

For starters (WS46)

Workers Solidarity Movement

1995

THERE IS A new mood out there. It is demonstrated by the magnificent support for the Dunnes Stores strike, and the occupations at Sunbeam and the Irish Press. As management push ahead with redundancies, yellow pack jobs, contract working and casualisation, workers are pushing back. When your back is against the wall you have to push back or be squashed.

However this should not be confused with a fight for a better life. For many, expectations of job security and a decent standard of living are being shattered. And some are determined not to take it lying down.

Not only do we all need to hang on to our jobs, wages, promotional outlets and all the other things that we won over the last twenty five years, we also need to rebuild the solidarity and strength that allowed us to win these things in the first place.

Victories achieved in defensive battles will encourage others to resist the bosses' offensive. They will also contribute to rebuilding the confidence needed to fight for more of the good things in life. If you can not defend what you already have, it is much harder to believe that you can win improvements. But if you win on one issue, then you are open to the idea that you can win a lot more.

Charlie and Bill

"Begrudgers, throwbacks and die hards". That is what the media called anyone objecting to the official state visit by Prince Charles. Their consensus had decided that anyone who would object must be "living in the past". You would think that the British ruling class had done nothing at all to stir up the troubles, that Prince Charles' Parachute regiment had never murdered 14 civil rights marchers on Bloody Sunday. And we were supposed to feel privileged that a filthy rich parasite was condescending to have a free holiday here at our expense.

Not everyone swallowed this forelock touching embarrassment, orchestrated by the politicians and their Dublin 4 media friends. 2,000 republicans, socialists, anarchists and anti-royalists took to the streets of Dublin on May 31st. The Workers Solidarity Movement played its part by giving out 5,000 leaflets urging support for the march, and organising a lively contingent on the night.

Demonstrations like this play a useful role. They remind us that there are rich and poor, workers and bosses, rulers and ruled. To recognise this and object to it is not begrudgery but realism! We know how things are now and we are declaring we want something better.

When Bill Clinton comes over on November 30th he should not be able to live the high life without encountering a protest or two. It will certainly give heart to dissident Americans to know that in Ireland there are those who oppose the US state's intervention in other peoples' countries and support for dictatorships in the third world. One question is whether Sinn Féin will be on the streets or at the dinner? Will a handshake for Gerry Adams be more important than taking a stand against injustice?

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