

Employee delegates present views at meeting with Minister

THE B+I Policy Group representatives met with the Minister for Transport, Mr. P. Cooney, at Dail Eireann on Wednesday, 21st October. At the meeting, the delegation stressed that from the time the Government took over B+I from Coast Lines Ltd. in 1965 the company had been undercapitalised and that this undercapitalisation was the cause of the present difficulties. While B+I would likely show a trading profit of £5 million for 1981/82, capital and interest charges amounted to a massive £21 million.

The delegates emphasised that B+I as a company had suffered from a situation whereby on the one hand it was subjected to a commercial mandate, while at the same time it was obliged to support a social commitment.

The submission states that the figures quoted clearly indicate that while the company can trade profitably even during what is accepted as a difficult year, the repayment of capital charges could severely damage the company.

The delegates compared the £33 million paid to B+I over a period of 15 years during which

The submission also points out that in the B+I itself there has been continuous growth in productivity since 1965. B+I Dublin terminal operates for 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The unsocial working hours involved were worked willingly in order to make the terminal an efficient unit. If the workers are to continue to give increases in productivity and to be flexible in adapting to new work practices, then as far as possible, they must be protected from changes in the political and economic areas which expose them to the possible loss of their employment, otherwise productivity and un-

and C.I.E., B+I do not have "captive customers". They compete for trade in the open market against a foreign shipping company who are subsidised by their Government. Even the normal approved system of fare increases has been denied B+I because of their involvement in a price war with the opposition.

Turning to the situation in respect of Cork, the submission states that, the aspirations of the workforce in Cork are not that the Cork Service should continue with a Company or Government subsidy, but that the Cork operation would make a contribution towards the

Details outlined at three meetings

B+I Chairman, M. J. O'Keeffe and Chief Executive, W. B. Mulligan, met the Minister for Transport, Mr. Cooney on the 12th October. It is understood that further information had been requested from the Company by the Department of Transport officials who were preparing a submission to the Minister and ultimately to the Government.

At the meeting of the Board of Directors held on the 13th October, a report was given on the discussions held between the Minister for Transport and the Chairman and the Chief Executive.

On Wednesday, 14th October, the Chairman and Chief Executive met a delegation in the City Hall, Cork at the request of the Lord Mayor of Cork. After hearing a submission as to the need to maintain the B+I service in Cork, the Chief Executive stressed that the entire operations of B+I were presently under review. He stated that these views and those of others which had been made to the Board would be taken fully into account in arriving at any final decisions.

port on B+I Line, dealt with this problem and recommended that only after consultation between the two semi-state companies should such a service be introduced".

The submission concluded with the point that considering all the difficulties confronting tourism in this country at the present time the performance of the Jetfoil, despite some adverse press publicity, and in

The delegates compared the £33 million paid to B+I over a period of 15 years during which an average of 2,000 people were employed, to the £56 million paid to the Cork Verolme Dockyard during the same period in support of 1,200 jobs. Delegates emphasised their total support for the building of Irish ships at home, but not if the result of this policy was to throw B+I staff out of their jobs.

The submission continued: "what is needed now is not a cut-back in the company's activities with the consequential loss in employment, but an examination by the Government of the structure of B+I loan repayments. These repayments should be pitched at a level which the company could afford to pay out of its trading profits".

Referring to the social consequences of a reduction in B+I employment levels, the submission states that down through the years dock workers of all sections generally have co-operated with their employers in agreeing to the massive technological changes which have taken place in Dublin port at a cost of many thousands of jobs. Today, young people living in the port area, must be querying the wisdom of their fathers' decisions to accept or agree to the conditions which led to the atrocious situation which exists today.

