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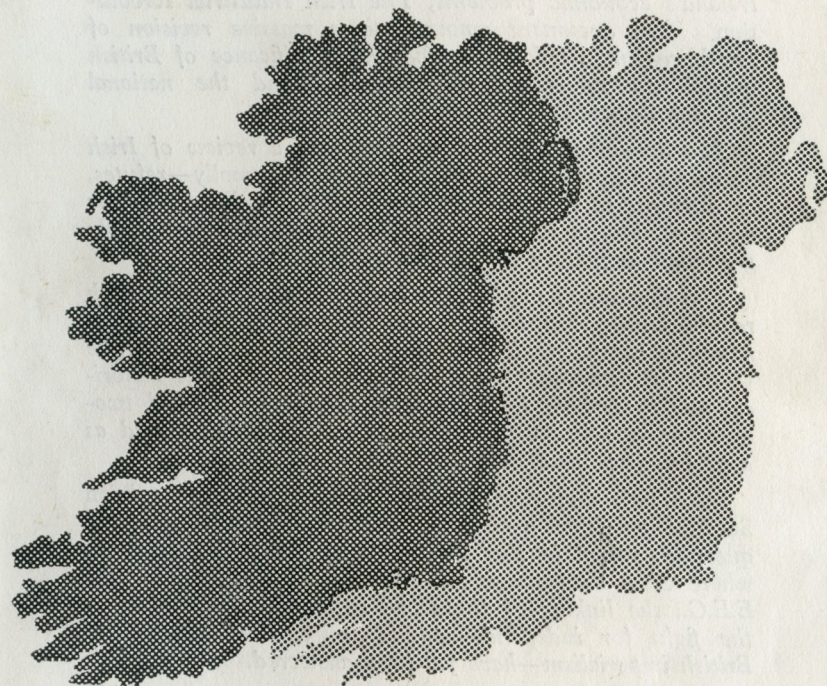
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## FOREWORD

**A**T the beginning of 1977 Sinn Féin The Workers' Party issued a contribution to the debate on how to solve Ireland's economic problems, *The Irish Industrial Revolution*. This document amounts to a massive revision of republicanism, in that the rôle and significance of British imperialism in Ireland is minimised and the national question declared redundant.

The document contains two sections: a review of Irish economic history, which—in the name of Connolly—refutes, or attempts to refute, everything that Connolly stood for; and a section on economic planning, which is unfortunately grounded in fantasy rather than reality.

The document, marking as it does a radical break with republicanism, has been welcomed strongly in the two-nationist camp, particularly by the B. & I.C.O.; and the United Irishman in May published a defence of the historical section written by Cormac Ó Gráda, an avowed two-nationist, a lecturer in economics in U.C.D. described as a professional historian.

In March and April, the editorial board of the Irish Socialist published a review of the document. None of the questions raised in that review—questions which relate to where Sinn Féin stands on important issues such as the E.E.C., the linking of the social and national struggles in the fight for independence and unity, their attitude to British imperialism—have yet been answered.

It is certainly not sufficient to list their publications without defending the ideas in them, or to rely upon the proud history of the Republican Movement when that history—as in the case of the Land League and Land Annuity struggles—is now decried.

Nor is it sufficient to rely upon outsiders to defend the document. Sinn Féin has a duty to make it clear whether or not the document is their party policy, particularly as it

conflicts with their signed commitment to the Left Alternative economic programme.

In the light of the discussion generated by our review of the document, and the fact that some people have been unable to get copies, the editorial board of the Irish Socialist is reprinting the review, together with the published correspondence which we received on the matter.

Our review, limited by space originally, does not deal fully with all the questions that might be raised—such as the important question of sources of finance for Sinn Féin's industrialisation programme—but we feel that it deals with the major thrust of the document.

The review is reprinted in a spirit of fraternal criticism without which the political process can only stagnate. Through the pages of the Irish Socialist we will continue to advance a Marxist analysis of the Irish economy, subjecting all proposals for solutions to sharp scrutiny, and making our own contribution to the debate on how to break the dominance of Britain and other foreign powers over our country in order to provide employment and material security for our people, in order to lay the basis for building a new, a socialist, society in Ireland.

**THE IRISH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION.**  
Repsol, 1977. 151 pp. £1.30.

**Part One :**

**THE ROAD TO UNDERDEVELOPMENT,  
1770-1976**

**A** KNOWLEDGE of history gives the working class a key to understanding the present so that it can decide on its strategy for liberation on the basis of an awareness of the real nature of the problems that confront it. But a misunderstanding of history can only confuse that awareness, and help to divert the working class from its road to freedom.

For this reason it is fashionable for the apologists of imperialism, like Dr. Conor Cruise O'Brien, to present a rewritten form of Irish history in order to emasculate the working class movement. For this reason, also, parties of the Left have a responsibility to lay bare the real movement of our history, so that we can learn the lessons of past errors and have a guide to future action.

It is unfortunate, then, that this contribution to the debate on economic strategy, from Sinn Féin's Department of Economic Affairs, should be so incorrectly formulated: it is a caricature of Irish history, reminiscent of the efforts of various Two Nations ideologists and imperialist apologists, and totally in contradiction to Republicanism.

The main theme of this revised version of Irish history is that all fundamental problems facing the Irish people—partition, emigration, unemployment, underdevelopment, monopoly capital exploitation—were historically and still are the sole responsibility of the native "Southern" bourgeoisie. This class *refused* to invest in manufacturing industry, preferring commerce and the professions.

This class, it is implied, achieved political power in the Southern part of the country as early as 1829 with Catholic Emancipation, and was the power which "presided over the famine".

Similarly, in the countryside, landlordism is dismissed. As early as 1845, it is argued (p. 24), that the "landlord was now of course, a Catholic strong farmer".

**LAND WAR**

Despite this amazing historical discovery, the land war of

the 1880s is picturesquely described as the ranchers' war, and the whole Republican involvement in the subsequent Land Annuities campaign of the 1930s dismissed as mere populism.

Throughout this whole historical section there is no mention of British imperialism or the effect of British domination over our country, except one reference in inverted commas (on p. 36), where it is stated that those who emigrated in the 'fifties knew that "the guilty men were not 'British imperialists'".

**CONNOLLY**

And in an attempt to justify this nonsense Connolly is misquoted. Far from ignoring the reality of British imperialism, Connolly defined it in *The Reconquest of Ireland* as "mastery of the lives and liberties of the people of Ireland by forces outside of and irresponsible and unresponsive to the people of Ireland—social and political slavery".

