

Labour Party Young Socialists IRISH CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE

WORKERS UNITY
-only way forward!

2p

bulletin no. 1

The Provisional Ceasefire must be welcomed by all Socialists activists in the Irish and British Labour Movements, who have struggled to put forward a socialist solution to the problems facing the Irish working class. The LPYS from the beginning of the Provisional Campaign have argued that a guerilla campaign in N. Ireland would lead only to defeat and demoralisation. Any organisation that turns away from the road of the mass struggle and the involvement of the mass of the workers in their own liberation, courts disaster and defeat. Particularly in N. Ireland where the working class was already divided on a sectarian basis, a guerilla campaign coming from one side of that religious divide could only further deepen that divide. This analysis has been completely borne out by events.

The Provos have correctly identified British Imperialism as the enemy. British Imperialism bears the main responsibility for the last six years of bloodshed. They sowed the seeds of religious division by their divide and rule tactics over the centuries. The figure of more than 1,000 killed is a grim testament to the blood and sweat Irish workers have paid for Imperialism's rule. But the Provos cannot escape a measure of responsibility for the present situation - their bombing campaign

has alienated Protestant workers driving them even further into the arms of reactionaries like Craig and Paisley, and has deepened the sectarian divide. British Imperialism is more than a military presence, it also means the control and subjugation of the Irish economy by the Big Banks and the Monopolies - the very same who exploit British workers. But what is the force capable of resisting the attacks of Imperialism and defending the interests of the working class?

Contd. Page 4.

The LPYS Irish Campaign demands

- * AN END TO THE TORY BI-PARTISAN APPROACH; FOR SOCIALIST POLICIES AND SUPPORT FOR THE IRISH ORGANISATIONS OF LABOUR
- * FOR A TRADE UNION DEFENCE FORCE TO DEFEND ALL AREAS, CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT, FROM SECTARIAN ATTACKS AND TO DEFEND WORKERS WHILE GOING TO AND WHILST AT WORK
- * WITHDRAW THE TROOPS
- * END INTERNMENT AND ALL REPRESSIVE LEGISLATION
- * RELEASE ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS IN IRELAND AND BRITAIN
- * TRADE UNION RIGHTS FOR THE ARMED FORCES
- * FOR A CONFERENCE OF WORKERS ORGANISATIONS FROM IRELAND AND BRITAIN TO FORGE UNITY IN ACTION AGAINST THE COMMON ENEMY OF CAPITALISM

UNEMPLOYMENT - NORTH AND SOUTH

The present world recession of Capitalism is also having its effect on the economy of Ireland, North and South. Two years ago the economy of Southern Ireland was known in the Capitalist Press as "The Miracle of the Western World". How different the story is now! Unemployment in the South now stands at the total of 104,000, with over 30,000 unemployed in Dublin alone. In the North the same story of Redundancies and short time working can be seen with over 7% of the insured work-force out of work. Just as in Britain the bosses have been trying to unload this crisis of the system onto the backs of the workers through holding down wages and through redundancies.. Inflation, running at a slightly higher figure than in Britain, is even more devastating in its effects, given the lower wages that are general in both parts of Ireland. But Irish workers are now beginning to fight back. In the past period in the North, bitter strikes, such as the strike by workers in the Milk Industry and a strike by lorry drivers show the determination of Irish workers that they will not be made to pay for the crisis in the capitalist system. Despite sectarian attempts to break the unity of the workers these strikes have remained firm and are an indication of the way events will move in the coming period as the crisis of capitalism deepens. In the South, the number of days lost through strikes in 1974 was treble the 1973 figures. Strikes have occurred in firms like Guinness and Clery's that have NEVER had a strike before in their long history of exploitation of Irish workers. If a class alternative of nationalisation of the banks and the big monopolies under worker's control were to be put forward by the Labour Leaders in Ireland and in Britain, the way would be open for a unity in action between the British and Irish Labour Movements against their common oppressor -- Big Business.

HOUSING IN N. IRELAND. "THE WORST HOUSING CRISIS IN EUROPE."

