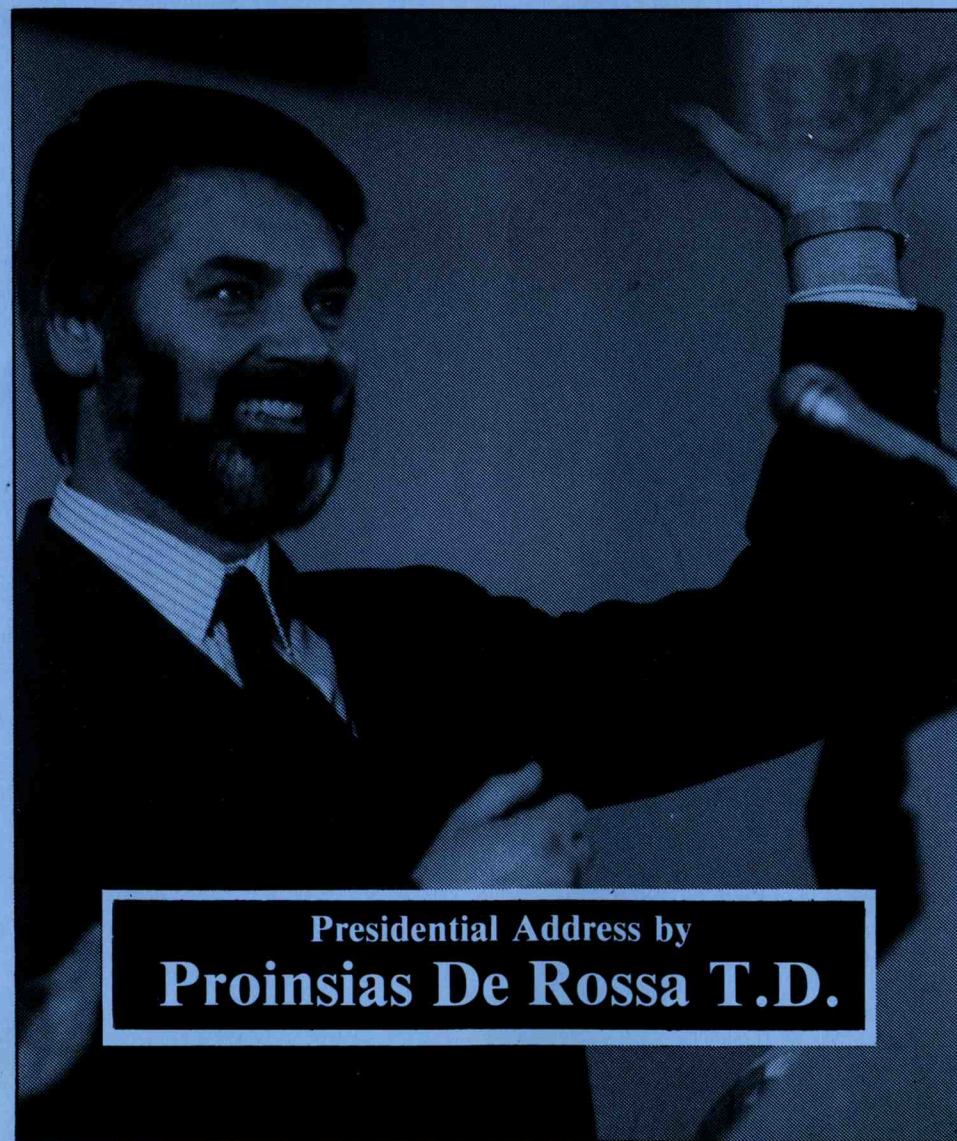


# **The Workers Party of Ireland**

**Annual Delegate Conference 1989**



Presidential Address by  
**Proinsias De Rossa T.D.**

**ORÁID AN UACHTARAN**  
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This year I want to challenge some ‘sacred cows’... raise some questions and offer some answers.

If some of the things I say surprise you then I hope your surprise is shortlived, that it is quickly followed by debate, decisions and political action. 9

**The Workers’ Party**  
**Ard Fheis/Annual Delegate Conference**  
RDS Dublin, Ireland. April 7, 8, 9 1989

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**Introduction**

Welcome comrades, fraternal delegates and International guests to the Annual Conference of the Workers' Party of Ireland.