And Connolly gave his life fighting to end that mastery.

When he wrote *Labour in Irish History* Connolly was particularly answering those who ignored the social content of Ireland's fight for freedom. But he never argued that the national content should be similarly ignored. On the contrary, his major significance, like that of Fintan Lalor, lies in the fact that he welded the social and national struggles into a coherent picture of an anti-imperialist struggle.

In relation to the land struggles, then, Connolly is far removed from the anti-farmer fetishness displayed in this Sinn Féin document. Like Lenin, he recognised the need to differentiate between different elements of the farming population, and spoke warmly of the principles of co-operation on the land—principles which Lenin saw implemented in Soviet Russia, but which Sinn Féin are now deriding as populist diversions.

Connolly did not see the Land War as a ranchers' triumph. Indeed, since the Land War was primarily reported from counties like Mayo and Galway, where rancherism even today is not the dominant agricultural form, it would have been ridiculous for him to do so. In contrast to the Sinn Féin view, as expressed in this document, he praised and welcomed it:—

"When the revolutionary nationalists threw in their lot with the Irish Land League . . . they were . . . placing

themselves in accord with the principles which underlie and inspire the modern movement of labour."

But it is in his assessment of the significance of the attempts to develop a native industrial bourgeoisie that the author of the Sinn Féin document makes his crudest errors.

The whole analysis is riddled with subjectivism. The word *refused* is used again and again, as if the failure to invest was not related to the economic context and was purely a matter of will.

This voluntarist view is itself riddled with contradictions.

On the one hand the Irish bourgeoisie are said to have refused to seek capital for the industrial development "as a conscious act of class preservation", while the consequences of this deliberate act spelled the death of this class at the hands of monopoly capital.

Monopoly capital is thus presented as an objectively progressive force, since it has the *will* to create jobs which the Irish bourgeoisie didn't.

#### MISQUOTED

Once again, Connolly is selectively misquoted to try and justify this erroneous view. In *Labour in Irish History*, Connolly asked how the Act of Union prevented Irish capitalists from "*continuing* to produce goods for the Irish market". (Our emphasis.)

Connolly certainly did not see the Act of Union as irrelevant. He points out, in *Labour in Irish History*, that prior to 1782 "the English parliament had prohibited Irish trade with Europe and America except through an English port, *thus crippling the development of Irish capitalism*". (Our emphasis.)

The consequences of this weakness were the Act of Union which consolidated the power that caused the problem, namely British interference in the development of the Irish economy.

He goes on to say that "an Ireland controlled by popular suffrage would undoubtedly have sought to save Irish industry while it was yet time by a stringent system of protection". I wonder why the author of the Sinn Féin document ignores that quotation.

Connolly rightly points to the timidity and temerity of the would-be Irish capitalists as the reason for their failure to carry their wishes into action, an analysis which leads to his ultimate conclusion that the working class must

assume leadership of the national struggle for freedom, as "the only incorruptible inheritors of the fight for Irish freedom".

But this timidity—a far cry from Sinn Féin's description of the Irish bourgeoisie as the most avaricious and lazy ruling class ever seen in European polity—was not caused by subjective imperfections and moral weakness, but by the economic and political context in which they existed.

#### COLONIALISM

British colonialism, as Connolly pointed out, had directly interfered with and hindered the development of capitalism in Ireland. It had imposed British feudalism here instead. The commercial class which arose as the middlemen for the carrying of British goods in the Irish market were thus an appendage of British connection.

The effort to break that link by developing manufacturing industry was therefore fraught with the danger of retaliation, which was only lessened in times of general world prosperity, as during the period of Grattan's parliament or in the period following the land settlement and leading up to the War of Independence.

While Sinn Féin's new view of Irish history has nothing in common with Connolly's revolutionary attack on British Imperialism and its native appendages, it does, however bear resemblance to the discredited Unionist apologetics of William Walker, the Two Nationists and the followers of Dr. O'Brien.

And the end result is that every fundamental of the Republican position is challenged. Following their misreading of Connolly, Sinn Féin now ask how the EEC is an obstacle of progress, despite the important contribution to the fight against the EEC made by Sinn Féin during the referendum campaign.

The Irish people have a right to know whether or not Sinn Féin favour EEC membership, whether or not they still favour national reunification, whether or not we have meaningful independence in the South.

For the revolutionary thrust of Irish history, the essence of Republicanism, is the struggle to break the link with Britain. That is where Connolly stood, where Republicanism has always stood, and where, we hope, Sinn Féin still stands despite the erroneous views of this document.



## Part Two :

### PLANNING THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

**T**HE complexity of modern systems of production has emphasised the need for centralised direction of the economy if resources are not to be wasted through mis-application, or opportunities lost through lack of preparedness.

Socialism has of course pioneered this development, but even within capitalist societies the growth of the system has required the State to expand into more and more areas of activity.

The logic of the possibilities of economic planning can of course be only fully realised in a truly democratic, a socialist society. But for countries like Ireland which have been kept underdeveloped by reason of the domination of British imperialism over our affairs, the State must undertake a crucial responsibility for industrial development if we are to develop at all.

The essence of planning is to match the human and natural resources available to society in such a way as to satisfy the maximum number of social and economic needs. But for planning to take place at all it is also essential that accurate figures be used (and be available) and that proper cost accounting references be used as a basis for deciding where and what to invest.

In this regard, this economic section of Sinn Féin's pamphlet unfortunately leaves a lot to be desired. The section continues the voluntarist thread which ran through the earlier interpretation of history—the idea that merely by saying that something is desirable that it is therefore possible.

There is no attempt to outline the existing state of our industrial development and the areas in which rapid expansion could be made. Instead jobs appear to be arbitrarily assigned to the different economic sectors at whim. If there is any economic basis for this it is not explained, either in terms of the Sinn Féin plan itself, or in relation to the economy at present.

On the contrary, scorn is poured on the idea of halting the decline of existing industrial areas and building up a home market base, and we are advised to adopt a modification of existing IDA policy: an enlarged rôle for the State

in industry, but an affirmation of existing contracts with monopoly capitalism.

### WEAKENED

The analysis is also weakened by a lack of source references. Figures are given, and we are left to wonder where they came from. This is particularly important because some of the figures are contradictory, presumably because they came from different sources.

Thus, for example, the existing total labour force in 1976 is given as 1,187,200 with 180,900 unemployed (chapter 7, pages 63 and 64).