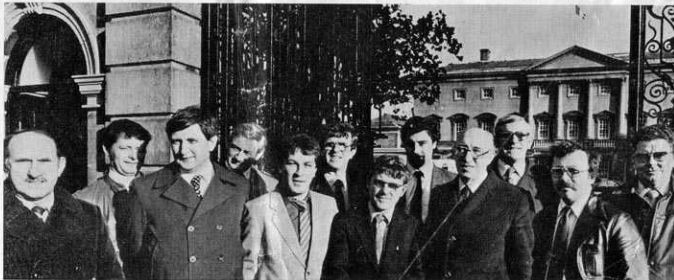
political and economic areas which expose them to the possible loss of their employment, otherwise productivity and unemployment become synonymous.

It later stressed that the performance of B+I Line for 1981 and the prediction by the company for 1982 is reasonable in all the circumstances. Like every other company they have been adversely affected by the severity of the current recession and the increase in the price of oil. Unlike other companies, even State companies, B+I was not able to increase its prices to compensate for inflation but was forced on the tourism side to reduce prices in 1981 as against 1980 because of the price war on the Irish Sea. It must also be pointed out that unlike E.S.B.

that the Cork service should continue with a Company or Government subsidy, but that the Cork operation would make a contribution towards the overall profitability of the Company. "To achieve this the B+I Corporate Plan of 1978 would have to be implemented. This Plan covering the period 1978/'83 included a proposal to introduce a Continental Service from Cork in 1980. The Plan envisaged that the new ship then being built in Cork Dockyard (m.v. Connacht) would be used on the Cork/Pembroke Service with a leg to the Continent. This Plan was shelved because the Government were anxious that B+I should not run a service in competition with Irish Shipping who operate to the Continent from Rosslare. The Joint Committee on State-Sponsored Bodies, in their re-

an the circumstances concerning tourism in this country at the present time the performance of the Jetfoil, despite some adverse press publicity — and in the face of the normal problems that confront every new service — augurs well for the future. In fact, this year's Jetfoil traffic totals, reflect a significant improvement in passenger load factor figures.

The delegation was led by T. Muldowney and included C. Kirwan (National Group Secretary I.T.G.W.U.), M. Merrigan (District Secretary A.T.G.W.U.), K. O'Brien (Head Office I.T.G.W.U.), B. Cunningham (F.W.U.I.), T. Gibbons (A.U.E.W.), J. Caffrey, S. Cushen, D. Gibbons, S. Murphy, J. Matthews, M. Coleman, T. Young and P. Rabitte (National Group Secretary I.T.G.W.U.) who arranged the meeting with the Minister.



What is role of worker-director?

Ever since the idea of worker directors was first mentioned, controversy has raged as to what their role should be and even now we seem no nearer to a straight answer than we were at the beginning. So many varied opinions exist on the subject that it is very difficult to pick out one theory and name it as the correct solution. However, I feel that a carefully balanced mixture of the best points is about as close as we can come to an acceptable answer.

To begin to formulate this mixture it is necessary to decide in the simplest terms what a worker director really is. He is the elected representative of all workers, within a company, to be their voice on the Board. It must be remembered that he is only one man and requires assistance to do the best job possible for those he represents.

In order to perform his role to the optimum, a proper structure below the level of the board is of the utmost importance. With a well constructed means of co-ordinating information and ideas from all sections in relation to the overall good of the company, I feel the worker directors would be at a great advantage. After all it is our futures that we want a louder voice in and I feel that if we can accept a few facts about what a worker director should be doing, overlook sectional differences and pull together, we can control our future to a much fuller degree.

If we can accept that Board level should be the absolute last resort for discussion of such items as pay, conditions and other day to day problems, we are well on our way to using the post of worker director as it was intended. Remember there are procedures laid down for dealing with disputes and also that sectional committees are elected to deal with these problems. Of course the worker director can assist in any way possible below board level to ensure that such problems never need to go as high as the Board for solutions.

Having overcome this part of the problem, I feel that worker directors should put all their efforts into creating an acceptable structure of participation below board level under a number of different headings. First of all, a worker/executive group in which a specially selected number of staff representatives would have a real input into planning and strategy from the very earliest stages. Secondly, endeavour to create closer co-operation between sections in an effort to form a solidarity between all workers, to strive towards gaining a hold on the continuous decline of our company and to put it back on its feet.