I have the privilege of addressing my first Ard Fheis (Annual Conference) as President of the Workers Party at what is a most exciting and encouraging time for socialists and for socialism. From the Urals to the Atlantic we are witnessing a great movement of socialist renewal and regeneration. And, this powerful current of change and transformation is not confined to the socialist countries.

The annual presidential address is traditionally seen as a synopsis of work done in the previous year and an agenda of work to be done in the year ahead.

This year I also want to challenge some of the sacred cows that are still mooching around the Irish political landscape, raise some questions and offer some answers. We need public debates on modern socialism, on Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution and on who or what is blocking peace in Northern Ireland.

How we respond, and the choices we make to the challenges facing us can win us the hearts and minds, and the active participation of the people of Ireland in charting our way into the future. But, if we are timid and fearful we will drift into stagnation.

If some of the things I say tonight surprise you then I hope your surprise is short lived, and that it is quickly followed by debate, decisions and political action.

The working class in Ireland cannot afford to wallow in nostalgia,

singing the odd ballad about glorious defeats.

They cannot make progress and we cannot make progress shouting irrelevant slogans or offering traditional remedies which were probably inadequate even when they were conceived.

"Bread and Roses" is a good slogan, but it did not stop the Dublin Bakery firm of Johnston Mooney and O'Brien from shutting its doors.

The internationalisation of industry, finance capital, communications, and the dawn of high technology processes demand new responses from socialism.

But these responses will not be produced unless we hack away the dense thickets of responses inherited from earlier struggles.

### The Labour Movement

We must get back to basics, to the corner stones of scientific socialism in order to frame our responses.

In Ireland and Europe the world of capital and labour which is the location of the primary contradiction in capitalist society, is no longer a simple matter of wages and conditions, if it ever was.

The growth of contract labour, part-time work, deskilling, exploitation of youth and women, the welfare state, and the massive subsidisation of capital by workers call for political and trade union responses which will have to be imaginative and innovative. The new categories of workers, often working on their own, or in small groups, for small companies who themselves are contracted or franchised need the services of trade unions. Pensioners, also a growing section of the population need the protection which trade unions could provide.

In this context I would like to say here how pleased the Workers Party is with the announcement that the ITGWU and FWUI, two large general workers unions, are to merge.

We are pleased because of the importance we attach to the unity of progressive organisations of workers.

This kind of development is essential if the Irish trade union movement is to be in a position to deal effectively with the range of issues I have referred to.

We hope that the impetus that this merger will create will encourage other unions to consider the benefits of co-operation.

In the context of '1992' it is essential also for the Irish Trade Union Movement to strengthen its international ties so that the collective interests of workers will be advanced in the European Community.

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions and the new Services Industrial Professional Technical Union can be assured of our goodwill and support in all their struggles to defend and advance the legitimate interests of Irish workers and their families.

### Society's Contradictions

Trade Unionists and their families, and working people generally are faced nowadays with a bewildering range of contradictions, which have both national and international implications.

These contradictions also require our attention as a party of the working class.

Not in any opportunist or superficial way.

But in a way which produces solutions capable of implementation.

For instance

What response do we make to the global problem of wealth and hunger. While Europe produces food mountains, children are dying at the rate of 1 per minute from hunger and disease in the third world. The Irish Government response is to reduce Overseas Development Aid.

- What mechanisms are needed, at a international level, state level and at community level to resolve the conflict of industrial and agricultural development with the environment.
- How do we translate our desire for peace, and an opposition to war into practical proposals for the conversion of arms factories, and technologies to alternative production.
- When will we start to campaign for new technology to be applied to work in a way which ensures an end to drudgery and the restructuring of work to provide meaningful employment for greater numbers and to give women their proper place in society as equals while acknowledging the differences between the sexes.

None of these questions presented themselves in their present form 50 years ago and the ones mentioned are only the most obvious.

Obviously these questions present us with a challenge which can not be dodged or fudged if we are to make advances.

### The European Community

The European Community of course presents us with a major challenge given the nature of Irish politics and the underdevelopment in particular of class consciousness.

We see in Europe an opportunity to break Irelands political and cultural isolation, while our aim is similar to many of the great European Socialist parties, that of a Democratic Socialist United Europe.

In this we differ fundamentally from the Irish conservative parties and indeed with some Irish socialists also.