But in chapter 8 we are told that the potential increase in the labour force total at work for the period 1977-1986 will be from 1,029,000 to 1,341,400, a difference in the 1976/77 figure of 158,200.

And later in chapter 8, on page 71, we are told that the workforce total remained constant at 1,055,000 between 1958 and 1975.

These three different figures probably relate to different estimates, but this is not made clear. Further confusion is caused by the fact that chapter 7 states that a total of 436,100 jobs must be created by 1986, while chapter 8 reduces this figure to 412,000.

The figures are not that important in themselves, but they confirm the impression that they were chosen at random, and incorrect totals in different sectors (e.g., the chemical sector) give an air of unreality to the whole set of proposals.

This is unfortunate because it could be used to deride the question of planning at all, and also to obscure the importance of the figures which Sinn Féin give as an indication of the massive size of the problem confronting us.

It is not possible to analyse each individual section, but the same arbitrariness runs through them all, and so a consideration of three important areas will suffice.

### FARMING

Throughout the entire document Sinn Féin's research section claim that the farming class (*sic*) are the enemy of the working class. Their estimates of the future job requirement of our people are based on accelerating even further the decline in agricultural employment: Sinn Féin has accepted the implication of the Mansholt Plan, and openly advocates that a further 100,000 farmers be driven out of

agriculture—and this in an economy suffering from massive industrial unemployment.

This is dangerous nonsense. The farming class is in reality a number of farming classes, and it is in the interests of the working class to detach the working farmers, i.e., the smaller holders, away from any sense of identification with the ranchers. Organisations of small farmers, like the Farmers' Defence Association, have done a lot of important work in this regard.

There seems to be the view that bigger farms are necessarily better, but Crotty has convincingly shown that agricultural production has dropped as the average size of farms has gone up, because cattle production is land extensive while tillage—now in serious decline—is land intensive.

It is tillage, in particular, that offers the greatest scope for food processing industries, such as an expansion of Comhlucht Siuicre Eireann. By demanding an intensification of monopoly's plans for Irish agriculture, Sinn Féin are undermining the whole basis of their own industrial support for the expansion of the State's rôle.

Certainly agriculture needs drastic overhaul, but this is to be done through intensifying agricultural production: the experience of the Soviet Union has shown how the establishment of co-operative farms, voluntarily by the smaller holders, can raise production, ensure supply to processing industry and allow for a rational integration of agricultural planning into the overall economic plan.

### FISHING

Again in relation to the fishing industry, the document pours scorn on the idea of defending what we have in order to have a future base from which to expand. On page 93, the following incredible remark is made:

*"Our party (i.e., Sinn Féin) is not going to join in with gombeen fishermen in the waving of the Green Flag over Irish waters. We do not accept that those who are not equipped to fish our seas have a right to ownership of them."*

We must ask if this is really Sinn Féin's position, because it flies in the face of all that the Republican movement has ever stood for. Indeed it is what imperialism has always said to underdeveloped countries, and the modern oil giants could similarly argue that we are not equipped to develop our oil industry and must therefore leave it to them.

The point is not that we are ill-equipped to develop this important natural resource—that is a long-standing complaint of the Left—but that the State must develop a progressive fishing policy that will so equip us, and the starting point of such a policy must be the defence of our sovereignty over our fishing seas.

In forestry, in contrast, it is stated that at present we have a planting rate of 25,000 acres a year, employing 4,000. It is proposed to increase this rate to 125,000 and thereby increase employment to 19,000, as if the planting of four times the acreage requires four times the manpower. Again no argument is given as to why this is so. There may be good reasons for it, but none are presented.

And a similar lack of reality pervades many other sections of the document.

Politically, this economic section continues the crypto-two nations line of the historical section. The entire discussion is made in the context of the 26-county state, and the appendix from the Belfast research section goes so far as to say that "the progressive demand is for a recognition of the reality of the Northern economy".

Does recognition mean acceptance? If so, the reality of the Northern economy is that the most developed industrial base of our country is cut away from its natural area of expansion and subordinated to the ups and downs of imperialist economics.

### REACTIONARY

This Northern appendix is indeed positively reactionary. It openly calls for support of the multinationals, and repeats the old tired Trotskyist assertion, advanced by Michael Farrell in the middle 'sixties, that "the economic question and not the 'national' question offers the most durable foundation on which to unite the Irish working class and so lay down the ultimate foundation, by consensus, of an Irish Workers' Republic".

Presumably the inverted commas are put around the word *national* to indicate that it doesn't really exist. And why not? Because imperialism is no longer an enemy, only native capitalism.

The appendix praises the idea (p. 151) that foreign industry means explicit imperialist control, and demands that "profitability has to be assured if new industry is to



expand" as part of the struggle against Ulster capitalism!

This by-passing of real political problems is matched by the contempt shown to the issue of national economic sovereignty in the South, as indicated by the fishing section, and by the call to maintain existing commitments to multi-nationals. It is classical economism.

And this is the cause of the fetishness behind the calls for export orientation, capital intensity and competitiveness. The point is that in a country like Ireland which has been robbed over the centuries of its capital accumulation there is a shortage of capital for industrial expansion.

In that case it is necessary that the major heavy industrial sectors upon which future industrial expansion depends get capital priority. And in order to balance our economic development, the rest of our capital must be made go a long way, which means a tendency to prefer labour-intensive industry.

And the whole imbalance is intensified by a complete disregard for where the massive amounts of capital needed for this plan are to come from.

### IMMEDIATE

In addition Sinn Féin present a short-term programme to meet the immediate crisis of unemployment. This section (chapter 20) is based on a work-force figure of 1,029,000 (see above) but this time the unemployed figure is given as 195,000 instead of the earlier figure of 180,900.

A similar confusion is evident in relation to the EEC. On page 126 it is stated that "we do not envisage withdrawal from the EEC as a prerequisite of our economic plan . . . we will force (*sic*) the EEC to assist in the aim of Full Employment". The section further states that Sinn Féin fully accepts a commitment to free trade as being consistent with the long-term plan for full employment, and indeed that their plan will be of benefit to EEC trade.

And this raises an important issue. Sinn Féin is a signatory and important contributor to the Left Alternative economic document, a document that is contradicted in almost every essential by this latest publication.