The LPYS has constantly laid the blame for the N. Ireland situation at the door of the British Ruling Class - who, in their drive for profit and by their divide and rule tactics have created some of the most appalling social conditions to be found anywhere in the British Isles. "As it stands today or, perhaps, totters is a better word? Belfast is a 20th Century urban disaster.", so concludes a recent report in the Times. The statistics in the report give some indication of the appalling conditions under which Irish workers live. 49% of the houses in the central area of Belfast were unfit for human habitation. This compares with roughly 7% in England and Wales. In the same area 57% had no bathrooms, 60.2% had no inside lavatory, 66.3% an inadequate hot and cold water supply. These figures, taken with the high level of unemployment, are a grim illustration of the failure of capitalism to solve even the most basic questions of decent housing and a job. It is in conditions like these that the roots of sectarianism are to be found. But in a period of growing unemployment in Britain and a housing crisis (British Capitalism now builds less houses than at any time since the 2nd World War), there can be no way forward for Irish workers on a capitalist basis. Only nationalisation of the big building companies and the banks and Insurance Companies under workers control can ensure that Irish workers will have decent homes..

LPYS IRISH CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE

The Irish Campaign Committee was set up by the LPYS NC After the 1974 Conference. Its purpose was to raise the understanding of the question of Ireland in the LPYS and in the Labour Movement generally. Since its foundation a document "Ireland and the British Labour Movement" has been published and distributed throughout the Labour Movement. A National Conference of the Labour Movement was planned to discuss Ireland last September. Arrangements for this Conference had reached an advanced stage when it was banned by the NEC of the Labour Party. The cancellation of the September Conference raises seriously the principle of the freedom of the contd. P.4

PREVENTION OF TERRORISM ACT -
A THREAT TO THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

Jenkins has threatened renewal of his Emergency Legislation for a further six months at the end of May, when it was due to lapse. This draconian legislation allows arrest without charge or trial; deportation and detention on hearsay evidence; extended powers of search for the police; power to ban any organisation on a ruling from the Home Secretary. Such legislation gives the British Labour Movement some idea of the conditions under which their class brothers in Ireland have been living for the past five years.

At the moment it is mainly Irish workers who are bearing the brunt of this repressive legislation. Before its introduction large numbers of innocent Irish workers had already had their homes ransacked by the Special Branch. Others have been put on remand without any evidence against them.

But the conviction of the Shrewsbury building workers of "Conspiracy to cause violence" and the £100,000 fine on the AUEW show that the law in Capitalist Society is not impartial, but is a weapon in the hands of the employing classes. Who can say that the new laws will not also be used against building workers or engineers.

When such legislation is passed by a Labour Government: the Ruling Class is pleased. It gets the workers used to the idea of repression. When the Ruling Class can no longer have its way through "normal democratic" channels it will have no hesitation about resorting to the imprisonment and harassment of trade unionists and socialists within the working class organisations.

Whitelaw on his return from Northern Ireland during the 1972 Miners Strike compared the striking miners to the "terrorists" of the IRA. This is an indication that futures class battles that lie ahead, workers struggling to defend their living standards will become "terrorists" in

the eyes of the bosses.

It was a disaster that such laws should be passed through Parliament by a Labour Government. After all, it has always been the Labour Movement that has been at the receiving end of all repressive legislation. Jenkins Bill was pushed through Parliament with hardly any opposition. The "Left" group of MP's were silent on this intolerable attack on the democratic rights of the Labour Movement. Only a few like Joan Maynard voted against.

No Socialist can condone the work of the Birmingham bombers. From its inception the LPYS has campaigned ceaselessly against the Provisional campaign, not only in Britain, but in Ireland. The campaign has played right into the hands of the Ruling class, leading to a deepening the sectarian divisions between the workers in the North, to increased repression in Ireland as a whole and divided English and Irish workers in Britain.

But legislation such as Jenkins will in no way prevent the repetition of such events as the Birmingham bombs. The LPYS has constantly explained that the causes of those events lie in the terrible condition of unemployment and bad housing created by centuries of Imperialist exploitation - the methods of individual terrorists must be fought politically and by the action through the organisations of the Labour Movement - Resolutions opposing the renewal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act and the repeal of all repressive legislation must be passed through every YS branch, Labour Party, Trade Union, and Shop Stewards Committee. The demand must be raised throughout the movement for the withdrawal of troops, for the setting up of a Trade Union Defence Force to combat sectarianism; for a Socialist Ireland and a Socialist Britain which will abolish the oppression and conditions of poverty which give rise to sectarianism.