Many of the contradictions I referred to earlier can only be dealt with effectively by the creation of common European policies to tackle them.

Ireland has a unique role to play as a neutral country, at present the only neutral country in the European Community. Used actively as an instrument of peace, Irish Foreign Policy, based on neutrality can ensure the community does not close in on itself; that it remains open to other neutral and non aligned countries and that the community pulls down cold war barriers between eastern and western Europe.

Our enthusiasm for the potential of Europe does not of course blind us to the reality of it today.

Socialists and trade unionists across Europe will have to battle strongly to ensure that 1992 does not become a nightmare for the people of Europe.

The people of the less developed regions such as Ireland, Southern Italy, Portugal, Greece are ultimately dependent on the solidarity of socialists and trade unionists in the developed countries to avoid stagnation and depopulation.

The Irish Government's approach to Europe is based on a "grab the grant" mentality, and a reluctance to exercise independent judgement in Foreign Affairs as befits a neutral state.

Our government's submission to the European Commission for structural funds is an example of their attitude.

The submission was hyped as a £9 billion investment plan, over 5 years, but amounts to a string of pious aspirations, dependant on Irish private capital coming up with £3 billion of the investment.

There is no evidence, historical or otherwise that Irish business will produce this kind of money. The evidence shows that in 1987 Irish investment approved for IDA grants, amounted to only 26% of the total of such investment. While latest indications are that they have also failed to produce their commitment to investment under the National Programme for Recovery.

## The Economy

But of course we are told the economy is booming by the new high priests of Ireland, the economists.

They assure us that wages are right; profits are right; the balance of payments are right; the exchequer borrowing requirements is right; inflation is right;

So where are the promised jobs???

And why must 600 of our people get out of the country every week.

Why are 380,000 of our teachers, nurses, architects, engineers, computer programmers, office workers and construction workers either producing wealth for Britain, USA, or Australia, or are languishing on the dole queues in Ireland.

The economists keep very quiet about this loss which runs to thousands of millions of pounds annually.

They also keep very quiet about the fact that emigration is projected to continue at a rate between 20 and 25 thousand at least until 2001. In fact, these population losses are behind government plans to shut down many schools.

This sorry tale is the result of doctrinaire Thatcherite economics implemented by Mr Haughey with the active support of Dukes and O'Malley.

In this situation it is essential that E.C. structural funds are not frittered away on grandiose road plans but are used to develop strong industries based on indigenous resources and capable of surviving the open market.

It is essential also that the haemorrhage of repatriated profits by multinationals is restricted, and it is equally essential that borrowing by government for productive job creation is not blocked by simplistic book-keeping economists.

## Party Progress

In the past year we as a Party have consolidated our organisation. We had magnificent victories in Leixlip, Co. Kildare, where we won 21% of the vote and took 2 seats. Our youth movement continues to grow and our local campaigns were very effective.

We launched our Peace Charter for Northern Ireland. We opened up lines of communication and co-operation with a wide range of political and social groups, north and south. We made progress on our proposal for a Rainbow Coalition of forces to fight poverty, unemployment and emigration. This task of developing co-operation with the Labour Party, the Democratic Socialist Party and with peoples organisations will continue during the coming year and should begin to build a coherent response to the right wing consensus which prevails at present in the Republic of Ireland.

It can truthfully be said that we have made steady progress.

But comrades can we be satisfied with just 'steady progress'.

This year we must do more than look back and feel satisfied and simply look forward to a gradual incremental growth in our organisation and political influence.

We must look 'in-side' as well.

By looking inside I mean looking inside the house of socialism. It is a house built in many styles by different countries, it is a house of many mansions.

Recently I visited one of those 'mansions'. The 18th Congress of the P.C.I. in Rome - a Party with 1 1/2 million members, and support from almost 10 million Italians.

They are seeking in their own way to plot a new course for Italian society. No doubt we would have diverse opinions on many issues, but what struck me in my discussions with the Italian Comrades was the similarity of the political, social, and economic challenges

we have to face.

It is clear to me, also, that in European terms this party is barely housed. We have four deputies in Dail Eireann. That means we have our foot in the door.

Now we must push hard on that door and beat it open and let some fresh air in.

