

# GALWAY

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# WORKER.

## LIFE IN A GALWAY FLAT.

The politicians and businessmen keep telling us that Galway is a thriving town. They are right of course. But they forget to mention the conditions under which young workers and students who are attracted to this "thriving city" live in. About 10 per cent of workers on the industrial estate live in flats; one out of six adults in Galway are students -- most of them live in flats. While most people know something of the high rents that are charged, they seldom find out about the pettiness of the sheer exploitation and the crazy conditions under which flatdwellers live.

A young worker writes :

" A friend of mine had a Landlady who often served them TAYVOES in the evening for potatoes . For that Quality food she got £7- a year ago. I , myself shaired a flat in a house belonging to one of the most notorious landlords in the city. His carpet were so sacred to him that he had them covered with plastic covering . No visitors were allowed after twelve. And this was no joke. One night at 5 past 12pm , he arived in his drawers telling my friends to leave. He usually only took girls because he thought that they were more "house-trained". The building is four stories high and has about 15 tenants . As well as that, it has no fire escape and the floor is just chipboard . But of course, profit comes before safety "

But there are two types of landlord. On one hand you have the working class family who try to make ends meet by taking in a lodger. This is often the only way they can defend themselves against inflation or manage to scrape enough money together to buy a car or a holiday. They usually make the most decent landlords. On the other you have the Hession and Nestors of this world. They own blocks of flats around the city. They are also closely linked to property speculation. You have only to look at the Hession empire.-- office blocks, hotels, unused property and of course flats. Recently he has given another lesson in the power of money by boldly advertis<sup>ing</sup> for tenants for luxury flats in St Endas road. These flats were illegally built in<sup>an</sup> over-crowded area and Hession was fined the princely sum of £10 .

Organization of people living in flats is difficult because people are so cut off. But it must be done . The only way to fight against high rents and evictions is to form a flatdwellers association. This can only begin from the big blocks of flats where people can see each other often. A flatdwellers association must fight for a freezing of rents, and an end to evictions, The only weapon that tenants have will be their ability to 'black' certain flats. Occup<sup>a</sup>tion may also be possible in the big blocks of flats --- it has worked in Italy, so why not here.

## GALWAY WORKERS RAISE THE ISSUE OF RANK AND FILE UNITY

The unofficial strikes at Bruno Shirts (Industrial Estate) and at West Con (Carraroe) illustrate the crying need for rank and file unity of the working class in the Galway area.

Take Bruno. Two women were dismissed at Bruno and eight were put on trial, as reported in the women's own Strike Bulletin which we published in the last issue of 'Galway Worker'. The refusal of the ITGWU officials, Meade and Breathnach to make the strike official aided the divide and rule tactics of the Bruno boss, Fancaldi.

At this point the Bruno workers felt the need for some organs through which

i) To publicise to the other workers in the Estate the nature of the dispute towards gaining their support

ii) To muster help in the form of factory collections and brief sympathetic stoppages

iii) To raise the crucial issue of unifying the Galway city workers in a common struggle against shake outs, redundancies, inflation, unemployment, refusal by bosses of unions and of equal pay claims etc.

The fact that no such organ of struggle existed was the reason why the Bruno workers issued a leaflet calling for the coming together of Shop Stewards and other representatives of groups of rank and file workers. They were expressing in their own spontaneous way their felt need for a Galway Shop Stewards and Rank and File Committee

At the moment Ireland is becoming a dumping ground for floods of very cheap clothes and shirts. Shirts are pouring in from Hong Kong Roumania South Korea Portugal etc. They can be sold here at such knock down prices because of the paltry wages of workers in these countries. Workers in the clothing industry must fight this dumping. — HOW —

They can only do so effectively by building immediately the organs of struggle that can carry such a fight to success in spite of the unwillingness of the Trade Union bureaucrats to really take it up.

It is through the federation of Shop Steward and Rank and File Committees that general demands for the blacking of 'dumped' clothing as for the blacking of assembled cars can be raised and fought.

This means that a Galway Shop Stewards and Rank and File Committee once off the ground must affiliate to the National Rank and File Movement.