FINBAR GEANEY
- Dublin Labour Party

The only force capable of doing this in modern Ireland is the Irish working class - which today constitutes 64% of the population. This is an enormous change from the time of Partition when only 16% of the Irish population were industrial workers. This makes a guerilla campaign -- the traditional form of present struggle - even more inappropriate.

That the Irish working class are the only force capable of defeating Imperialism and uniting the country as a consequence of the Socialist transformation of society is central to LPYS policy on Ireland. The road ahead can only be through the organised Labour Movement in the coming period of economic crisis.

Neither Direct Rule nor the new Assembly will solve the problems facing the N.Ireland workers. The new Assembly will be as powerless as the old, when confronted by the growing unemployment and the scandalous housing.

None of the sectarian parties can offer a working class alternative to the horrors of the present situation that will appeal to both sections of workers in the North. A mass Party of Labour that could appeal to both sections of workers is an urgent necessity in the present situation.

Despite the Truce, peace has not returned to N.Ireland. Sectarian killings continue. Every day brings news of another atrocity - the shooting of a group of workers in Coleraine; the murder of a Catholic youth in south Belfast. Here again the Trade Union and Labour Movement must accept its responsibility to defend workers against sectarian attack. In the past no sectarian-based organisation has proved able to defend working class areas.

The British Army, the armed force of the capitalist state will not defend the working class because they are there to serve the interests of their employers, to impose a solution in the interests of Capitalism.

The troops must be withdrawn, but it is not sufficient to simply raise the question of the withdrawal of troops by itself and think that this is our only responsibility to the Irish working class. The Irish working class are our brothers and sisters and we, in the British Labour Movement, must use all our power and influence to prevent the catastrophe of a sectarian civil war that would lead to a re-partitioned Ulster: a new even more sectarian Orange mini-state - an immense "Carnival of Reaction" that would set the Irish Working class movement back for decades..

A Trades Union Defence Force must be formed: the Trade Unions as the only movement uniting Protestant and Catholic workers must provide the basis for a force capable of protecting all workers, of eliminating sectarianism and of preventing the catastrophe of a sectarian civil war. It is only on this basis that the immediate crisis can be solved. Allied to these demands are the demands for the ending of Internment and all repressive legislation in Ireland and in Britain.

The struggle of workers in N.Ireland is inseparably linked to the struggle of workers in Britain. If the whole of the Labour Movement were to take up these issues and force the Labour Gov. to abandon its Tory Bi-partisan policies, the way forward to a real unity in action would be clear.

FOR A SOCIALIST UNITED IRELAND LINKED TO A SOCIALIST BRITAIN !

contd. from page 2 .

LPYS to campaign within the Labour Movement on its own ideas. More recently greater limitations on the freedom of the LPYS have taken place. A recent Youth-Sub Committee of the NEC refused to allow a National Circular about the campaign to go out from Transport House. Despite these difficulties, the campaign has gone on. The Campaign C'tee has sent speakers to many YS branches, Day Schools, Labour Party G.M.Cs and Trade Union branch meetings.

Every LP YS branch must be conscious of its responsibility to carry the socialist alternative to Bi-partisanship and the continuation of repression in Ireland by a Labour Government to every corner of the Labour Movement.

The most urgent needs of the campaign at the present time are the setting up of regional support groups so that the Campaign can be tightened up on a national basis and, of course, finance. With the Provo ceasefire there is a danger that interest in the Irish situation will wane, we must ensure that this does not happen.

All donations etc. to SEC- FLAT 4, 133 VICTORIA WAY, CHARLTON-LONDON S.E.7

Title: Workers Unity – Only Way Forward!

Organisation: Labour Party Young Socialists

Date: 1974

Downloaded from the Irish Left Archive.

Visit www.leftarchive.ie

The Irish Left Archive is provided as a non-commercial historical resource, open to all, and has reproduced this document as an accessible digital reference. Copyright remains with its original authors. If used on other sites, we would appreciate a link back and reference to the Irish Left Archive, in addition to the original creators. For re-publication, commercial, or other uses, please contact the original owners. If documents provided to the Irish Left Archive have been created for or added to other online archives, please inform us so sources can be credited.