Our task in the coming 12 months and every year after that is to increase the numbers pushing on that door and the door of every local authority in Ireland, north and south. To build a mass party of democracy that is strong enough so that socialism can march in at the head of social democracy.

The first step was to put in a party of deputies strong enough to expose the corruptions of capitalism. The next step is to strengthen that party until it is strong enough not merely to expose, but to block, the corruptions of capitalism. That second phase should see our party as the principal socialist opposition party by 1992. The third phase is to prepare the party for government, to be the premier party of socialist democracy in Ireland well before the year 2000.

That is the agenda. But it cannot be completed in one year. As the song says we have to make it one day at a time. Or at most two days at a time.

I say two days, because only two days matter in the life of this party. Today and tomorrow.

## **Socialism**

So let us now look at the tasks of today and see what they can tell us about the tactics of tomorrow. And in this scrutiny we can no longer keep our eyes fixed firmly in our own back yard. Because if we look up and look around us we will see our neighbours in Europe at the same work as our ourselves.

The work of winning.....

The purpose of this party is political power. The purpose of political power for us is to change the balance of power in society so that the majority and not the minority has power. The rule of the majority is called democracy and is the first condition of socialism.

But what is socialism today?

For two years now the vast upheavals in the Soviet Union have sent reverberations into the progressive and democratic and communist parties of Eastern and Western Europe. These earthquakes, are shaking the house of socialism to its foundations. Some who call themselves socialists pretend things haven't changed, or don't need to change, or should not be allowed to change. They hope for a long sleep.

The problem is that is you sleep that long you wake up like 'Rip Van Winkle' and you don't recognise the world anymore.

Comrades and fraternal delegates, this Party is wide awake! We want to play a full part in the revolution that is renewing socialism across Europe, from Madrid to Moscow, from the Pyrenees to the Atlas Mountains.

Each country interprets the present upheaval in its own way and to meet its own needs. This country is no different. The struggle for socialism in Ireland at this time takes three specific and urgent forms - and these tasks are not specific to socialism, they are tasks of democracy, in which socialists are obliged to play a

leading part.

What are the three tasks?

The first task is to secure peace in the North. The second task is to modernise the South. The third task is to harmonise relations between the two states, North and South, within the framework of a new Europe.

That means change. Change is a word and a world to reckon with. Change is what we are for and change is what our opponents are against. That's the agenda.

Comrades... This time last year Tomas MacGiolla, outgoing president, spoke of the necessity of change. Your reaction showed that you were ready for change, that you grasped the need for change, that you understood the reasons for change.

This year I am asking you to go a step further and face the reality of change.

Change is not change unless it takes an effort.

Perestroika and glasnost, like democracy and socialism, are fine words to bandy around. But they are hard words to put into practice. And as we see from the Soviet Union putting these words into practice is not all bread and roses, but more a matter of blood, sweat and tears.

Socialism, we are all agreed, means continual change. So far so good. But the next step is not so easy. We must get down to business. We must bell the cat. We must get down to what changes, where, when, how and why. This will be a long hard slog and it will tax our discipline, our commitment, our energy.

Comrades we can't dodge the hard questions. For example which things must change? and which things should not change? and which things are matters of principle, and which

things are passing expedients forced on us by history? and how to tell the difference between principles and political pragmatism?

These are the questions that are now convulsing the socialist world. A great revolution is taking place before our eyes. We cannot stand aside.

### What is to be done?

Lenin's great question is as valid as ever. It means what are the practical tasks of the hour? What must we do, right now, to advance the cause of socialism?

Most of us would agree that the first task is to clear our minds about the present convulsion that is rocking socialist countries. What some like to call a crisis.

Crisis? Look at the Soviet Union.. Do we see the system breaking down and the Stars and Stripes fluttering from the Kremlin. No! We see democracy breaking out.

Socialism in the Soviet Union without democracy was like one hand clapping. But when the strong hand of democracy joins with the strong hand of socialism the result is an iron grasp. The iron grasp of the people. Democracy and socialism. The sound of two hands clapping for peace and progress and a better life.

We must not begrudge the people of the Soviet Union their current experiments with new forms of socialism and democracy. Change is a bumpy road. But the people who stopped Hitler will make little of such a journey.

Comrades before we start lecturing the Soviet people we should recognise that the present 'crisis' is a kind of holiday for them. They have the luxury of rocking the foundations of socialism in safety simply because socialism is standing on foundations that are dug deep.