In the last issue of 'Galway Worker' we reported the initial moves in the dispute at West Con which is also an unofficial strike opposing redundancies. Thirty workers who erect the houses produced at West Con have since broken the unofficial pickets with the backing of Meade and Breathnach. Office workers have been seconded into the factory to prepare materials for distribution. All this picket bashing is backed up by Gardai and Special Branch, which are thick on the ground in the Carraroe industrial Estate ever since a lorry breaking the pickets was smashed by the workforce on strike

The crippling isolation of this small section of workers illustrates once again the vital need for a Rank and File organisation to tie up the chain of small isolated sections of various workers in the Connemara Gaeltacht. A Coisti Oibri na Gaeltachta must therefore be formed as a priority. It must build from the start close links of practical active solidarity with the Galway Shop Stewards and Rank and File Committee and affiliate to the National Rank and File Movement

A minimum programme on which all workers willing to take the offensive of the bosses can fight must be worked out in fully democratic discussion to become the basic programme of these Committees

Revolutionary Socialists accepting this minimum programme must be free to propose within the Committees their strategy for fighting all the basic issues facing the working class in such a way as to mobilise the class as a whole and organise it for the seizure of power in a workers revolution that will build the workers Republic over the bones of the Capitalist Class.

BEGIN TO BUILD THE GALWAY SHOP STEWARDS AND R&F COMMITTEE NOW

BEGIN TO BUILD COISTI OIBRI NA GAELTACHTA

## WESTCON

Westcon is a small factory in the Carraroe Industrial Estate. It makes various parts of system built houses. Although there are only 12 people employed in the factory itself, there are about 30 more Westcon workers round the country in different building sites. Workers at Westcon have been on strike for 7 weeks in protest at the sacking of 4 men and one girl. This is a very important strike because it is the first stand that workers in Galway have made against redundancy.

As is the usual tale in Galway at the moment, the ITGWU bureaucrats have done another old "stab in the back". The dynamic duo Meade and Breathnach have just added another trophy to their long record of SELL OUTS. Although this is a strike over basic trade union principles. It is about the right to work. Yet the duo have refused to make the strike official. Fursey Breathnach had to run off the Carraroe Estate when he tried to call the strike off.

The result of this betrayal has been that the other 30 workers have continually passed the pickets and taken supplies out of the factory to keep the work on the building sites going. And if there is a shortage of materials at Westcon supplies are brought in from Coens in Galway which is non union. Just to help in the whole effort to break the strike a few of the male workers on the staff have rolled up their shirt sleeves and are putting in a short period on the production line for the duration of the strike.

A few weeks ago the workers on strike attempted to put an end to the scabbing by stopping a lorry bringing out supplies and smashing up the stuff that was on it. After a phone call from the management Garda were brought in from as far away as Oughterard. They were accompanied by two special branch men from Galway city. The strikers were soon outnumbered and have been forced to allow the scabbing lorries through. There is now one Garda on watch at the picket line permanently.

Since the strike a few things have come out. It looks as if the management had planned all along that if the first batch of redundancies had been accepted there would be more to follow. In fact all the signs are that they may be sniping to close down the factory. Management has already begun to spread the rumour that the long strike may lead to closure. Yet the order book is full and orders kept coming in during the strike. Two factors however are threatening closure: I) Gross inefficiency by management II) shortage of ready cash which is a product of the planless chaos of capitalism going into recession.

It is only the workers at Westcon who can prevent this happening. They know that there are not many jobs around this area that will be offering jobs at over 25 a week. But if they are to win and turn the bosses offensive against the bosses the only successful tactic is to occupy the factory and hold the machinery and goods as ransom to back demands. The occupied base must be used as a base from which to mount a struggle in the Connemara Gaeltacht and in Galway for support -- financial and on the streets. Attempts must be made to win back the solidarity of the 30 site workers by pointing out that they are in the same boat.

But there are a few crucial lessons in this strike for other workers as well. The whole tactic of automatically placing a picket on the gate is not always the best. An alternative is to occupy the place. This keeps all workers together, puts them sitting comfortably inside on the capital and goods of the bosses which can be used as ransom. Again the betrayal of the union officials points to the need to build a Shop Stewards and Rank and File committee in Galway. This can muster solidarity in the form of collections round factories it can put pressure on the union officials to make the strike official by floating petitions and organising marches of members of different jobs to Union offices.

