

For peace, unity, and socialism

SOCIALIST VOICE

Monthly publication of Dublin District, Communist Party of Ireland

For a view from the left on • economic alternatives • trade unions • the European Union • the North • international news



Progressive change is home-grown —not a gift from Brussels

LATER this year we will be asked to vote for the Lisbon Treaty, or the revised EU Constitution. This treaty as a document is incomprehensible unless read in conjunction with the Treaty of Rome (1956) and the Treaty of Maastricht as amended by the Treaties of Amsterdam (1992) and the Treaty of Nice. Very few advocates of Lisbon will have read these dense tomes. However, they will be advocating a Yes vote on the grounds of all the wonderful things that have happened to us since we joined the "Common Market" back in 1973.

There is a general view that all progressive change has come from the European Union. However, the facts seem to tell us that progressive change has not in fact come from Brussels but is largely home-grown.

On the question of social issues, the 1980-81 and most unions added the twelfth day over a number of years towards May Day when he loved "his" holiday on 1 May.

The availability of contraception came from various radical groups of Irish people who broke the law unless common sense prevailed (some public cases even risked losing their licence by installing condoms).

Even the limited abortion rights, mostly related to the right to information and travel, came about when reluctant governments were forced to act on the famous X case.

On the issue of workers' rights, how many times have we heard workers refer to their "EBC" days when referring to the fourth week of annual leave? I have no idea how this expression got into common use. However, if we examine the subject we note that workers had three weeks of annual leave as a result of Irish legis-

lation introduced in 1973. An additional two days were added as a result of the first "national understanding" between unions, employers and Government in an agreement of 1979-80. A further two days were added in the Second National Understanding, 1980-81, and most unions added the twelfth day over a number of years towards May Day when he loved "his" holiday on 1 May.

The only public holiday unaccounted for (or bank holiday, as they tend to be called in Ireland) is 1 January. I have heard some people say that this came about as a result of some European decision. However, I have no positive proof in this regard. While we all know that women still get paid less than men, we will be told by the pro-Labour, Sure didn't equal pay for women come from Europe? Well, yes, it did—but not because of some act of philanthropy on the part of Brussels. The idea of equal pay for equal work was introduced by the French Left government of Léon Blum in the 1930s. It stayed on the statute books in France throughout the Nazi occupation and con-



Women workers obtained equal pay as a result of struggle, not as a gift from "Europe"

“And now in the union Jurgis met men who explained all this mystery to him; and he learned that America differed from Russia in that its government existed under the form of a democracy. The officials who ruled it, and got all the graft, had to be elected first, and so there were two rival sets of grafters, known as political parties, and the one got the office which brought the most votes.—Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle* (1906).”

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