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Sect behind CEC Split

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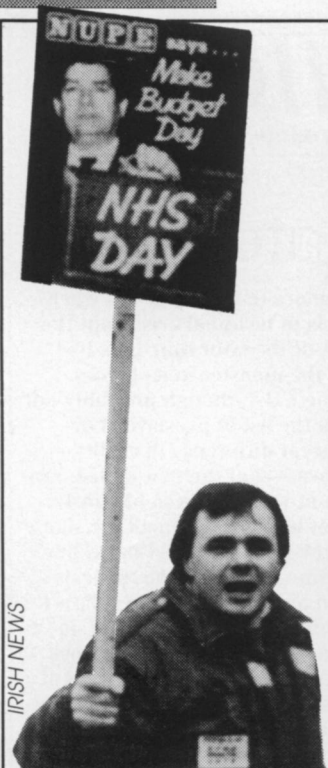
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**OVERSHADOWED** by the dramatic funerals last month was a less newsworthy face of Northern Ireland. Not that of prosperous 'normality', but of angry health workers who took to the streets as the chancellor, Nigel Lawson, was closing that famous battered briefcase.

According to the organisers, the Irish Congress of Trades Unions, 10,000 joined the march in Belfast—the RUC said 4,000. Shipyard workers joined the demonstration, which was in protest at the £14 million shortfall the four health boards collectively face in the UK's poorest and unhealthiest region. One of their officials, Joe Bowers of MSF, warned of a whispering campaign against the yard—it should not be sacrificed so that spending could be diverted, he said.

Meanwhile, the government last month clawed back a further £5 million from the Housing Executive budget (*Fortnight* 258). The Executive said it was "disgusted".

Still to come, from this month on, are the new social security 'reforms', which will hit housing benefit hard and replace most grants by loans (*Fortnight* 258, 259).

Coming too is the new wages order, which will remove young workers from any wages council protection. Seamus Mallon told the Commons that widespread low pay and unemployment here showed the claim that young people could price themselves into jobs was "brutal nonsense". The chancellor, however, had other priorities.

## Sect behind CEC split

THE Campaign for Equal Citizenship, the pressure group which calls for the 'mainland' political parties to organise in Northern Ireland, sustained a body blow last month when its charismatic president, Bob McCartney, resigned.

Laurence Kennedy, the campaign's chair, also departed, within weeks of the resignation of the CEC's secretary, David Morrison.

Over the past couple of years the CEC had mounted an aggressive lobby, leading to a bitter *in camera* battle at the OUP conference in 1986 and to the expulsion of Mr McCartney from the party in May last year. Standing as a 'real unionist' he fought Jim Kilfedder in the June general election.

Mr McCartney's close run in North Down surprised many observers. His supporters had already detected a favourable wind in an opinion poll which found 62 per cent endorsement, straddling the sectarian divide, for British parties contesting elections in the province.

But a circular to CEC members at the end of February, revealed that trouble had been brewing. The document, a valedictory statement from Mr Morrison, attacked Mr McCartney in forthright terms. He accused the campaign president of "a very high-handed attitude", causing "incalculable damage" and precipitating "a debilitating inner conflict".

What emerged from the document was a clash of strategies between on the one hand Mr Morrison and Brendan Clifford—a key CEC intellectual—and on the other other leading members, including the president, whom the ex-secretary accused of having "a strictly electoral orientation".

Mr Clifford had been arguing that what was needed was a more ambitious policy of "exerting influence on various institutions of civil society which have been turned against the great majority of the people of the province, eg, the Arts Council, the Northern Ireland Committee of the ICTU, the BBC, the [Queen's] University, as well as doing something about the general use of nationalist textbooks in schools".

Matters had been brought to a head by Enniskillen. Mr Clifford drafted a CEC leaflet in response to the atrocity but Mr Morrison said it was overshadowed at its press launch by a surprise announcement by Mr McCartney that the campaign would be holding a conference of "all good people"—and that a "blacklist" would be drawn up of those who failed to attend.

Mr Clifford immediately resigned. Mr Morrison claimed the sort of people he was wooing with the grand 'civil society'

strategy—such as "thinking elements" in the churches—"would be put right off" by the blacklist statement.

At the next executive meeting, Mr McCartney was said to have "stormed out" and to have threatened to "expose" the executive. Seven executive members prepared a public response should he go ahead. But when Mr Morrison moved a motion of censure against Mr McCartney at the next meeting, he failed to find a seconder and resigned.

