with the support of Irish sisters in Britain and here, ALRA and NAC, posted a coat hanger and an information card printed with an airline ticket, to every M.P. explaining that there were two ways in which women in Northern Ireland could obtain an abortion—on the backstreet risking sterility and death or by paying for a private abortion in England and the cost of the fare (up to £200) in one of the charitable clinics. Six hundred and thirty odd coat hangers (some very odd battered specimens) achieved the impact that they were designed for—that M.P.s of which a majority are pro-choice, should take notice of the fact that up to 3,000 women this year will travel to England for abortions and those who cannot afford to will resort to the backstreets.

Six of the envelopes were given to Jo Richardson, a prominent pro-choice M.P., to be delivered personally to the top dogs—Thatcher, Foot, Prior, Connallon and the Messrs. Paisley and Powell. Jo Richardson has pledged support to the campaign and another pro-choice M.P., Bob Crier attempted to raise a supplementary question during the debate on Northern Ireland that day. It should now be raised in this current session.

To have the law extended to Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Abortion Campaign is going to have to concentrate on British M.P.s. As far as our lot is concerned it is a dead loss. Opposition to any progressive social legislation has always been inevitable. The late M.P. for Fermanagh/South Tyrone, Frank Maguire, flew in to London specially to vote on the four or five occasions during his time against the 67 Act and any progressive amendments to it—so much for an abstentionist policy, he was well capable of accepting Westminster when it suited him, and although Jim Kilfedder is the only Northern Irish M.P. with an impeccable record on abortion he may well say one thing privately and another publicly (as what appears to have been the case over homosexuality law reform) or may even trade in his vote for some concession on "Ulster's security".

Straight press coverage in Northern Ireland particularly was good although what with the Beeb with their rent a speech demands at half and hours notice and the Belfast Telegraph, after breaking the embargo date (will they be receiving press statements in future?) being more concerned in creating scandal and rows between British Airways and the Northern Ireland Abortion Campaign for using a British Airways ticket on the information sent to M.P.s, as one of the ways in which women travel to England (and with the closing of the Liverpool ferry just about the only way). Something has to be said about the persistent harassment of women in the N.I.A.C. over this issue—are they that low on stories? However, the following day they did come out in favour of abortion law reform in their editorial plus a "much more effective programme of sex education in the schools, together with ready availability of contraceptives and greater financial assistance for mothers who decide to

keep their babies". — a significant step onwards when one considers the taboo surrounding the subject less than five years ago. Views have changed and the subject is being discussed more and more openly. There are thousands of women in Ireland who have experienced that uphill struggle to get an abortion. Some women, like Lottie Hutton for example, have died horrific deaths after botched abortions. The arguments of LIFE and SPUC are not going to be strong enough to maintain the ban on abortion in Northern Ireland now that the ignorance is being dispelled.

Both the Abortion Law Reform Association and the National Abortion Campaign in London were tremendous in their support of the action. Both organisations have fairly recently included Northern Ireland in their aims and will support us in any future action that we decide to do. Added to this is a growing Irishwomen Support Group in London which is arranging help/support/accommodation for women from both North and South when they go to London for an abortion. Whilst a change in the law will not change people's opinions, especially in the medical profession, —it may for instance, prove impossible to obtain an abortion on the NHS outside of Belfast—it will allow the charitable clinics to operate, it will mean that thousands of Northern and Southern Irish women coming north, will not have to make the often traumatic journey to England and in more enlightened conditions, we would hope that the whole question of abortion on demand, contraception, sexuality, childcare and single parenthood will be discussed and recognised as valid social issues.

Since we have come home there has been a letter from the Pro-Abortion Labour lobby (a group of M.P.s) who have pledged their support to the campaign.

DUNNES STORES— BETTER VALUE?



The Dunne family have been in the news a lot recently, with all the publicity surrounding the kidnapping and the dramatic release. Especially intriguing were the stories about the half million pounds that the police kept taking away. While you may have sympathy with any family in such a situation, it is instructive to look behind the headlines, at the Dunne family and the empire that they have built up, to the point where they can raise half a million pounds at such short notice.