The question must be asked: By which signature does Sinn Féin stand? Do the views of the research section, anti-republican as they are, reflect the actual position of Sinn Féin? When we examine the important rôle the

Republican movement has played since the 'sixties in the fight against imperialism it is hard to believe that it is so, but only Sinn Féin can provide the answer.

In summary, it can be said that the document presents a two nationalist, economist version of Irish history, typically social-democratic in its denial of the importance of the national question, and so at variance with all that Connolly, in whose name much was written, stood for.

Social-democratic in historical perspective, it is ultra-leftist and economist in economic perspective, as if all that is required to solve economic problems is the will to do so.

The consequences of that kind of voluntarism can be seen in China where Maoist dogma has reduced the Chinese economy to a shambles.

It is to be hoped that Sinn Féin will reject this distortion of and diversion from Republicanism and re-assert, in the words of Tomas MacGiolla at Carrickmore in July 1972, its traditional anti-imperialist position:

*"Preference will be given to those who have a stake in the country rather than fly-by-night international junketeers.*

*. . . We would break the bonds that tie us to Britain as a controlling market and single, dominant partner, and we will continue to fight, North and South, the effects of the decision to join the EEC, as these effects bear in upon the workers and small farmers of this country."*

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## A LETTER AGAINST

A chara,—Your reviewer of “The Irish Industrial Revolution” makes what Lenin called the most dangerous possible mistake—to confuse reality with one’s own wishes. The reviewer is so anxious to discover betrayals of Republicanism that they are found on almost every page, and this self-appointed guardian of the Republican tradition concludes with a ringing exhortation to Sinn Féin the Workers’ Party to make its top priority not the demand for Peace and Civil Rights and an end to sectarian divisions in the working-class, not State ownership and control of our huge natural resources wealth, not the expansion of State industries and the creation of jobs and consequently an industrial working-class, but—wait for it—“the struggle to end the link with Britain”! Wrap the green flag round me boys . . .

Some strange people call themselves Republicans (readers of the “Irish Socialist” will be only too well aware that some strange people call themselves Communists too) but the position of Sinn Féin the Workers’ Party is clear—the wealth of Ireland for the people of Ireland—all the people—in a united, secular (it couldn’t be united any other way), Socialist Republic. Such a Republic can only be created by the mass-movement of a politically conscious people, and “The Irish Revolution” makes an important contribution to building that movement because it shows clearly what your reviewer—blinkered by his preconceptions—has still failed to grasp: that what is most significant about the industrial revolution in this country is that *it didn’t happen*. De Valera would have read this review with glowing approval—I can think of no worse insult.

It’s bad enough to have people snivelling for the plight of the decent honest Irish gombeen class anywhere (what about the period 1945-60, a time of unprecedented world-boom, when, with every possible State encouragement and protection, the best they could give us was subsistence farming, starvation wages and massive emigration?). It adds insult to injury to have them doing it on the pages of the “Irish Socialist”.

There is a long, hard road ahead to the Irish Socialist Republic. We have in the Left Alternative a broad alliance of progressive groupings ready, willing and able to travel that road. We do not have mass support, but Sinn Féin

the Workers’ Party has the tradition, the base in the people and the programme (the past, the present and the future) to build that support. These are objective facts. Let’s stop sniping and squabbling for petty party or personal reasons and get on with the job of building a Workers’ Republic. There is plenty to do.

Slan,

Howth, Co. Dublin.

SEUMAS PHELAN.

## A LETTER FOR

Sir,—I was interested to read your critical review of “The Irish Industrial Revolution”, produced by Sinn Féin the Workers’ Party. Your review might have given more attention to the curious economics of this document as these may be of interest to your readers.

In setting forth a plan to secure full employment in the Twenty-Six Counties state by 1986, the Sinn Féin document first adapts Brendan Walsh’s projections to estimate how many jobs will be needed because of population growth. It then estimates the number of jobs needed for those leaving the land, a process which the Sinn Féin plan both welcomes and would seek to accelerate: “On the basis of our outline plan for ‘land as a natural resource’ a projected annual decrease of 10,000 per year in family farming would ensue.” (Page 63.)

Adding these estimates together it comes up with a figure of 412,000 jobs needed in the decade to 1986. It then multiplies this figure by sums derived from IDA estimates of the capital investment needed per job in export-orientated, capital intensive, multinational industry in Ireland, to produce a grand total of the investment needed for full employment, as follows:

“Our calculations thus indicate an additional investment requirement of £11,400 million. The maintenance of our existing level of investment will require a commitment of £9,500 million, to give a total investment of £20,935 million in the ten year period. The development of this investment will be the task of the Industrial Planning Authority representing the interests of the working class. . . . The organisation of the economy to achieve an investment level approximately 120% higher than the present level is therefore essential if we are to get more on the road towards full employment in the next five years.” (Page 68.)



The Sinn Féin document therefore calls for an average annual investment rate of over £2,000 million a year, at 1976 prices, over a decade, a sum equivalent to nearly half the Irish G.N.P.

So far as I know, no country in history has ever attained an investment rate of this level, not to mind sustaining it each year for a decade. And perhaps the most remarkable thing about this "plan" is that *nowhere in the document is there an indication of where funds of this extraordinary magnitude are to come from.*

The investment figures required are, as it were, plucked from the air. Detailed targets are given for desirable job creation in various industrial sectors. Abuse is thrown at those who question the self-evident superiority of basing development on export-orientated, capital-intensive investment and the requirements of the multinationals, whom the document tells us are "objectively progressive". (Page 148.)

An investment figure of £21,000 million in a decade is arrived at as the basis of this plan for full employment—*and then forgotten all about.* For this totally unrealistic figure is not once mentioned again and there is not a paragraph of discussion to indicate how it might be found. Without this being done, of course, the economic "plan" is meaningless.

There is later mention, on page 123, of a short-term programme which Sinn Féin advocates should be pressed on the Irish Government over the period 1977-78. This, we are told, would require the spending of £460 million of State investment, to create 55,000 new jobs in this period of time. There is some discussion of how such a sum would be raised—and it turns out to be by means of import controls and foreign borrowing!

This indeed is one of the surprises of a truly astonishing document, for throughout much of its length it is virulent in its abuse of "gombeenmen" and "archaic protectionists" who seek to foster internal demand and the Irish home market. Yet when it comes to detailing its own short-term proposals, they turn out to be an extreme of ultra-protectionism.

The document refers to £700 million of imported goods, many of which could be produced in Ireland and states: "Our strategy would be to restrict, by means of quotas,

combined with a system of internal price controls, a range of these imports so as to raise a substantial proportion of the £460 million required." (Page 125.)