In Ireland we have no such luxury. Instead we have the task of rocking the foundations of capitalism.

And capitalism and its crimes are buried very deep, but they are not unshakeable.'

### **Capitalism's Failures**

Attempts by capitalism to regroup behind the banner of Thatcher and Regan are now petering out. Thatcher's bubble has burst in a Britain more divided than ever in its history - not only by class but by geography. The Regan dream of American domination lies shattered in the shadow of Gorbachev's initiative in leading the world away from the nightmare of war towards a new era of peace and hope.

While in Ireland Fianna Fail's agility in facing all directions at once is matched only by their ability to talk out of both sides of their mouth at once .... saying different things to different people. Bertie will talk to the unions about part-time workers, Bertie will talk to the bosses about part time workers, Bertie will promise less rights for part time workers. Bertie is a union man, Albert is a business man, Charlie is a superman, Brian is a nice man....and they are all hard men.....

Fianna Fail is good for business and business is good to Fianna Fail. Charlie, Alan and Dessie have given business the best environment they've ever had....low inflation, low interest rates, moderate wage increases, grants galore, subsidies and incentives, and radio and TV franchises... And how has business responded to this pampering? The hard men with capital have been given the perfect economic environment, the kind of environment which they have been clamouring for for decades. "Give us this environment and we'll give you growth, we'll give you prosperity". They said "Just give us a chance, give us a fair break and we'll be able to compete with the best of them"

So, have they kept their word? Have they delivered the goods? Well, in a way, they have. They have delivered the goods to themselves. Profits are growing, sales of expensive cars are growing, demand for costly luxuries is growing, investment abroad is growing, the market for houses costing over a hundred

thousand pounds is growing....So we do have growth, we do have prosperity. Business is booming. If you have money, you can make money. But, is the rising tide of business lifting all boats? The answer is written on the faces of the quarter of a million queuing for the dole, of the thousands queuing for assistance, of the young people queuing for badly paid jobs in a buyers market and on the faces of the tens of thousands of Irish men and women forced to leave the country in search of a job.

It is not that socialists are afraid of the market or believe that it has no function. But we do believe that the State must intervene to insure that the market meets the needs of people, all the people, and not allow people to be used to meet the needs of the market and of those who manipulate the market in order to line their pockets.

### **Modern Socialism**

So what is to be done? The first thing to be done is to tell the people what principles we are working from. We must tell them our current definition of socialism so they understand what we are about.

Yes, I did say 'current definition'. We don't believe that socialism is a dogma written in tablets of stone. We believe it is a theory of change which itself changes. We think that Socialism needs to be defined over and over again.

How do we define it in Ireland? How does it lead us to the tasks we set ourselves.

We define Socialism by letting the people tell us what they want from Socialism. What it can do determines what it is. Or as Marx would say: existence decides essence.

What people all over Europe are saying is that they want socialism to be democratic. They want socialism to get back to it's classic place - in the vanguard of social democracy.

That is what the people of Ireland want too. We know this because we listen. North and South, we spend a lot of time standing around

keeping our mouth shut and listening to the things people say - AND also figuring out the things they want to say but are afraid to say.

Socialism they say should be about politics. And so that is how we now define it - in terms of politics and democracy rather than of economics and coercion.

Socialism, we believe, should at this stage be defined as the political rule of the working class. That means that democracy has to move to the centre of the historical process. Majority rule yes, but also protection for minority rights.

Socialism, we believe, must cast off the shackles of economic dogma and go back to being what it once was - a theory of political and social change.

And Socialism must start talking in the language of politics and democracy, the language of the street and the factory and sportsfield, and not the jargon of the fringe fanatics who slide so easily into terrorism.

Socialism, democratically defined as a theory of political change in the service of democracy, and speaking in the ordinary language of politics can solve the big problems of Irish society.

### Northern Ireland

The greatest of these problems is Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland is the place to test our socialism to the full. If socialism has no solutions for the North then it has no solutions for the South. This seems a stony soil for 'Red Roses' or the 'Tree of Liberty'.

But, Comrades it is the most fertile soil on this island...

Not every one shares our vision. Northern Ireland is a problem which many believe is insoluble. It is a problem which has cost this party the lives of some of its best members. But they have

not died in vain.