I feel that for too long we the workers have been involved in a rather one sided form of participation which was more of a presentation of facts with very little leeway for making a decision other than the intended one.

Now is the time for us to unite under the new worker directors in an effort to put this company—our company—where we want it, that is profitable and growing. Let us not give the old cry so often used in the past of "They are paid to take the responsibility" and point to management. You can use your voice to ensure that your future is a prosperous one.

When election time comes, vote No. 1 for your selection, but give your No. 2 vote to whoever you feel will be a strong voice and good representative for all workers. Use your vote and let yourself be heard.

Retirement of three employees



Road Transport helpers, Dinny Warren, Gussie Maguire and Hugh Byrne, one of our four employee-directors attached to the Clerical Section at North Wall, all retired during the month.

Dinny Warren is a member of a family with many years association with B+I, his father, Dan, was driver of the "Queen Mary", a huge road transport vehicle used for those early days "heavy lift" projects. His brother Michael, is foreman in the Road Transport and son Denis Junior, is a driver. Another brother Dan, is checker at Dublin Ferryport.

The Maguire family also have connections with the company. Christy and Gerry are attached to the Maintenance General Duty Section. Gussie, himself, spent all his time with Road Transport. A successful amateur boxer, he is always a busy person. Recently, Gussie has given much time to helping two charitable organisations—the A.R.C. and the C.R.C.

Hugh Byrne spent 40 years in B+I Clerical Section at North Wall. Best known for his golfing prowess, his popularity with his colleagues was emphasised during the first ever election of employee-directors to the B+I Board. Hugh won the clerical nomination and went on to be elected as an employee-director.

Labour Court rules against holiday entitlement claim

Arising from a dispute between the trade unions and management on the interpretation of holiday entitlements specified in the National Understanding, the trade unions, at the request of the Policy Group, referred the dispute to the Labour Court. The unions contended that the bands for leave had been altered, that the position of staff with 5, 10 and 15 years service had worsened

considerably. The Labour Court issued the following recommendation:

"The Court considers that the Company's interpretation of the National Agreement is correct and considers that it would be contrary to the spirit and letter of the Agreement to restore the difference. The Court recommends accordingly".

An outside opinion of B+I

We publish below the text of a letter included in the *Irish Times* issued on Wednesday, 14th October.

Sir, — You have recently published a number of items about the present problems of the B+I Line. As one who, in the late 'fifties and early 'sixties along with Desmond Branigan and other then prominent in the Maritime Institute, was involved in efforts to persuade the Government of the day to acquire B+I, I would like to be allowed to make a comment.

The B+I was eventually acquired for this country from the large British consortium which had owned it for many years and which had let it decline into a fairly run-down condition. If the acquisition had not taken place the odds are that this historic company would have disappeared, like the Coast Lines consortium to which it belonged. Once acquired, it very quickly became not only a credit to those managing it and to the officers and crews manning its ships, but also the valuable national asset which those of us who had urged its acquisition always believed probable. Moreover, it has been a pioneer in a number of fields, not least in experiments in associating the work force of semi-State organisations with the management of their enterprise.

Enormous sums of money have been saved for the Irish people because the Irish shipping line has since the mid-sixties been carrying more and more of the passengers and freight entering and leaving the State. Had there been no B+I, millions in fares and freight charges would have had to be shelled out to non-Irish concerns. The B+I expanded its fleet, giving valuable employment by building many of its vessels in Ireland when, once again, money might have been drained away to pay for ships constructed in yards elsewhere.

B+I took Irish shipping back into regular trading with the near-Continent from which it had long been absent. It attracted officers and crews of the very highest professional quality. Until two years ago it was making an annual profit, and even since this is no longer the case, basically because of the weight of loan charges for new vessels and not because of any wild errors of management; it is carrying more passengers and freight than before.