More astonishing still, this highly protectionist scheme is to be carried out, seemingly, with the co-operation and assistance of the EEC!

"We do not envisage withdrawal from the EEC as a prerequisite of our economic plan. . . . We will force the EEC to assist in the aim of full employment within the territory of Ireland. With this commitment secured we will proceed to negotiate whatever necessary temporary derogations from EEC trade policy will be required to further the aims of the Short Term Programme. We will negotiate these agreements in recognition of the longer term commitment to free trade which we fully accept as being consistent with the long term plan for full employment. In sum, our imposition of temporary import controls will . . . be ultimately of benefit to EEC trade." (Page 126.)

Plans for full employment put before the Irish working class by those who purport to serve its interests should be realistic and capable of achievement. The utopianism and lack of realism of these proposals speak for themselves. —Yours, etc.,

ANTHONY COUGHLAN,

*Secretary,*

Irish Sovereignty Movement.

#### SINN FÉIN VIEW

Dear Friends, — "The Irish Industrial Revolution" has been reviewed at length in the "Irish Socialist". The reviewer is, of course, entitled to his opinion.

Perhaps it is as well to explain that "The Irish Industrial Revolution" is the natural development of a series of detailed studies of the Irish economy carried out by Sinn Féin the Workers' Party from the point of view of scientific socialism.

The studies are: *The Great Irish Oil and Gas Robbery; The Banks; The Public Sector and the Profitmakers; Tony O'Reilly—A Case Study in Irish Capitalism; Full Employment by 1986;* and now *The Irish Industrial Revolution.* Material from these studies has been extensively used by all sections of the Left in Ireland. Imitation is a sincere form of flattery—so it is often said—but the source of the infor-

mation these people use is seldom acknowledged!

The fact that we do not receive credit for our work does not worry us unduly, but it is annoying when our material is used and then presented in a "screwballed" manner.

It is possible for us to say without fear of contradiction that Sinn Féin the Workers' Party studies of the Irish economy are the most detailed and extensive carried out by any Irish organisation of the serious Left, or indeed any sort of "Left" for that matter, in Ireland.

Our book is the result of original research; original works often shock—I suppose one could say—minds which are set in a conservative mould even on that side of the political spectrum.

Much ado is made in the review of "The Irish Industrial Revolution" on the absence from the book of traditional expressions of loyalty to the Irish people and their struggles. Our credentials on this matter are impeccable, therefore we feel that there is no need to stress the point. We are a working-class party seriously engaged in working-class political struggle, and because of this, we must take special notice of the growing power of USA imperialism in the Irish economy.

But the Irish working class will judge our economic studies and our political work. We see signs of ever-increasing support for our party in the Irish working class . . . we are content to let that class write the vital review.

Signed,

EAMONN SMULLEN,

Director,

Department of Economic Affairs,  
Sinn Féin the Workers' Party.

30 Gardiner Place, Dublin 1.

#### REPLY

**EDITORIAL BOARD:** *In his reply, Mr. Smullen unfortunately avoids dealing with the arguments raised in our review or answering the questions posed. The major point we emphasised was that Connolly recognised British Imperialism—in its political as well as its economic presence—to be the main obstacle to social progress in Ireland.*

*While the USA dominates on a world scale, the directing centre which affects us is Britain, whose troops and administration can be physically seen in the North. With the vast*

*bulk of our financial transactions being cleared through London clearing houses it is ridiculous to ignore British imperialism as our major enemy.*

*Mr. Smullen has not challenged our assertion that the document implies support for the EEC. We must again ask where Sinn Féin stand on this issue: are they still opposed to EEC membership?*

*Mr. Smullen also seems to imply that other Left groups, possibly ourselves, are plagiarising their material. But the point of our review was to express our criticisms and disagreements with the views advanced. Perhaps Mr. Smullen could explain.*

*Certainly one of our complaints was that Sinn Féin's document did not give the specific source references by which figures could be checked—figures compiled by Government and other economic agencies for public use, and no way the personal property of Sinn Féin.*

*We take note of the points made in Mr. Coughlan's letter. They serve of course to emphasise our basic criticisms. However, pressure of space did not allow us to cover every point in detail, and in our original review we just stated that the source of the finance needed had not been explained.*

*In reply to Mr. Phelan we would only ask: Is it wrong to unite the maximum strength against British imperialism, which, despite its junior rôle on the world stage, is still the dominant political and economic presence affecting Ireland, and preventing the full realisation of the capabilities of our country?*

*The thrust of Sinn Féin's case is that foreign investment is laying the basis for serious industrialisation. We disagree, and argue that their type of industrialisation is peripheral and limited. That is why the State must intervene decisively in the control, as well as the direction, of finance and investment, and necessarily in manufacturing industry as well.*



## SINN FÉIN REPLY AGAIN

A chara,—Your review of Part 2 of "The Irish Industrial Revolution" and the letter from Anthony Coughlan in the May issue of the "Irish Socialist" contain serious inaccuracies and misreadings, if not misrepresentations which we are now drawing to your attention.

1. You state that "accurate figures need to be used for economic planning". In this regard you state that the IIR "leaves a lot to be desired". Even bourgeois commentators such as A. M. Duffy in *The Sunday Press* have acknowledged that the IIR plan is the most comprehensive published by any political party. Indeed, David Neligan who as former Chairman of the Resources Protection Campaign deals constantly in facts and figures complained in *Hibernia* that the IIR seemed "obsessed" with statistics. The Irish Left in general has been very short on statistics. We are glad to note that we seem to have aroused an insatiable appetite.

2. In paragraph 6 of your review, you state that "There is no attempt to outline the existing state of our industrial development and the areas in which rapid expansion is to be made". In point of fact the whole first part of the book entitled "The Road to Underdevelopment" is a detailed attempt to outline the existing "state of industrial development". Dr. Cormac O'Grada, writing in the May issue of *The United Irishman*, found it a largely successful attempt. However, the disagreement here probably lies more in the realm of politics than practice. Dr. O'Grada largely agreed with the analysis. You categorically disagree. What cannot be questioned is that there are substantial matters to disagree about. In short the work was done. You pretend it was not.

Furthermore the second part of the book contains many instances of the existing underdeveloped nature of the neo-colonial Irish plastics industry. We could of course have reprinted in their entirety specific case histories such as those contained in our pamphlet "The Banks" and "Tony O'Reilly's Last Game". This would have been tedious for our party members who have mastered these documents and also cheated the Irish working class of the further original material they were entitled to expect from our party.

