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Workers' Party of Ireland

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UNLESS the government begins to act comprehensively on Ireland's penal system, there is a real danger of an outbreak in Irish prisons, similar to the violence seen in Strangeways Prison in Britain this week.

There are worrying similarities between Strangeways and the biggest prison in this country, Mountjoy. Both are prisons built in the Victorian era, and both have suffered from appalling overcrowding and totally inadequate sanitary facilities. One former inmate described Mountjoy as "a powder keg waiting to explode".

Successive reports of the Prison Visiting Committee have drawn attention to the appalling conditions and lack of facilities in Mountjoy, but little or nothing has been done to deal with these problems. Despite the opening of Wheatfield Prison in Clondalkin, overcrowding remains a serious problem, with prisoners, on occasion, having to sleep on cell and office floors.

Hopefully the shocking violence seen in Strangeways will wake the Minister and Department of Justice out of their complacent attitude to problems in Irish prisons. The grave tension which exists has manifested itself already, as this week's suicide in Mountjoy became the fourth in Mountjoy within six months.

THE WHITAKER REPORT

The Whitaker Committee undertook what was probably the most thorough and detailed examination of our prison system ever conducted, and in their Report, published in August 1985, produced a comprehensive range of proposals for reforms and improvements in Irish prisons.

Unfortunately the Report was virtually ignored by the then Fine Gael/Labour Coalition and subsequent Fianna Fail government. Are we going to have to wait for a Strangeways type riot before the government takes action?

This is what the report found:

- The older buildings — Mountjoy (men and women), St. Patrick's, Portlaoise and Limerick (men and women) — were designed for a style of imprisonment far removed from modern concepts. They are deficient in various ways, particularly in washing and sanitary facilities and in space for prisoner activities.
- The available washing and toilet facilities in many places were in an appalling condition. Non-subversive prisoners in Portlaoise endure particularly poor conditions. Pressure of commitments to prison has resulted in an increasing encroachment on the principle of one prisoner to each cell. Since some if not all of these prisons must be retained for a long time before they can be replaced, extensive modernisation and up-grading are urgent requirements.
- There is a dearth of absolute family contacts, and a programme of upgrading and renovation is an urgent necessity.
- Poor, even in new and modernised prisons, and the open centres showed lack of care. The low standard of accommodation provided for women and juveniles is indefensible.
- Conditions at the Bridewell in Dublin, through which hundreds of as yet unconvicted persons pass every year, are far below acceptable standards.

ICTU speak out

THE EXECUTIVE Council of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) has demanded that privatisation be discussed in the context of public enterprises generating wealth, creating jobs and developing the economy.

Congress, in opposition to selling off government shares in public enterprises. The ICTU is also opposed to using money from the sale of a minority of shares to pay back the national debt. Secret discussions with consultants and financiers are also rejected by the ICTU as totally unacceptable procedures for dealing with privatisation proposals.

The Executive Council of the ICTU accepts the case for selling of a minority of shares in public enterprises, but they are of the opinion that this is an alternative method of raising the capital required to make existing jobs secure or create new jobs, but would prefer structures for channeling private investment into the enterprises of Irish Telecoms Investment where the public enterprise remains in full control.
CSW demands Mountjoy closure

**THE IRISH PEOPLE**

The decision of the Director of Public Prosecutions not to offer any evidence in the case involving a member of Seanad Eireann, Dr Sean McCarthy, is disturbing and unsatisfactory and will do nothing to stop many members of the public from believing that the government is not fair in its dealings with justice.

In the absence of any explanation from the DPP, it is reasonable to assume that Dr McCarthy's claim of privilege under Article 15.13 of the Constitution has been accepted by him.

Members of the public, who quite properly do not enjoy this privilege, have every right to be angry that a person holding public office can avoid having to answer to a court for his action.

It was never envisaged that the limited immunity provided for in Article 15.13 would apply to motoring or drink related offences. In all cases where a claim of privilege is made by a member of the Oireachtas, the correct course is to allow the Court itself to decide on the validity of the claim.