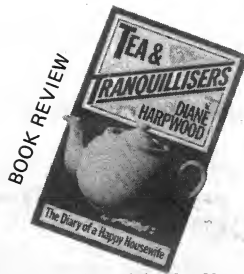
The Dunnes are selfmade millionaires. The father started in a small way, and eventually through various means built up a chain of stores rivaling, British chains like Littlewoods, and Marks and Spencers, for markets in Ireland. They sell products cheaper than many other retail outlets, and have shares in many of the new big shopping precincts opening all over Ireland. It is only though in the last few years that they have ventured into the north.

Like all good businesses though they have not got to where they are now by running charities, they have built up a reputation for hardheadedness, in their dealings, and none more so than in the matter of employees.

The Dunnes like to run things their way and new staff soon learn that what Dunnes say goes. One thing they say categorically is that joining a union is not on, and mention of it is likely to result in the sack. Work in shops has never been the best paid or the best conditions. Shop workers particularly in the lower levels i.e. on the floor or at registers are nearly always women. The work while not being dirty, is largely unskilled and very badly paid, this often means a high turnover in staff though with unemployment running as high as it is now most shop workers are holding on to their jobs no matter what the

conditions. Shops also employ a great deal of part-time workers again nearly all women, and these workers are perhaps the worst off of all in terms of conditions and benefits. In all shops most of the managerial staff are men and few women ever find themselves promoted from the shopfloor. Unionisation among shop workers is very poor, often because the workers are fragmented, and also because of the attitude of employers, in particular the big chains, women don't join out of fear. Consequently most of them do not possess even the limited protection afforded by union membership.

The new Dunnes store in North St is a case in point. The women there have complained of the conditions the they are forced to work in, this includes few breaks, and hard work as the place is not well staffed - a typical Dunne cost cutting move. As all of these women need their job and even the poor money it brings they are forced to put up with these conditions. But Dunnes aren't the only people in town to take a dislike to the union. C&A also don't allow the union in their premises, like Marks and Spencers next door (who don't exactly ban the union but are not happy about it) they argue that they pay their workers above the union rates and so their is no need for complaint. Woolworths hold the same view, all these stores try to promote a family atmosphere in their shops, with the personnel managers acting as big daddies there to solve the childrens problems. As we all know though a good way to keep the workers in their place is to make them act as individuals, in unity lies strength and so they have to do everything they can to make sure that it can't exist, as usual its the women workers who suffer, and the bosses who live off the profits.



"Monday 1st - Started the New Year right did the washing, had to, the laundry basket is not a bottomless pit. Don't know how I found the strength to tackle the washing after grappling with a two stone, very determined Katie who seems to have half a dozen legs and four or five arms. She'd rather spend the whole day in a stinking nappy than go through the ordeal of a wash."

So begins Jane Bennett's diary of one year than forms the basis of Diane Harwood's new novel "Tea and Tranquillisers", just published by Virago. Jane is married with two small children, and a very traditional husband, who is totally helpless when it comes to doing anything in the house. Jane and her family had to leave the north of England, and her family and friends when David found work in the south. Now resigned to spending a good deal of the rest of her life here she keeps a diary to stop her from going mad. In it she charts the day to day existence of a housewife coping with small children and with very little money - a constant source of friction between her and her husband. In the diary she describes with great feeling the utter monotony of her life. Everyday is the same to such an extent that picking her older daughter up from school becomes the high point of her days.

Later in the book David gets a better job with more money and the financial problems are lessened, but this doesn't change Jane's life that much. Diane Harwood has captured well the existence of many young mothers and through the lives of the other women who live in the same estate as Jane has given us a picture of women's lives. The book is often very funny as Jane surveys her life with a great deal of wit, but there are also very sad moments, which are handled in a realistic and not a sentimental way. Diane Harwood has denied that the book is in any way autobiographical, or that she is in any way in the situation that Jane is in, who she describes as a "loser". I find it hard to believe that anyone could write so convincingly had they in some ways experienced some of the trials of Jane.

A book well worth reading. It costs £2.95, and is available from Just Books, 7 Winetavern Street, Belfast.

Towards the end of the speeches at the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament march and rally in London on October 24th, we were told that the last of the march was entering Hyde Park. It had taken over five hours for the 250,000 people to march the three quarters of a mile from Victoria Embankment and even then the police had had to open up a second route in the afternoon to accomodate all the marchers. People had arrived from everywhere, from as far away as Shetland and Northern Ireland, from all sorts of backgrounds, groups, classes as the amazing banners proclaimed....mother and toddler groups, first generation CNDers singing the golden oldies, trade unionists, anarchists, lots of feminists in carnival originals of purple and green and CND dancers from all and everywhere.