Why such acrimony? Mr McCartney certainly has a forceful personality, but a key factor was the role of the shadowy grouping known as the British and Irish Communist Organisation. While the B&ICO is understood to have dissolved, though secretly, a few years ago, central figures in the CEC have been associated with it—in particular Mr Morrison and Mr Clifford, as well as Boyd Black, the Queen's lecturer who stood as an 'equal citizenship' candidate in Fulham.

The B&ICO, which now appears to be operating under the name of the Ingram Society, has a history of spawning a myriad of labels, publications and front organisations—from the Workers' Association, to the Campaign for Labour Representation, to the CEC. Its small band of highly ideologically committed supporters have provided important activist enthusiasm for the campaign.

The B&ICO ideology is an unusual mixture of left-wing rhetoric and strident unionism. It emerged around the onset of 'the troubles', in reaction to the prevailing nationalism of the left—against which it produced penetrating polemics—but has since evolved an increasingly defensive unionist stance.

The major participants were last month unusually reticent about commenting on the affair.

But one executive member blamed the B&ICO for the row. "I think what happened was the B&ICO were a bit dismayed [after the June result]. Morrison and all backed McCartney and in a sense he failed to deliver the goods."

"They wanted a winner and, having failed to find one, they have reverted to an earlier strategy of theirs: just to mangle away gradually and ceaselessly in more left-wing terms—or at least apparently left-wing terms."

Of the organisation, he said: "The B&ICO know how to fight. They haven't survived for 20 years on a pacific organisational strategy. They go for the jugular."

**Robin Wilson**

## Pope's man for Dublin

DR DESMOND Connell, a 62-year-old philosopher, has become the Catholic archbishop of Dublin, without creating either the expectations of liberal change which accompanied Dr Dermot Ryan in 1972 or the fears of ultra-conservative reaction which surrounded the appointment in 1985 of Dr Kevin McNamara.

This muted response is remarkable, since the Vatican overrode the clergy of the Republic's senior diocese, who would have preferred Dr Donal Murray, an assistant bishop and a highly regarded theologian.

Perhaps clergy and laity are weary of their apparent inability to deflect Pope John Paul II. The low-key accession of Dr Connell can also be attributed to his determination not to say anything topical and to keep smiling.

Commentators have dwelt at length on the social and pastoral problems which will confront him in a diocese of more than one million Catholics. Dublin is divided starkly into the haves and have-nots. In the inner city and in suburban sprawls thousands struggle against poverty, homelessness, family break-ups, drugs and gangsters.

Although nearly nine out of ten people in the Republic attend weekly Mass, in the deprived areas of Dublin only two out of ten still fulfil their religious duties. Young people in particular are increasingly indifferent to 'the faith



**Dr Connell—keeps smiling**

of their fathers'.

Paradoxically though, some young people, reflecting the conservative mood of the times, are attracted by the fundamentalist appeal of Christian sects. This challenge may further influence the archbishop towards proclaiming traditional values.

Dr Connell is from the conservative wing of Catholicism. The Vatican once again has seen fit to appoint an archbishop of Dublin known not to be disposed towards a pluralist Ireland. And because of the powerful hold of Catholicism, the archbishop of Dublin carries considerable political influence in church-state relations—akin to being an 'ecclesiastical Taoiseach'.

Not surprisingly—given Pope John Paul's Polish concept of a Catholic nation—the Vatican sees Ireland as a bastion of traditional Catholicism, to be

preserved against secular influences. However, no churchman, either in Rome or Drumcondra, is can indefinitely block progress towards pluralism.

Dr Connell was close to his two predecessors who spearheaded the hierarchy's counter-attack against Dr Garret FitzGerald's attempts to remove sectarian features from the Republic's constitution and laws. He also appears to share their lack of public interest in the violence in Northern Ireland.

In his remarks after his ordination, Dr Connell warned that the world was under threat of universal destruction and that "the living fruit of the womb is denied its divinely implanted promise of life". He made no reference to the challenge which violence—so much of it of sectarian—poses to the credibility of organised religion in this island.

**John Cooney**

## 'Jesuitical' judgment

LAST MONTH'S Supreme Court decision to uphold the order restraining the Dublin counselling clinics may not represent such a setback for the clinics as the headlines suggested.

Open Line Counselling and the Well Woman Centre had been enjoined against providing information on abortion in Britain in a ruling by Justice Hamilton in the High Court in December 1986 (*Fortnight* 245 & 258). He