To get right down to it, your charge that we didn't deal

with areas in which rapid expansion could be made is patently absurd in the light of our ten-year plan for full employment which deals with key sectors. Long-term development, that is past 1986 is treated sector by sector. For example electronics (p. 120), petrochemicals (p. 97), downstream wood products (p. 89). Then medium-term development such as steel, smelters, engineering, food processing together with short-term developments is set out with a wealth of statistical detail in chapter 20.

3. You then go on to say "Jobs appear to be arbitrarily assigned to the different economic sectors at whim. If there is an economic basis for this, it is not explained, either in terms of the Sinn Féin (*sic*) plan itself or in relation to the economy at present."

On the contrary, this is one job we have done extremely well. In a nutshell we maintain that the thrust of new job creation must be in commodity producing sectors. Our rationale (p. 67) is that "Job creation is not pronounced in areas such as commerce, finance and the security forces, since they do not add anything to the GNP". Further in chapter 8 (pp.72-3) we explain why we emphasise job creation in the production of investment goods such as the main branches of the engineering industry. Again and again we counterpose our alternative of a high productivity industrial workers' republic, producing machines and investment goods with the "labour intensive" panaceas to which you seem to subscribe.

4. On agriculture you falsely assert that we advocate that one hundred thousand farmers should be driven out of agriculture into an economy suffering from massive unemployment. You are well aware that this is precisely what is occurring and will continue to occur under capitalism. We alone are putting forward the socialist alternative which will increase the security and living standards of those engaged in food production, provide thousands of more jobs in food processing and at the same time give cheaper food to the urban worker.

5. On fisheries your reviewer attacks us for not supporting the Irish skippers' right to ownership of our seas. We would plead guilty to this charge, merely drawing your attention to the fact that your paper recently carried a story about the Irish skippers locking out trade unionists at

Howth. Our main concern is that they are inefficient and should be replaced by a B.I.M. State fishing fleet.

Finally your review goes on to perpetuate the theory long beloved of the Irish bourgeoisie that there is a shortage of capital in Ireland and concludes that there should be "a tendency to prefer labour-intensive industry". For Marx, capital was an exploitative social relationship, that is, funds in the hands of capitalists. There is no shortage of such funds in Ireland, as there is no shortage of capitalists. The problem for us is that the kind of capitalists we have prefers, like your reviewer "labour-intensive industry". This means low wages, shoddy goods or in other words the kind of capitalism summed up by Mr. Michael O'Leary's promises to pay £20 per week to create labour-intensive industry.

6. The letter from Mr. Tony Coughlan is a far more serious misrepresentation than even the above glosses you have put on the IIR. To keep it simple the IIR has the objective of building a high productivity socialist economy. The ten-year plan to lay its foundations we estimated would require £21 billion over the next ten years. Mr. Tony Coughlan misreads this ten-year investment as an *annual* investment rate of "nearly half the Irish GNP". He remarks sarcastically on his own fantasy that "No country in history has ever attained an investment rate of this level, not to mind sustaining it each year for a decade". Mr. Coughlan is quite right to work himself into a tantrum about his own misreading of our figures. However just in case misrepresentation and not misreading is what he is about, it is necessary to put the record straight.

Anyone who reads the section "The Plan For Expansion of Investment" (pp. 71-2) can see that Mr. Coughlan is trying to pull a fast one. The table shows investment growing at a gradual rate of 14% each year, to 34% of the GNP by 1986. Now, to save Mr. Coughlan any tilting at windmills, an investment rate of 14% has in fact been *exceeded* in particular years during the 1960s. And the 34% of GNP that we aim for by 1986 is in fact the level which currently holds in Japan. Mr. Coughlan's excitement at the enormity of our vision can be judged from the fact that we're saying that ten years from now, instead of spending £1 on job creation, we must spend another £1.20. Of course, our party is quite confident that such a growth rate is possible,

because a GNP growth of approximately 8.2% per annum (p. 72) is quite modest compared with the past rates of growth achieved in Socialist countries with a centrally planned economy. As for the financing of our crash programme which requires an investment of 29.9% of the GNP (an estimate which Mr. Coughlan admits is detailed) there seems to be a cry of "Caught you" in his charge that this is "ultra Protectionism".

Protectionism to Mr. Coughlan means protection of the existing capitalist and inefficient manufacturing class. We are against that policy. But in a socialist economy we would have no such inhibitions. The distinction seems pretty plain to us. We *do* propose a 24-month restriction of spending in imported consumer goods. This is not to increase the gombeens' profits however but to raise the cash for job creation. We set out clearly the measures to divert this cash to the State companies. There is a big difference between Protectionism which means cash for the sweat shops and protectionism to give cash to the State for the creation of new industrial jobs.

I hope this correspondence will clarify some of the issues raised in your review and thus help to continue the fundamental discussions which the IIR has provoked on the Irish Left. — Le meas,

SEÁN Ó CIONNAITH,  
P.R.O.,

Sinn Féin the Workers' Party.

30 Gardiner Place, Dublin 1.

## REPLY

*Sinn Féin, in their second reply, have still avoided facing up to the political points made in our review and in the subsequent correspondence.*

*The essence of our major point was that Sinn Féin in this document denied the relevance of British imperialism to the struggle for social progress in Ireland, making no analysis of its presence whatever, concentrated its fire solely on the native bourgeoisie (a position which accords with the orthodox economic arguments put forward by the likes of Whitaker since the beginning of the Lemass era) and ignored*

the reality of the State, as if it were a neutral, or even a progressive factor, outside the context of real capitalism as it exists in Ireland, a capitalism subservient to the interests of imperialism.

This appalling confusion as to the nature of the struggle to be waged here, centering as it does on the national question—derided as “mythical” in the Sinn Féin document—is compounded by a ridiculous attack on the small farmers and fishermen.

While the election campaigns waged by Sinn Féin candidates in areas where the small farmers and the fishermen are significant—e.g., Seamus Rogers in Donegal or Owen Kirk in Monaghan—should caution us to take these points with a pinch of salt, it is unfortunately clear that Sinn Féin’s research section will quote the votes given to Sinn Féin candidates as votes for this document, even though the opposite may be the case, as manifestly so in the above cases.