Unless action is taken to prevent such claims of privilege recurring in the future, public cynicism about the Oireachtas and the whole political system will be increased. The Committee on Procedure and Privilege should consider drawing up a voluntary code of practice in relation to the use of privilege under the Constitution.

Failing agreement on this the government should consider the possibility of amending Article 15.13 to clarify more precisely the circumstances under which a member may claim privilege from arrest.

Israel "worst violator"

Two separate human rights reports released recently have branded Israel as one of the world's worst violators of human rights.

The reports, which focused on Israel's treatment of the populations of the occupied Palestinian territories of the West Bank and Gaza, were prepared by the US State Department and the International Commission of Jurists.

According to American press reports, intensive efforts were exerted by pro-Israel officials to prevent the reports from being made public. The reports were vastly edited and quotations were cut.

Despite distortion efforts however, the reports emerged as a devastating indictment of the Jewish state.

Sinn Fein's conference ploy

The recent conference held by Sinn Fein in the North was an elaborate ploy to discuss the ending of abstentionism, according to Workers' Party representatives in the North.

The "internal debate" was not about creating conditions for peace, but was held to pave the way and set up a time scale for Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams to take his seat in the British Parliament and to discuss ways of getting around the government-imposed ban.

According to sources, this was clearly shown when discussion on the IRA's terrorist campaign lasted only ten minutes, and leading Parliamentary representatives that this murder would continue and that there was no question of an ending of the campaign of violence that has spanned two decades.

Call for WX Child Unit

The NEED for a Pacifist Unit in Waterford was highlighted this week by local Workers' Party representative, Virginia Foyne.

According to Virginia, the figures provided for the party by the Minister for Health showed that the case for a Pacifist Unit was unanswerable.

A massive 743 children from County Waterford were treated at the Antrim Pacifist Unit in Waterford in 1989. Of that total, 143 were detained for more than six days, and 17 were referred as emergency cases by Waterford County Hospital.

The travel involved in order to bring the children from Waterford to the Waterford Unit was 16,000 miles last year. The fact that over 20% of the children were detained for more than six days is evidence of further inconvenience and expense incurred by Waterford parents, many of whom wouldn't be able to afford the 80p a week rounded trip to Waterford to visit their children according to the Waterford representative.
Environmental agenda needed

SPEAKING at a public meeting in Galway last week, Workers' Party President Proinsias De Rossa, called for the laying down of an environmental agenda for economic and social activity, adding we can no longer confine environmental issues to one department of government.

While almost everyone now professes to be in favour of environmental protection there is still a lack of clarity among many people on what constitutes the environment, what exactly it is under threat from, from whom it needs to be projected, and the measures needed to safeguard it.

The 'environment' cannot be defined in any narrow way - it is essentially where we live. People are an essential part of this environment as are issues such as rural depopulation, emigration and the general social environment.

We cannot hope to solve environmental issues with our reference to social and economic considerations. As all forms of human activity impact on the environment to some extent, there is a need for a policy which promotes sustainable development, rather than viewing people and human activity as part of the problem. This in turn must be linked to a policy which sees people as part of one eco-system on this planet.

We now know that even the seas and oceans are not unlimited and previous notions of seafood and pollution could be 'dispelled and dispersed' in the oceans are now clearly rubbish themselves. Yet we still have the problem of discharges from Sellafield and toxic dumping at sea to mention just two glaring examples of destruction of the environment.

This raises the questions of the need of the local community to militate against protection of the environment. The biggest problem which people in every town in this country face is the issue of bad planning - by property speculators, from inadequate planning of developments through lack of concern to protect natural habitats.

The Minister for the Environment has now promulgated an Environmental Protection Agency as a solution for all our environmental problems. But we need the proper structures and local democracy to allow the aims of such an agency to be implemented, and to allow local communities a full and adequate say on environmental concerns of whatever nature.

A network of community 'Ecowatch' planning committees in all local government areas needs to be created, with a clear environmental protection mandate in setting all planning and development proposals at local level. In addition we need a series of regional and sub-regional Local Environment Forums, covering pollution of drinking water and bathing water, noise, litter and waste pollution, smoke and lead free air proposals, ozone protection and pesticide controls.
Revelations at Sandoz hearing

WORKERS' Party Councillor, Kathleen Lynch has tabled a number of questions for the Cork City Manager, Mr T P Rice, regarding a statement made by the Cork County Chief Environmental Officer Mr Ian McClean.