B+I pioneered the introduction of the jet-foil for short-sea passenger traffic in Northern Europe. Ignoring requests several times made by the late President Childers not to forget the good news, certain journals and journalists have given a great deal of space to occasions when the jet-foil, *Cù na Mara*, has had trouble and had to cancel a passage, leaving the general public largely uninformed about the hundreds of successful speedy passages which she has made, the thousands of passengers who have found not only convenience but real enjoyment being conveyed in great comfort with exceptionally attentive and efficient staff between the very centres of two great cities, and the prestige and the foreign currency obtained for Ireland when foreign crews came to train aboard the Irish jet-foil.

There is, in my opinion and in the opinion of very many people more competent than myself with whom I have discussed at length, home and abroad, the future of short-sea passenger traffic, no doubt whatever that the jet-foil has a most important role in this kind of service, already and for all the foreseeable future.

B+I now has a considerable number of first-class personnel trained for successfully handling the conditions met by a jet-foil even on the rare occasions when the seas between Dublin and Liverpool are whipped up to a height of seventeen feet. These men and women, together with those in the company's ferries and container ships, are among the finest human assets our land possesses.

It is both from the point of view of preserving those assets intact and from that of saving us from collapsing into our old dependence on foreign shipping in the short-sea trades, with all the too-little-noticed haemorrhage of cash that that entailed, imperative that the Government should enable B+I to keep its fine fleet fully operational. To insist on it scrapping services would be national asset-stripping, and would prevent the company returning to financial profitability, which it certainly will, if not obstructed, with the first brightening of the economic horizon. — Yours, etc.,

JOHN DE COURCY IRELAND



Assistant Chief Executive, Brendan Bird makes a presentation to Paddy Doyle (Docks' Section) on the occasion of Paddy's retirement. Paddy Doyle spent over 40 years with B+I. During that time he was the representative of the Worker's Union of Ireland and for a time acted as Chairman of the original Group Committee that led to the formation of the Work's Council and Policy Group.

A dream afloat

Well it is 7 p.m. and having had four days off, it is time to go back to work. I say goodbye to Mother and Father and drive towards my "home at sea" for the next couple of days. Just before I reach the port area the Sports News filters through on the radio that a big crowd is expected for Saturday's Division 1 match between Liverpool and Manchester United.

Already a trickle of cars has built up and a crowd of football supporters are busily arguing amongst themselves about their favourite footballers.

Having boarded the ship like a real seasoned sailor, I make my way to my cabin where all is quiet and serene. It is now into my uniform checking all is in order and a smell of black polish looms menacingly as my shoes nearly blind me. As I leave, I glance happily at the pin-up of Farrah Fawcett Majors which adorns the wall. After the roll call, I make my way to the

cafeteria where everything is shining and ready for the night's onslaught. The time is 8 p.m.

Next door in the galley is reminiscent of an ant hill, with the cooks rusing around busily preparing food as pots boil, and simmer, as tons of sausages, burgers, fish and chips are nearing their peak. The time is 8.20 p.m. and already the queues are forming. Outside of the door a hungry boisterous crowd wait. A cry of *United!* can be heard through the door, quickly followed by *Liverpool!* It is 8.30 p.m. — suddenly the call "Open the doors" is heard. A crashing din is heard as the human wave surges forward.

"Sausages and chips"—"burgers and mash"—"tea"—is all that can be heard as the campaign commences. The monotony is broken with the odd question of "Have you any porridge?" But the gods are on my side and he quickly settles for oxtail soup. "More chips for

recalled by John Burford



John Burford

the cafe" is the call as the clock strikes 10 o'clock. One and a half hours non-stop and the crown continues to queue and the place is like the Stretford End as red scarves appear everywhere. Then the queue stops momentarily, as an old lady studies the menu as if her

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Training ashore

Recently, Captain Peter G. Pope and Purser Charles Ryan of the m.v. *Innisfallen* have been jogging along Pembrokeshire lanes when the ship was berthed at Pembroke, practising for the Dublin Marathon on 26th October. Captain Pope ran in last year's event in Dublin and in the London Marathon. Mr. Ryan recently completed the Manchester Marathon in four hours in aid of the Cancer Research Campaign and also raised nearly £200 for the RNLI in a Cork to Cobh run. He is looking for sponsorship for the Dublin Marathon in aid of the spina bifida appeal in the Republic of Ireland.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

A dream recalled

life depended on it. After 10 minutes, she turns to me and asks: "What have you got?"