But whatever may be the position of the candidates, or indeed the decisions of Sinn Féin ard-fhaiseanna, we must assume that the document does represent Sinn Féin policy since Seán Ó Cionnaith has put his name to this letter as PRO for the organisation.

In this regard, the question that presses itself is what allies do Sinn Féin see for the working class in its struggle? If the small farmers and fishermen are written off as indistinguishable from property owners in general, and if native manufacturers are condemned so vitriolically, the working class is itself condemned to isolation and probable defeat.

Thus, while the arguments may sound very revolutionary, they are essentially reformist. Reformist, because the idea is presented that the existing state can perform the functions of a socialist state, that the existing economic and political context can be worked in by the working class alone to build socialism.

And this is why the other side of the imperialist military presence in the North, our economic and political integration into the EEC, is ignored. “We do not envisage withdrawal from the EEC as a prerequisite of our economic plan. . . . We will force (sic) the EEC to assist us in the aim of full employment within the territory of Ireland.” (p. 126.)

It is utterly misleading to believe that the EEC can offer us a context for solving our economic problems. Sinn Féin’s

own publications during the referendum campaign should have made that obvious. But perhaps the research section hasn’t read them, or perhaps they don’t agree with them but are afraid to say so openly.

Mr. Ó Cionnaith, then, has very sound reasons for failing to deal with the political issues except by innuendo. But the research section has another reason, also, for concentrating on the question of figures.

The whole credibility of the research section within Sinn Féin depends upon a blind faith in the research section’s mystique of infallibility. By exposing the inaccuracy and inadequacy of their figures we have undermined the basis from which the research section was able to advance those political revisions of republicanism, revisions that amount to an acceptance of imperialism in practice.

Let us deal with the research section’s case, point by point:—

1. We charged that the research section’s figures were inaccurate and confusing in a number of ways. As examples of this, we instanced the fact that three different figures for the total workforce were used: 1,187,200 on page 64, 1,029,000 on page 65 and 1,055,000 on page 71. Also, two figures are given for the number of jobs needed to be created by the Sinn Féin plan: 436,100 on page 64, and 412,100 on page 65.

Sinn Féin has attempted no explanation of these discrepancies, and in the absence of such explanation—or even probably with it—the figures are utterly useless.

It is certainly no defence of them to say that A. M. Duffy—whatever qualifications he may have—of The Sunday Press was impressed. The fact remains that no serious plan can be proposed on the basis of such confusing figures.

The research section is indeed obsessed with figures, as David Neligan complained. The obsession lies in the re-publication of tables of statistics issued by Government agencies, with no attempt to add an analysis of the relevance of the figures quoted. Economic planning demands more than that. There should be no mystique attached to tables of statistics that can be purchased by anyone at the Government Publications Office: they have to be explained.

2. The most serious omission from Sinn Féin’s document was the failure to give a comprehensive analysis of the exist-



ing state of the Irish economy, a breakdown of the nature of the market, at home and abroad, upon which the economy could be developed and jobs created. Instead Sinn Féin's research section contented themselves with a superficial series of generalisations of doubtful relevance, and even more doubtful accuracy.

Certainly, the first section of Sinn Féin's document is NOT an economic analysis. At best, it is an economic history of Ireland, revised to pander to the anti-farmer and anti-national prejudices of the research section. The fact that it was welcomed so loudly by the anti-Republican B & ICO should be an indication of its value.

As to Mr. Ó Gráda's review in the May issue of the United Irishman, this review followed precisely the pattern of the review published by the B & ICO. We charged that the logic of Sinn Féin's historical section was two-nationist. Are Sinn Féin indirectly admitting that fact?

As to the individual economic sectors, we certainly do not question the fact that they are underdeveloped. The point is how to develop them, and that is not done by acts of will-power: an integrated economic analysis must be produced. That Sinn Féin has singularly failed to do.

We have already pointed out the utopian nature of the proposals for many sectors, such as forestry. This together with the inaccuracy and inadequacy of the figures used, and the arbitrariness of the sector breakdowns is the basis of our charge.

3. This point follows on from the above. Jobs are arbitrarily assigned, because there is no analysis of the market. If we increase production, where are we to sell the increase produced? Since Sinn Féin's research section, like Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, are obsessed with export-led growth, and export-orientated industry these markets will have to be found abroad. But Sinn Féin have still not presented any argument as to why certain sectors can be developed.

Instead, they argue as to why it would be nice to be able to develop certain specified areas. We all agree that it would be nice, but there must be a market for our goods or the economy would collapse. Sinn Féin seem to labour under the assumption that the capitalist world is eager for Ireland to solve its economic difficulties, a line of argument that

has been known to be heard at Fine Gael and Fhaiseanna.

The reality is different. Capitalism wants Ireland as a source of cheap labour, cheap raw materials and cheap food, and capitalist export markets are inevitably rigged against poorly developed economies like that of Ireland.

And this is the reason why the Communist Party supports the call for developing the home market and strengthening home-orientated industry, rejects the EEC and calls for the development of an independent economic policy under the direction of a state machine no longer subservient to foreign interests.

It is our position that such a change of course must be forced upon the existing power structures, primarily through the trade union movement insisting upon policies that meet the needs of its members, and also through building the maximum national unity behind the leadership of the working class on these matters.

4. Sinn Féin charge that we falsely accuse them of advocating that a further hundred thousand farmers be driven off the land. Our answer is that Sinn Féin do so advocate. Despite the difficulties of employment currently being endured in the industrial sector Sinn Féin accept the inevitability of the decimation of the farming population that is a consequence of EEC membership.

In particular, they declare that their annual job creation figure of 41,200 (not to be confused with the earlier figure of 43,610!) differs from the widely quoted figure of 30,000 because of this very accelerated outflow from family farming (p. 65). This 30,000 figure, now sneered at, is the figure used by the Left Alternative economic document which Sinn Féin signed and, in a large measure, contributed to writing. But perhaps the research section wasn't in on that.

In fairness, we must point out that despite the anti-farmer fetishness of the document which so glibly writes off another 100,000 small farmers, Sinn Féin candidates during the election campaign, such as Owen Kirk of Monaghan, himself a small farmer, vigorously defended the rights, interests and potential contribution of Ireland's small farmers. Communists would have little difficulty in supporting his position on this question.

But, whatever the views of the candidates, the Irish Industrial Revolution marks a fundamental, though not

clearly acknowledged change of policy. Compare the position as expressed by Sinn Féin in *Bolas*, an international news bulletin, of December 1975:

"The struggle for national independence had to be led by the working class in alliance with other groups such as small farmers, small business people, intellectuals, students and all those elements of Irish society, North and South, which suffered the effects of imperialism and did not have a stake in its domination of the economy."