Mr McClean, who was giving evidence at the Oral Hearing into the proposed Sandoz pharmaceuticals plant at Kingsakiddy, indicated that residual ash from a toxic waste incinerator in Cork county was already being dumped at the city dump on Kinsale Road.

The Saile Road dump has already been a source of controversy for some time, with local residents blaming it for foul smells in the area, and for illness in themselves and their children. The dump is surrounded by a number of large housing estates. There are also fears surrounding the build-up of methane gas at the site and the possibility of explosions there.

Cllr Lynch is to ask the City Manager if Mr McClean's allegations are correct, and if so, for how long has this dumping of toxic ash been taking place. She has also questioned the Corporation's monitoring of such substances and the precautions being taken when dealing with them.

"The statement made by Mr McClean has very serious implications and there is an onus on Cork Corporation to come clean on this matter forthwith, in the public interest," said Cllr Lynch.

ENVIRONMENT Minister Padraig Flynn has ordered yet another enquiry into the proposed down-stream area of the plant by an expert committee. He has also recommended the establishment of an inquiry which was that a pollution control officer be appointed down-stream of the lake at Dunkettle, obviously in the Lee catchment area.

Mr McClean also said that a bridge be built and that there would be a toll bridge? And who would the likely builder of the bridge be? Tom Roche, the guy who built and runs the toll bridges in Dublin, it would be a toll bridge! Who would the likely builder? Who would the likely builder? The likely builder would be a toll bridge? Tom Roche, the guy who built and runs the toll bridges in Dublin, it would be a toll bridge!

Cllr Lynch wonders why the Minister is so adamant that a bridge be built against expert opinion. Could it be that the idea of the idea is that there is a plan for the route of the toll road? And who would the likely builder of the toll road be? Who would the likely builder? Could it be that the idea of the idea is that there is a plan for the route of the toll road? And who would the likely builder of the toll road be? Who would the likely builder? The likely builder would be a toll bridge! Tom Roche, the guy who built and runs the toll bridges in Dublin, it would be a toll bridge!

by John Bowen

Another day another lift broken

RESIDENTS of Ballymann are fed up with the inconvenience caused by lifts which are out of order. Mr Denis Looney of Balcurris lives in a fifth floor flat. The lift which Mr Looney uses to gain access to his flat is, he says, out of order every second day. This causes great difficulty for Mr Looney, who suffers from a heart condition and has difficulty climbing the stairs.

He has spoken to local TDs about the lift but to date nothing has been done to prevent it from breaking down. The Corporation claim to have the lift serviced regularly, but Mr Looney says he has never seen evidence of this.

The lift in question was repaired a couple of weeks ago, but as a certain part is needed, residents were told that it would operate only as far as the fifth floor until the part was available. On Sunday last the lift reached the seventh floor and got stuck. As a result, three young children who were in the lift at the time had to be rescued by the Fire Brigade.

Mr Looney said that the lifts are damaged as a result of neglect and old age. "There is very little vandalism in the area, so that can't be the reason," Mr Looney said, adding that the lift has been going up and down 'one thousand times a day for the last twenty years, and is bound to be worn out if not looked after properly.'

The Irish People, newspaper of the Workers' Party, requires a dynamic editor to edit a new look expanded paper. The person appointed will ideally have experience in journalism or Public Relations, and should have a good knowledge of the Irish political scene, and the Workers' Party in particular.

This is an exciting opportunity to develop news and coverage from a socialist perspective. The ideal applicant will have initiative, fresh ideas on design and layout, and some experience of sub-editing. S/he will have an ability to work to tight deadlines, and be available for evening and weekend work when required.

Salary will be commensurate with experience and will be by negotiation. Applications with CV and examples of previous journalistic or public relations work should be addressed, BEFORE APRIL 12th, to the Administrator, The Workers' Party, 30 Gardiner Place, Dublin 1. 