Ann Petit from the Women's Peace Camp also spoke. She was very repetitive and it was a shame that she sounded like Pam Ayres which led the group we were surrounded by to ridicule her, which belied the achievements that she and the fifty people, mostly women and several babies had made over the previous month. They had all walked from Wales to Greenham Common in Berkshire, a journey which had taken ten days. For many of them it had been their first taste of public protest. Greenham Common is the site where the first batch of Cruise missiles will be delivered in 1983. The women had chained themselves, suffragette style, to the fence at Greenham Common in an attempt to get a television debate going between them and the government, unsuccessful but they did get the local radio to interview them. The women have set up camp at Greenham Common, in tents at the moment, although they are hoping for caravans to come down and either join them or be left for them to live in, and for people



NUCLEAR FREE ZONES

Derry District Council and their equivalent in Cork, have declared their areas "nuclear free zones".... a novel decision though radiation will hardly stop at the council boundary and it won't stop the mining companies if they find their uranium samples to be "satisfactory" (ie: profitable)... nor will it stop the Derry air base being used as a link in the nuclear bombing chain.

But an interesting decision none the less. Meanwhile a member of the Unionist Party Executive wants cruise missiles to be stationed in "Ulster". (Cruise missiles are the gift of Reagan and Co. to his western allies...so that nuclear war can be fought out in Europe without harming the USA).

The Unionists feel that cruise missiles will bring money, jobs and strengthen their somewhat shaky political position. Fools, undoubtedly, but dangerous onesand its people like them who are making the nuclear decisions in Britain, America and Russia. And it is such fools who have given the go-ahead for the huge nuclear underground complex being built at this moment in South Armagh near Forkhill. Daily—huge mahogany beams are being flown in by helicopter to strengthen the underground structure. Whether it will house nuclear missiles or merely serve as a hide out for top military and bureaucrats is as yet unknown. Its an official secret!

We were distressed to hear of the death of our friend and comrade Sylvia Jeffares who was knocked down and killed two weeks ago on her bike in London (Sunday 25th October), whilst visiting her friend in Broadmoor. We remember Sylvia for so many reasons, her expressiveness and sensitivity, her resistance to authority with its constraints and its conventions and her interest in Ireland over the last ten years and her support for the women in Armagh and prisoners in England. Our sympathy to all her friends and her daughter Eileen Rose.



Everybody seemed to be under the impression that there was going to be a lot "on" when we reached Hyde Park, particularly lots of live music. But in the event none of the groups had been allowed to play inside the park—police orders—although the Jam set up at the Park gates as we all filed through to the street theatre and the street pedlars of badges, newspapers and leaflets. What should and could have been a dynamic afternoon dwindled in the end to applause or otherwise for the many speakers.

The main theme of most of the speeches was of organising, of reaching out to the apathetic masses and giving them a good shake before they slip into eternal sleep during world war three. Although there were big cheers for Tony Benn and E.P. Thompson, they didn't manage more than the usual rhetoric and to our minds the best speaker of the day was Petra Kelly, a libertarian and feminist from West Germany who told of the difficulties of organising in an occupied country which was also first on the hit list. She spoke of the non violence of Martin Luther King and of Gandhi, of the strength and power of their message in contrast to the insane and corrupt power of the warmongering patriarchy.

to move in onto the Common in protest and commute from there. The women had spoken at meetings all over the country and had marched for four days from the Common to London to join up with the CND march.

Ann Petit's speech emphasized the importance of grass roots support and activity. The CND march was an amazing show of support but how many of those quarter of a million people will spread the message in the community, in the shops, factories, pubs and streets where they came from? The straight media certainly didn't think it deserved a great deal of comment, particularly the telly. CND itself tends to put forward an apolitical image and channel people's energy and enthusiasm into meetings, resolutions and lobbyings of various political and religious dignitaries. This didn't work in the sixties and won't work today and with the whittling down of civil liberties, the experience gained by the State in Ireland and during the recent rioting in Britain means tougher opposition to any direct action taken in the future, for a campaign to disarm nuclear weapons is not an apolitical campaign, it is a rejection of a state which is preparing for war, and that total disarmament a revolutionary action.