They have not died in vain because the solution to the problem of Northern Ireland is in sight. Not in vain because their vision of peace has proved more enduring than the seductions of a savage sectarian war. Not in vain because as they predicted the Provos can never win. Their power to inflict is not as great as the Protestant people's power to endure. and despite all Provo provocation there has been no Protestant murder campaign on the scale of the Provos genocidal war.

The Protestants of the North have won the moral war, they are winning the propaganda war, and if they hold their hand and refuse to retaliate they will win the physical war as well.

But they must do better than that - they must go back into politics.

All they have to do is apply the principles of democratic socialism, which does not deal in mathematical majorities within two rival traditions, but in the absolute majority of the working class across the divide.

That majority, in poll after poll, tells the Unionist parties and the SDLP and the Workers' Party to engage in constructive dialogue - a dialogue which we have consistently sought.

We cannot force the SDLP to do it's duty. We can however assist the South in it's slow and shocked reappraisal of John Hume, who once had the status of a saint in the South but is now exposed as another tribal leader whose main asset is that he says tribal things very slowly and very quietly and very often.

The Protestant people can isolate the SDLP and expose it as a sectarian party. The price the Protestants must pay may have to go as high as going into talks on devolution with no preconditions. But the prize is a hat trick: isolation of the Provos, the SDLP and the Southern Haughey hawks all at one stroke. But they must drop their flirtation with Integration and if their present leaders have not got the courage to do this then new leaders should be elected.

By the simple step of starting to talk the Protestant people can roll back the Provos, can force the SDLP to roll back the Provos or else expose themselves as a Provo Party.

Dialogue. It means talking. And it means listening. This dialogue is the most lethal response possible to the Armalite strategy. Devolved Government means the SDLP have to take on security or show themselves up as sectarians without Armalites. The SDLP have to turn off the tap on the Provos water supply. There will be no water for the pirhanas to swim in. They perish.

The Provos cannot take this kind of pressure. Already they are in deep trouble. Their trouble is that time is standing still for them. Twenty years on and no advance beyond gangland killings. Twenty years on and they hold no ground. Not a square yard of South Armagh.

Despite massive media coverage in newspapers and magazines, despite the centrefold in Playboy, despite the good wishes from every fringe group in Britain, despite the covers in trendy magazines, and despite all the murders meant to make the six o'clock news - they have failed.

More and more they look less and less like Al Fatah and more like Al Capone.

The Provisionals are facing the beginning of the end. What they fear most is not extirpation by the SAS - because that would only bring them martyrdom - but liquidation at the hands of the democratic parties in Northern Ireland - because that would send them not up to Milltown Cementry but out into the real world. Where they would perish. A world of work and play, of life and love is a place of punishment for the average psychopath.

The Protestant people have it in their power to put the Provos into small print and dump them on the margins of Irish history.

That is because an overall majority in the North want talks.

Talks towards a devolved Government in Northern Ireland are not an option to be turned down by the SDLP. They are the democratic right of the people of the whole island.

Socialism tells us to speak out, to speak plainly, to speak calmly and above all to speak for the majority in the North and in the South.

North and South the message is the same: start talking.

Socialism must press for straight talking and expose crooked talk.

Nowhere is plain talk more important than Northern Ireland. Here we have murder gangs who talk about 'legitimate targets' when they mean Protestant workers. Here we have supporters of murder gangs who talk about Protestant and Catholic unity even as they spot the targets for the murder gangs. Here we have nationalists North and South who think that a Unionist is some sub-human species because he or she doesn't want to be bullied into a state with huge unemployment, no divorce, a miserable health service and teeth pulled on three months notice..

Comrades, the North is not an insoluble problem. It is not a natural disaster. It is a human disaster. It can be solved by the power of human will and reason.

By that social skill we call politics.

So before I leave the subject of the North, I want to pledge the support of this party to the political process of peace in the North. Nothing, not the Anglo Irish Agreement, not the Irish Constitution, nothing and no piece of paper must be allowed stand in the path of the political search for dialogue and devolved government.

When we say nothing must be allowed stand in the way - we mean nothing. The Anglo Irish Agreement and the Irish Constitution are not Holy Writ. They are documents that we should be writing new

clauses in all the time, even as we take out old clauses that give offence.