## STUDENTS BEGIN TO MOVE

When 60 students were detained at the Bridewell for trying to find out what R. Burke had up his sleeve for students union officials tried to stifle rank and file protest by saying it would anger the judiciary and would guarantee sentencings. We in SWM said no. We pointed out that the only way to guarantee that the students got free was to show strength where it tells -- on the streets in mass action. We were proved right and the timid bureaucrats, who pivot between the Campus bosses and Government and the student rank and file were proved wrong. The judge said he didn't want to spoke the wheels of the careers of the student leaders -- how perceptive of the judge. The leaders promised the judge to be good boys, not to do it again and to keep their flight to their careers pure from anything so ugly as forcible entry. The real reason however the judge didn't sentence was the fear of the Government of the mass action this would unleash. Long live this fear.

WHAT WE SAY . . . . . ON REDUNDANCIES

As we all know by now there is a big shortage of jobs in Galway at the moment. You have only to look at the 'Appointments' page in the Advertiser or the Tribune to see how slack things are. Every job in Galway must be held on to. Yet at the moment there are rumours that Crown Controls will not last another year. This is backed up by the fact that overtime has been cut out. A month ago, the attempt by the Bruno management to put 8 experienced operatives on a 'trial period' was seen by workers as a sign of coming redundancies. Workers at Westcon have showed the way to fight by winning back the jobs of five of their brothers threatened with the sack. The numbers signing on at the Labour Exchange is well over a1000. So whatever about the rumours and the figures it is clear that redundancies is going to be one of the biggest issues facing the working class in the coming months as the recession really bites.

What causes redundancies ?? The simplest answer is that the reason varies with each case, with each closure. So you could say that the threatened closure at Galway Crystal was brought about, last summer, by a corrupt and inefficient management. In another case the product is just out of date. Or there might not be enough demand for the stuff the factory -- this has happened at DANUS in Limerick where the sales have fallen off with the collapse of the small farmers incomes.

But you also need an explanation of why we are facing a general WAVE of redundancies, if we are to be able to organise against them. What we are seeing is the first major crisis in capitalism since the forties. The restrictions on

credit, the fall off in investment, the bankruptcies bring closures and lay-offs. But the important point is that they are not a kind of natural disaster which is inevitable. They are an attempt by those who own and control the wealth in this society to make the working class pay for THEIR crisis. Where you have production based on profit and not on the needs of people, you will have overproduction and underproduction. Result : REDUNDANCIES. Competition between the bosses forces them to cut down on their 'costs' -- to rationalise by getting less men to do more work. Result : REDUNDANCIES.

But places like the Galway Industrial Estate are particularly open to redundancies. Most of the companies who come here are just the tiniest parts of multinational empires and can be knocked off without much cost to the parent company. They are here, not out of the love of the Galway accent, but because of the government grants and the cheap labour. Once the grants are up they pull out. You have only to look at Beckmans who employed 16 people making bakery machines. they closed immediately after the £7000 grant, payed from the taxes of PAYE workers, was up. That is what imperialism is all about.

How do we fight redundancies ?? Redundancy compensatory payments only give you a lump sum which lasts two or three months, by which time you will have to face the dole. Another trick to sell redundancies is "natural wastage" -- where retired workers are not replaced. However when this happened a while ago on the docks, some of the dockers pointed out that JOBS were being lost in a town that had enough unemployed. The only effective strategy against redundancies is one that recognises that workers should not take the burden of the bosses' crisis on themselves. Where there is a fall in demand and lay-offs are being talked about we must call for sharing of the available work on full pay. No man must go to the door. The Trade Unions must make the general demand for cutting the working week to 35 hours without loss of pay. This will bring a lot of the unemployed in from the dole queue. Trade Unionists must fight for the abolition of overtime in the present crisis by hitting at the reasons why people must do it -- low wages and high prices. We must demand flat rate increases and a minimum wage of £35 a week.

Where the loss of a single factory tells us he is broke he must be told that we want to see his accountbooks to make sure he is not lying or is involved in corruption. If they prove that he is telling the truth we must still fight for the preservation of our jobs. This will be got by fighting for the nationalisation of the factory under workers control --- workers to have a continuous veto on the decisions of the management.

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IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN THE POLITICS OF THE ' GALWAY WORKER' AND WOULD  
LIKE MORE INFORMATION ON THE SOCIALIST WORKERS MOVEMENT THEN WRITE TO OUR  
NATIONAL HQ :TOP FLOOR, 95 CAPEL STREET DUBLIN.

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