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Tax + Wages: Strike Now!

Dublin Anarchist Collective

1983

As we go to print the Dublin Trades Council stoppage against the tax system is happening. This will be unlike the stoppage we had in April. Tokenistic gestures from the union leadership! Did the ICTU follow up on the last stoppage with any real action? Thousands of workers had been mobilised on April 13th. This only occurred because the pressure was building up from below. The Waterford workers had the initiative others might follow. The leadership had to do something if their control was to be maintained. They had the stoppage and then effectively tried to undermine any follow up activity. Lobbying the politicians was all they could come up with.

But the action taken by Waterford workers was spread. The Waterford stewards called meetings in Dublin. They came up, explained their case and called for solidarity action in Dublin for May 16th. An ad-hoc shop stewards committee was set up to organise this. The Waterford stewards came up again and talked to the Dublin Stewards and encouraged them to come out on May 16th.

May 16th was quite a success. Sections of Aer Lingus, CIE and the Corporation came out. Datsun, Rowentrees, Packard Electric, Tesco, Unidare and Tayto came out. Some of the oil companies were also out. When the situation was reviewed most stewards

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were happy enough unlike most workers on the ground in the factories involved. A start had been made. Along with the people who came out in Waterford they could keep the pressure up. A stoppage for the following Monday was planned but later called off. It was decided to lobby the Dail the day the amendments to the Finance Bill were being debated. The ball is now back in the Union leadership's court. The Shop Steward's initiative has more less come to an end.

We must ask why. Problems were encountered in building for the stoppages especially the second one which was eventually called off. Firstly the workers in some of the places who came out on the 16th were not happy at the turn out. They lacked confidence and felt ineffective. I feel that this is due to the fact that it was only shop stewards who were brought together during the build-up to the stoppages. At no stage were the workers in the different places actually brought together. This could have been done either on the march/rally on the 16th or through some kind of mass meeting where the successes and failures could have been discussed. This was especially important given the papers deliberately played down the effect of the stoppages on the 16th. Thus you were left with the individual stewards going back to their workplaces trying to convince the workers that the papers were wrong.

The second problem was that some places were being asked to come out they responded that they were in wage negotiations and that they would be possibly be coming out over wages. A 24 hour stoppage was planned for the ESB on the 18th. Here a political weakness emerged. The stewards were not able to link the struggle for wages and tax equity into one struggle. They failed to realise that in fighting for a better tax system you are fighting the bosses. The government is basically the tool of the bosses. Running the show in their interest by letting them off tax free for handing out huge grants to them. The reason workers pay so much tax is that the bosses pay so little. Fighting for wages and tax equity is about

rejecting the bosses' efforts to make us pay for the present crisis. It's about us having decent standards of living at the bosses' expense.

At the moment there is a lot of talk about the need for a Rank and File movement. A movement to link the struggles for wages, tax equity and jobs together. As far as Anarchists are concerned this movement should not be about forcing the trade movement to move into action. It never will. The leadership of the trade union movement has more in common with the bosses that it does with ordinary workers. They are not revolutionaries committed to fighting for a society run by workers on the basis on what people need rather than on the basis of what makes profit for the boss. A movement aimed at making them move can be easily bought off. The odd day-of-action and everyone's happy!

Our objective is to build a movement based in the factories and shop-floors. A movement controlled by workers and run in their interest. A movement committed to fighting for social revolution. If a rank and file movement is built, this must be the objective. It must know where it is going in the long-term, so that it can't be so easily bought off.

This present stoppage can be welcomed. But don't be fooled by it. If we are going to win on tax and wages we must do it ourselves. Maximum solidarity must be built if people are to strike. And people must strike. It is our only really effective weapon. Its only by hitting them where it really hurts (not boring speeches and marches) will any victories be won. The mobilisation when the Ranks workers were jailed proved it.