And amending these documents may become the main task of politicians in the South. Because, while we have peace in the South, we do not have peace of mind. The North is always there, like a ghost haunting us.

But the North is not beyond the reach of reason. The problem is terrorism. The solution is socialism. The prize is peace!

Comrades probably the toughest job for us to do is to tackle the question of Article 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution, for we must not only isolate the terror gangs by appealing to reason and humanity.

We must also critically examine the political culture which sustains them. Too often have we seen the genuine horror of ordinary decent people being turned into confusion and silenced when these gangs draw on the mish-mash of myth and fable which passes for Irish History.

1991 is the 75th Anniversary of the 1916 rebellion. We must not allow ourselves to be drawn into unthinking celebration of this event. We must start now to extract the myth from the reality. Acknowledge that 1991 is not 1916, that the world has moved on since then. This party has a strong tradition of looking reality in the eye and acknowledging the need to change.

We have reached a point where we must look at 1916 coldly and analytically and decide what weight we want to give it in the evolution of our politics.

Afterall, we are a party committed to the unity of the Irish working class. The Irish working class has more than one tradition - and we need to construct new symbols and a new culture based on the realities of the modern Ireland to accommodate those traditions.

This is not arguing for a denial of our roots, or our traditions, but a call to recognise that we have travelled a long way, fought too many battles, suffered too many painful losses to stop short now. We have made our greatest gains standing out fearlessly and independently for a new vision of society.

We should also during the coming year challenge the assumptions underlining articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution. We are the only Party with the courage and the capacity to undertake this debate. New thinking on this issue would lift a terrible weight of confusion and guilt from the shoulders of the people of the South and a feeling of siege by many people in the North. Such a debate would also do more for class politics in Ireland than a decade of Presidential speeches.

Yes there will be taunts from the gombeen backwoods men of Fianna Fail while the provos and their fellow travellers will scream 'revisionism' and use all the tired old epithets which substitute for political discussion in Ireland.

But the potential gain from freeing the labour movement of the clammy grasp of gombeen nationalism is unmeasurable.

### The South

Comrades,

The South shows us a very different aspect of socialism, or rather the need to emphasise our definition of socialism with it's emphasis on democracy and dialogue.

All too often socialists are accused of being against enterprise and innovation, against sturdy individualism, against risk taking and competition, getting on in the world by your own individual efforts, and in general suffering from begrudgery.

I think it is fair to say that the old left in Ireland suffered from some of these symptoms, and if so it is a flu that this party does

not want to catch.

This party is a party of production and work and getting on with the job of making Ireland a better place not just to live in, but to enjoy living in.

Again, and all too often, socialists are accused of being in favour of featherbedding, a cosy civil service, and ever-burgeoning bureaucracy, and an economic policy that many people see as a policy of saying 'if it moves nationalise it and when it stops moving then we can get down to organising trade unions properly'.

That charge can only be answered by coming straight at it. This party is not for nationalising anything that does not need nationalising. This party is for public ownership only where the public want to own something.

Some people will find such a statement surprising from a socialist party. That is only one of the surprises we have in store for capitalism in Ireland. Because the last thing a certain kind of capitalist wants is a socialist party which believes in enterprise and energy.

Let us remind ourselves of what we mean by socialism.

Socialism is first and last about the political rule of the majority in society. The particular forms of economic life can be decided by democratic decision at all levels of society. But once the majority rule in society, it is not a problem of principle whether private firms operate in that society. The point is whether they operate efficiently and whether they operate in the public interest.

In short, Socialism is not about who own the society, but about who controls the society. Ownership no longer determines power. Power determines ownership.

Democracy and socialism are one. That means a democratic socialist government must do the will of the people. In economic

terms it is clear that the people of this country do not at this time want public ownership of the means of production. They want a market system. They want a market system mediated by the price mechanism. If that is what they want we will not stand in the way.

So far Fianna Fail and Fine Gael have no problem. Their problem is that the Irish people want far more than that. They want the market kept in public view.

The Irish people don't want capitalism to work away in the dark. The people want that market system scrutinised by the State. The people want the State to make sure that the market system is not milked by crooks and capitalists out of control. The people want the State to leave enterprise alone providing enterprise is playing a full productive part in public life. But when it breaks down or breaks in like a burglar the people want the State to step in and to control and direct the means of production.