A LIFE IN THE DAY OF....

In September a UDR man was shot at lunchtime outside a factory in West Belfast - this is one woman's account of that day.

7 am and the day starts as usual with the baby crying, who needs an alarm clock? Within minutes Karen who is three is also up and ready to go. I can't take on two at the same time, get up, go down and put the kettle on. Its really cold these mornings. Mike follows like an extra from nights of the living dead, but manages to hold the baby still so that not only can I make the breakfast, but his lunch as well.

Finally everyone fed, and Mike leaves. The prisoner of Zenda stays behind with her two torturers, at the rate they are going they'll be ready for Castle-reagh in no time. Make an attempt at cleaning up, and refereeing the battle at the same time - impossible. Decide to go out to the shops, not to buy anything its too near the end of the week but it does break the monotony. By 11.30 we're back and I have to think of lunch. We have soup, Karen goes to nursery for two blissful hours every day and if I'm very lucky the baby might sleep.

At 12.15 the electrician calls to read the meter, I complain about the price, he agrees and then tells me that we used the same as last year but the price is a lot different.

Loud bangs.....gunshots.... I run to the door but a man opposite yells to get down. Get back inside with me the electrician and the two kids on the floor. Shooting goes on for what seems like forever, finally silence, I start to breathe again.... an ambulance arrives, the police, then running. Large black figures run by screaming, one deposits itself at my front door yelling 'shoot the fenian bastards, everyone of them', I panic, have we been taken over by the UDA/UVF? No its a friendly RUC man so much for the non-sectarian police force. It now sounds like the gunfire at the OK corral outside. It goes quiet, and the police come in just to make sure we're really cringing.

A UDR man has been shot at the top of the street, women are now shouting outside it seems that the police/army reckon as a result that anyone in the street is fair game. I go out to find Mary my next door neighbour hysterical. Her back door had been open so the police had run mad through her house yelling she was harbouring gunmen. At the same time another bunch had gone into the house opposite, and seeing a commotion in Mary's house had fired straight into her house, leaving her walls and wardrobe very alive—



how did they know she was having trouble with condensation? What also emerges is that all the shooting in the street had been the police - at the bottom plain clothes men had arrived, at the top the uniformed branch, they then proceeded to shoot each other, there were no casualties except all the people who lived in the street and their nerves.

The street starts to calm, women swap babies and comfort each other. The electrician still lying on the floor rings in the central office, hes had enough, hes going home. Now the fun begins....search operation begins.

Every house is to be searched by the police... they even empty my nappy bucket. Eventually though they go, its now 1.30, no point sending Karen to nursery, baby goes to sleep, and Mary comes in for a cup of tea. Door knock its the army, they want to search... same routine, they take everything out and I put it away again.

They leave and we go back to the tea, door goes again, its the police, they want to search, I can't believe this my home is beginning to feel like the local barracks. They leave, and the door goes two more times before 2.00 - five searches in all. At 3.10 the door goes again - its the army, I've had enough, amazed at my own courage I tell them that they're not getting in and shut the door in their faces. After

a bit they go, and I settle the children, and send Mary for a half bottle of whiskey. Another loud noise this time at the back, I go out to find 6 Brits in the kitchen and my backdoor lying in the yard, I start screaming but it gets me no where except hoarse, and the two children crying. Finally the nappy bucket searched for the sixth time they leave, just as Mary gets back. Hot whiskies all round, bang goes this weeks family allowance. Mike made his own tea, and ours. Fell into bed about 8.00 with the kids. Just another day in Belfast.....

There will be an Abortion Conference on December 5th in Dublin either in Liberty Hall or Trinity. The conference is organised by the Womens' Right to Choose Group in Dublin and the Northern Ireland Abortion Campaign.

Workshops will include: Is Abortion a feminist issue? Anti-abortionists, North and South, Women and Poverty, Single Parents, Male Involvement—problems/responsibility, Sex education, If you want to go and you can offer transport or need transport please contact the women's centre 43363.

Also if you need accommodation. There will be women going from Craigavon, Coleraine and Derry as well as Belfast. Posters will be ready soon. Watch out for details.

Also watch for posters advertising the benefit in aid of Northern Ireland Abortion Campaign.

ABORTION CONFERENCE ABORTION