While now, the need for allies is ignored, and the small farmers are characterised as enemies: "Despite the hard evidence that the farming class, including small farmers—who although doomed still cling to the property concept of their larger neighbours—despite the fact that the farming class never ceases to wage class war on town and city, the Irish working class is still inhibited by the official history from understanding the facts before their eyes." (*Irish Industrial Revolution*, p. 18.)

5. In our review we drew attention to an amazing position on the fisheries put forward in the Sinn Féin document. Since it is defended we quote it again: "Our party (i.e., Sinn Féin The Workers' Party) is not going to join in with gombeen fishermen in the waving of the Green Flag over Irish waters. We do not accept that those who are not equipped to fish our seas have a right to ownership of them."

Sinn Féin seek to justify this incredible position by suggesting that the claim to a fifty-mile limit is only being made by the skippers, or will only benefit the skippers; and secondly, that since there are differences of interest between the skippers and the working fishermen on other issues that the call for a fifty-mile limit should not be supported until *Bord Iascaigh Mhara* has taken over control of the fishing industry in toto.

Sinn Féin would do well to read the statement issued by the fishermen's branch of the ITGWU during the election campaign which specifically demanded a fifty-mile limit, and wanted to know where the election candidates stood on the issue.

Certain it is that Sinn Féin did not put forward the research section's position during the election in answer to the ITGWU fishermen. Indeed, in Donegal, the Sinn Féin

candidate, Seamus Rogers, campaigned for an immediate exclusively Irish 200-mile limit.

Whether the limit be 50 miles or 200, Sinn Féin's election candidates clearly stood by the principle of Irish rights over Irish waters, in contradiction to the research section's position.

Sinn Féin seem unable to understand that workers can vigorously pursue their industrial interests against their immediate employers, while at the same time uniting in common defence of economic and political rights against foreign encroachment. In practice, of course, it is always the workers who are to the fore in such defence, and the employers who lag behind.

Finally, on this point, Sinn Féin seem to believe that we shouldn't have a fifty-mile limit now, but wait until the industry is state owned. The point is that while this sounds very revolutionary and uncompromising to the employers, the EEC will have destroyed our fisheries unless we have limits on the future prospects of which we can confidently build a fishing industry.

It is like saying that we would rather see the Navan zinc leave the country than see it smelted in an Irish capitalist-owned smelter. The analogy is not completely correct of course because we do not have an Irish smelter company. But we do have a small fishing fleet, and we should be endeavouring to protect and extend it, rather than abandon it to the wolves of the EEC.

In concluding their comments on our review, Sinn Féin's research section completely avoids the question of the sources of finance for industrial development. They assert that because we have no shortage of capitalists we can have no shortage of capital. What puerile rubbish.

Firstly, the overwhelming majority of the Irish capitalist class have sold out to some extent at least to foreign companies, either as sources of finance or as organisers of markets.

Secondly, the problem of capital accumulation that lies at the root of our economic difficulties has not been a failure to accumulate at fast enough a growth rate. On the contrary, in a pamphlet on the economy published by the ASTMS—this was attacked in a review in the *United*

Irishman—in May 1976, Professor Dale Tussing, then of the ESRI, noted that Ireland's rate of capital formation as a percentage of GNP was one of the highest in the world, at around 22%.

What Professor Tussing also pointed out was that the tendency to capital intensive investment in an economy with a labour surplus frittered away the capital that we do have, a position aggravated by our almost total integration into the British economy.

Much of our problem of providing the capital we need is caused by foreign control of our financial institutions and by the linkages with London and other imperialist financial centres.

While nationalisation of the finance industry is therefore imperative it cannot of its own accord immediately provide funds of the magnitude which Sinn Féin propose.

In addition, our investment in infrastructural development—roads, communications, transport, industrial training, etc.—has traditionally been low, and the leeway must be made up now.

This means that scarce supplies of large capital and skilled workers, particularly the most skilled technicians and administrators, must be directed into the key areas. For the Communist Party, the engineering industry must be high on our list of priorities, and therefore to the front in allocation of our resources.

But given our labour surplus—the problem of unemployment—we must generate other means also of developing our economy, in a rational balanced way, and that is why we argue for a tendency to prefer labour intensive to capital intensive development.

We argue for industrialisation that matches our own needs and resources, instead of one that looks wistfully to the developed capitalist economies of Western Europe.

6. Sinn Féin round off their letter with some comments on the letter we published from Mr. Tony Coughlan. Mr. Coughlan is, of course, quite capable of replying in his defence, but it seems to us that Sinn Féin have avoided his main point, the source of the investment proposed, for innuendoes as to misrepresentation, and personal abuse as to tantrums.

However, the jibes about misrepresentation and misreading are clearly misplaced. Mr. Coughlan has made no mistake with Sinn Féin's figures. On the contrary, he quoted in his original letter page 68 of the Sinn Féin document which calls for an investment of £20,935 million over the decade.

Mr. Coughlan went on to say that this represented "an average annual investment rate of over £2,000 million at 1976 prices" which, of course it does. Since the current GNP is £4,429 million, this average figure is indeed nearly 50% of our current GNP. Hardly misrepresentation.

The emphasis of Mr. Coughlan's letter was that no evidence was brought forward for the origins of this sum.

Sinn Féin's case seems to be that their plan will work because they want it to; that the finance will be available because they want it to. They proclaim that the source of the capital lies in the success of the plan in achieving the growth rates they predict.

But that is begging the question. Because we have shown that the plan, based on ill-digested figures and half-understood smatterings of economic history, is not more than a Left veneered version of existing IDA policy, with the addition of an increased state rôle.

Believing that economics is a matter of will, Sinn Féin's research section also try to wish away the existence of British imperialism so that they can tilt at the windmills of an independent Irish capitalism.

And living in a world of their imagination the research section are unable to face up to the real questions.

The con-trick of the research section's economic competence has been exposed, but more important is where Sinn Féin itself stands. The Irish people are entitled to know whether they still stand in favour of national unity and independence, against the multi-nationals as they declared in their election manifesto, or whether they have now given in to the two nationalist, economist views of the research section's document.

That document is summed up as Left in form but Right in content.

Sinn Féin The Workers' Party have yet to say whether or not it is their position.

**Title:** Which way for Socialism?

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