Which is what FF and FG will not do. Because too many of their friends have a sweet tooth. And too many of them have their faces buried in the National cake or the national beef burger as the case may be.

Because we want to extract a few rotten teeth does it mean this Party is against enterprise, against money, against going out and doing your own thing?

No. We stand for enterprise, energy and experimentation in the South. For devolution and democracy in the North. We want a society that goes out to work and that brings home the bacon.

But we do think making money is immoral when it damages people. Or when the surplus is not shared.

Socialism, as we see it, is not anti-market, anti-enterprise and anti-individual. Socialism will stimulate effort, enthusiasm and enterprise at all levels of our society. Work will be well rewarded and the lazy penalised - and that means dole spongers as well as tax-dodgers, short-day shirkers as well as bosses.

We know that wealth must be produced before it can be distributed. We know that enterprise, innovation and risk-taking should be rewarded. We want growth.

### Human Values

But we also know comrades, that if socialism does not humanise society then we are on a fools errand.

To place men and women at the centre of society is the project we have set ourselves. And, to do it in such a way that the principles of liberty equality and fraternity have real meaning for people in their every day relationships; at home; at work; at college; and at leisure.

We want more than homes to live in; clothes to wear and food to eat.

Human life is not just about satisfying material needs. Men and women are essentially creative beings. We crave a life that has meaning.

We need challenging work; we need laughter, we have an insatiable urge to express ourselves; we desire to love, to be loved and to belong.

Denial of these human needs brutalizes us. And, capitalism with its emphasis on the price of everything distorts our lives and our relationship with each other and with our world.

Capitalism, comrades, must be tamed, caged and starved until it withers away.

### Choices

The Workers' Party continues to give people a choice and the response shows that more and more people want a choice.

We have a choice as a society of condoning the expenditure of five hundred thousand million dollars a year on the arms race, of tolerating the madness where the amount of money spent in one half day on world arms spending would pay for the full immunisation of all children in the world against the common infectious diseases OR we can loudly demand an end to expenditure on weapons of death and destruction.

We can choose between hypocrisy and straight talking in public life. We can choose to ignore those who impose a narrow and oppressive morality on others by denying citizens the civil right to divorce while living their own lives as they please and complaining about the lack of civil liberties in Britain OR we can confront this cant and duplicity by demanding that the State order its affairs in accordance with civilised and humane standards, without fear or favour and without looking over its shoulder at entrenched power structures that are not accountable to the will of the people.

We can choose between dishonesty and integrity in our approach to civic affairs.

We can turn a blind eye to those who fiddle the State through dodging taxes, robbing grants and subsidies, abusing incentives (and cheating on welfare) OR we can insist on calling a crime a crime and punishing those who commit them so that the State can function effectively as an instrument of equity and fair play.

We can choose between secrecy and openness in all public and private institutions.

We can accept that information is an instrument of power to be used by those who have it as a means of controlling the lives of

those who dont OR we can pursue an open society where all information is freely available to those who need it.

We can choose between technological advance or primitive methods of production.

We can choose to harness all the great advances in science and technology to produce better quality goods and services that will improve the quality of life for all OR we can allow these to be hijacked to produce playthings for the rich while continuing to use outdated methods to produce the goods and services used by working people and their families. We can produce faster and bigger cars for the rich to drive and second rate buses for public transport OR we can put in place a first class transport service for all to use.

We can choose to go forward OR to go back, but we cant stand still.

We can pretend we are not a part of Europe and go back to the protectionism and isolation of the 30s and 40s or we can march forward with our brothers and sisters in other countries to build a better Europe and a better world. We can choose "sinn feinism" or solidarity. We can fight for a social Europe as a step on the road to a socialist Europe in a socialist world. We can look out OR we can look in at ourselves, we can think big OR we can think small, we can be generous OR we can be mean.

We can choose between politics based on personalities or politics based on people. People can choose to run politics or let politicians run peoples lives. We can make things happen or let things happen to us. We can take part or be taken apart. We can control our lives or we can let others control us. Comrades, Socialists have always wanted to change the world. We now have the means of doing it.

The World needs changing. Let us start with Ireland. It is a task we relish. Let us get to it.

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Workers' Party Annual Delegate Conference, 1989

**Organisation:** Workers' Party

**Author:** Proinsias De Rossa

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