However, all is forgotten as you hear a shout "Who is in charge here?"

"I am", I say in my best accent, "can I help your Madam?"

"You want to do something about this tea, it's just horrible", she says.

"Did you put any sugar in Madam?" I say.

"Of course I did", she says, pointing to the salt container.

"Finished at last" is the universal comment as they begin the mop-up operation. At 12.30 it is time for a well deserved pint before the bar closes at 1 o'clock, and then straight down to the bunk for a few hours sleep.

While most of those at home turn over for their second sleep, it is up again for phase 2 and would you believe, a large queue has already formed. The shutters go up at 6 o'clock and the first person on the queue is that man who wanted porridge the previous night. As I glance gleefully at the steaming pot of oats at my fingertip, "can I help you", I ask confidently.

"Have you any sausages and chips?" he asked, with a smile.



DATELINES

Income tax service

In accordance with requests made at a recent Policy Group meeting, representations have been made to the Revenue Commissioners regarding their assistance in setting up an advisory service to deal with staff income tax problems.

Pension clinics to be resumed

The pension clinics introduced during the year by Pension's Officer, Adrian Smith, will resume in the near future. The clinics were held in the Policy Group office and on board ship. They were well attended and found by those who attended them to be very informative. Staff members who seek answers to any matter relating to pensions should watch the notice boards and the *Bulletin* for the announcement of the date when the clinics will resume.

Proposal in respect of religious service

Following a discussion at a meeting of the Policy Group on a proposal that an annual religious service be held for all B+1 people past and present, a sub-committee has been set up by the Policy Group Chairman to decide on the form of the service, date and location.

The sub-committee will consist of Ned Corr, Mick Gahan, Duncan Lorraine, Peter Fox and representatives from some other areas yet to be nominated.

P.A.Y.E. information

This month's *Liberty*, the journal of the I.T.G.W.U., contains a full page "plain guide to P.A.Y.E." This subject came up at a recent meeting of the Policy Group. Members of the Group, indeed any member of the staff with a P.A.Y.E. problem, should read page eleven of *Liberty*. They will find the article on P.A.Y.E. both interesting and informative.

Markievicz Memorial Lectures

The Irish Association for Industrial Relations recently issued the texts of and fifth Countess Markievicz Lectures. The fourth lecture entitled "Labour Law—Sword or Shield" by Dr. Paul O'Higgins.

The Association's objective is the study of Industrial Relations by discussion and research. In their winter programme is the sixth Markievicz Lecture. The lecture will be delivered on 16th November in the Hibernian Hotel by Dr. Richard Hyatt, Senior Lecturer in Industrial Relations at the University of Warwick. The title of the lecture is "Unemployment—Crisis in Industrial Relations".

Talk and film on alcoholism

Mr. Brendan Roche, Dip.A.C.R.P.N. gave a talk on "Alcoholism in the 1970s" followed by a short film on this subject and a group discussion. This took place on Wednesday the 28th of October at 7.30 p.m. in Liberty Hall.

Election of New Safety Committee

The following members have been elected members of the new Committee:

N. Weldon (Road Transport)

S. Whyte (Clerical)

W. Curry (Stores, Ferryport)

D. Warren (Groupage Stores)

P. Curtin (Dock Section)

R. Barry (Maintenance)

F. Coffey (Maintenance)

The new Safety Committee is to hold its first meeting in the next few weeks to elect a Chairman and