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No. 9, March 1989.

budget '89

The Budget forecast an increase of 13,000 jobs in the economy in the coming year. But it is not clear how realistic this jobs forecast is. The only specific item of job creation included in the budget is the 3,000 jobs expected to result from increased capital spending (on roads, sanitation etc) in 1989 mostly financed by increases from the EEC's Regional Development Fund. Most of these jobs will be in the construction industry.

The rest of the job growth forecast is expected to flow from general improvements in the economy, including the spin off effects of budget tax reliefs and welfare increases. By putting more money in peoples pockets you encourage them to spend more. But the extent of job creation as a result depends on many factors e.g. how much of the extra money is spent on imported goods. Meanwhile the budget also announced that there would be a reduction of a further 3,000 jobs in the public sector in 1989.

The latest Labour Force Survey which is the only measure of overall employment in the economy showed an increase of 6,000 jobs between April '87 and April '88. The fact that the LFS figures indicate the first increase in employment of any significance this decade is being presented by the Government as confirmation that they are on the right track in tackling unemployment. The LFS also showed that most of the recent drop in unemployment was due to emigration. This alone should be enough to confirm that much more concerted action on job creation is necessary than is evident in the Budget.

In what ways will the Budget affect the unemployed? All social welfare payments are being increased by 3% from July. In addition the Budget provides for an extra 9% for the single long-term unemployed i.e. a total increase of 12% or £5. However adult dependant allowances were only increased by 3% so the percentage increase for married couples on long term Unemployment Assistance is less. The Budget also announced the introduction of a minimum child dependent allowance of £10.

Though these changes are welcome it must be pointed out that they still fall far short of the minimally adequate income calculated by the Commission on Social Welfare, and in fact they are well short of the £50 basic payment called for by the INOU and other groups, as a first step towards implementing the Commissions recommendation.

The Budget included a number of other measures directly relevant to the unemployed. It announced that the definition of what constitutes an 'urban' or 'rural' area for the purposes of the unemployment assistance scheme would be reviewed before July. In fact the Minister has since announced that the separate rural rate will be done away with and all unemployed people will receive the higher urban rate. Also an anomaly in the National Fuel Scheme is to be removed. In future people who are otherwise entitled to fuel allowances, e.g. somebody on long-term unemployment assistance, will not be disqualified on the basis that somebody else who is also a welfare recipient, lives in the same household.

The only mention of training or tem-

porary employment schemes in the Budget concerned payments to participants. SES participants will get an increase of £5 if single and £7 if married, while participants on other schemes will get an increase in line with Social Welfare increases. However no additional money will be made available to FAS to pay for these increases. The funds necessary must come from within the FAS budget which means something else must be cut back to pay for them.

Already in the estimates the allocation to Fas for training was down 7%. Of the two temporary employment schemes, the SES allocation was down 1% while Teamwork got the same as last year. None of these figures take inflation into account so the real decline is greater. These cuts will have the overall effect of reducing training and temporary employment opportunities for unemployed people. ■

spending eec funds

Who decides how money from the European Community's structural funds gets spent in this country ? We could be talking about as much as £4,000 million over the next four to five years coming into the country from the European Regional Fund, the European Social Fund and the Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund.

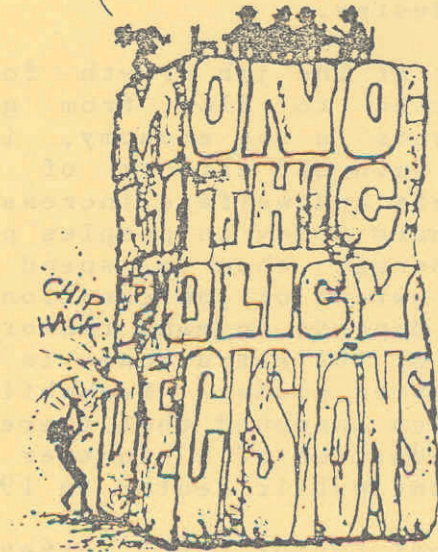
The question has become extraordinarily important because increased monies from these funds is the big carrot being held up to Ireland to get us into the Single European Market (post-1992). The argument runs that, thanks to help from these funds, Irish business and Irish workers will have acquired the skills and facilities by 1992 to be able to compete on an equal basis with companies in any other area of the European Community.

A parallel can be made with the big boost in farm incomes that was promised to get us into the EEC in the first place. The big boost came but the extra income was spent in a way that had very limited impact on the rest of the economy and did nothing to put agriculture on a sound development path. Will the same thing happen over the next few years? Will increased money from Europe get spent in a short-sighted way by one major interest group (in this case, not farmers but the construction industry) ?

The Budget speech let us know how the Government views the process. It seems that, last October, when Jacques Delors, the current president

of the European Commission, visited the Taoiseach (then in the Mater Private Clinic), broad agreement was reached on this approach : the key headings to guide spending are to be "transport", "environment" and "employment creation" ; what is needed under each heading is to be examined for each of seven regions in the country .

RELAX - IT'S ONLY A COMMUNITY WORKER



For each region, therefore, what is called its NATIONAL PROGRAMME OF COMMUNITY INTEREST will be drawn up ; the seven programmes will be reviewed by the Department of Finance before being forwarded by the Government to Brussels as the country's DEVELOPMENT PLAN for the next five years - this is to happen before 31st March ; the European Commission then vet the Irish Plan and prepare what they will call the COMMUNITY SUPPORT FRAMEWORK which becomes a type of statement of intention by the European Community as to what type of thing they will fund and where in Ireland over the next five years.

There is need for a lot more public and local attention to be given to this whole process. In his Budget speech, the Minister spoke of "an extensive local consultative process on the preparation of the (seven) sub-national programmes" "to ensure local interests will have an input." Presumably these words were for the European Commission's benefit. Even TDs and local authority councillors have been ignorant of what was going on, let alone Centres for the Unemployed or community groups. In each of the seven regions into which the country has been divided, however, there is a Working Group - largely made up of civil servants - beavering away on a programme for that region while, assisting it, there is an Advisory Group which is largely made up of established interest groups.

It is important that your organisation should know just what new by-pass, road, tourist development, or whatever, are being put forward as the priority needs for businesses and workers in your region. Find out just who is on the Working Group and the Advisory Group in your region and demand to know what the projects they are considering. For their names, contact either the Department of Finance or the Combat Poverty Agency. Also the Community Workers Co-operative have co-ordinated a campaign demanding that the elimination of poverty be a priority in the use of the Funds and seeking representation of community groups and trade unions in the formulation of the NPCI. They can be contacted at:
39 Upper Gardiner St., Dublin 1.
Tel. (01)732802. ■

workforce changes

Did you know that the workforce in western Europe is changing in gender balance? It is common knowledge that the number of women entering the workforce has grown markedly over the last twenty years or so, but it is less widely known that in some European countries the number of men in the workforce is actually declining.

First a point of clarification: the workforce includes all those who are employed and all those who are 'unemployed' i.e. 'available for work'. It does not include all adults of working age. Full-time students, full time housewives, people who have taken early retirement etc. are not included. At times of low unemployment or labour shortage more people are likely to enter the workforce, whereas at times of high unemployment people drop out of the workforce.

Traditionally housewives have not been counted in as part of the workforce since they were neither in paid employment nor were they actively seeking employment outside the home. Where once their absence from the labour market was taken for granted, today fewer married women are likely to confine themselves to homemaking and childrearing. At the same time, though more slowly, it is becoming more common for men to take on the work of homemaking and childrearing. Older sex roles are breaking down.

This breakdown is to be welcomed. Traditional views that 'a woman's place is in the home' and 'a man's place is out at a job' had very inhibiting, oppressive effects in that they limited each sex in terms of life-experience. Women were discouraged from thinking of their future in terms of a career, job choices, financial independence, and indeed from envisaging any kind of



future for themselves other than that of housewife and mother. Men could not think of establishing their identity in any way other than through 'having a job', and so were rendered extra vulnerable to a loss of self-identity and self-confidence in the event of any kind of prolonged unemployment.

It is no harm to underline this point, since in some quarters women are scapegoated for causing high unemployment, allegedly taking up jobs that men would otherwise hold. Women, married or single, have as much a right to jobs as have men. Furthermore a balanced human life needs both kinds of activity - a job to go out to and the equally valuable work of homemaking, childrearing and community activity to come back to. The breakdown of the traditional sexual division of labour may help this development.

Returning to what is happening in western European labour markets, however, not all is rosy in the garden, since there is some reason to think that men are being pushed or discouraged out of the workforce, and are giving up hope of ever being employed. In the UK in 1987 male unemployment fell by 244,000, but male employment only rose by 162,000; and 1988 witnessed a drop in unemployment of 369,800, but a rise in employment of only 124,000. This means that in 1987 some 82,000 men and in 1988 some 245,800 men 'disappeared' from the labour market.

In the case of women the opposite trend was observed. In the UK in 1987, 130,000 more women gained jobs than is accounted for by the fall in female unemployment; and in 1988 female unemployment dropped by 175,000 but female employment rose by 272,000. It seems that the composition of the workforce in the UK is changing with more women entering the job market and more men leaving it. It is difficult to make a direct comparison with the Republic. We can note nevertheless the fact that between 1979 and 1986 the number of men in employment declined by 91,000 while the number of women increased by 15,000. So perhaps similar trends are at work in the Irish workforce.

A word of caution - the trend towards employing more women and fewer men has often been marked by a transition from unionised to non-unionised labour, along with a reduction in wage levels, and the expansion of part-time employment. The need to fight for fair wages and the right to unionise, and for the extension of employment protection to part-time workers, are common issues around which womens groups and trade unions could unite.

youthreach

A new Government Scheme for unemployed early school leavers has been introduced. This programme, called 'Youthreach' is, in effect, a new version of the 'Social Guarantee' introduced in 1985. The target group of 'Youthreach' is early school leavers. Of the 66,500 who left school in 1986, 15,500 had an Inter or Group cert and 4,400 had no qualification. Of this group, one year later - 9,000 were still unemployed, 3,400 were on training schemes and 4,800 had emigrated.

As with the Social Guarantee, names of early school leavers with no qualifications will be passed on from schools to Fas. Fas will track these young people and after a period, those who remain unemployed may be offered up to two years education and training - one year on a 'foundation programme' run by Community Training Workshops and VEC's, followed by one year on other work experience or training programmes. People on the programme will be paid Fas training allowances.

Also those other early leavers with some qualification, who under the Social Guarantee could be offered 7 months skills foundation in Anco Workshops will now be entitled to a years programme under Teamwork or through a 'New Training Contract'.

'Youthreach' is expected to provide 3,000 places in its first year, possibly with some increase in later years. On the information available 'Youthreach' would seem to be a welcome initiative. The low number of places means that its impact may be useful but limited. Also, because of the low numbers it is not an adequate way of addressing the income needs of unemployed 16/ 17 year olds and the demand for some kind of social welfare provision to meet the needs of this group remains a priority. ■