

Workers' Weekly

WORKERS ASSOCIATION BULLETIN

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THE PROVISIONAL IRA IS NOW CLOSER TO DEFEAT THAN AT ANY TIME SINCE THEY BEGAN THEIR WAR AGAINST THE PEOPLE OF NORTHERN IRELAND.

Maire Drumm and other Provo leaders may claim that they declared their ceasefire "from a position of strength," but all the evidence points to the opposite conclusion. The level of Provo activity dropped dramatically during 1974. As the "Year of Victory" drew to its close with no "victory" in sight, the Provo leadership had ample cause for concern. How could they keep up the morale of the rank and file in face of the disappearance of the promised victory? How could they prevent 1975 becoming the Year of Demoralisation and Defeat? To deal with these problems, the Provo leaders swung from one extreme to another.

THE CEASEFIRE

ENGLAND '74

Their first response was to launch a major bombing offensive in England. O'Connell, clearly believing that he could succeed where Goering failed, hoped that this offensive would terrify the British people into pressing the Government to declare their intention to withdraw from Northern Ireland. The bombing of Birmingham represented a last desperate effort to turn the "Year of Victory" into a reality. It failed. The sections of the British working class directly affected by the bombings made it clear that they would not be terrorised. They responded in the same way as their fellow workers in Belfast had responded under similar provocations.

STOP THE CLOCKS

The failure of the offensive in Britain caused the Provos to swing to the opposite extreme and declare a ceasefire. The clock has been stopped as far as the "Year of Victory" is concerned. But stopping the clock can only postpone matters. Sooner or later the crunch must come, and the negotiations or conflict must end in agreement or defeat. Indeed in getting themselves off the "Year of Victory" hook by means of a ceasefire, the Provos have landed themselves in even deeper trouble than ever before.

POLITICAL BANKRUPTCY

Having abandoned violence at least temporarily - the Provos will be forced to attempt to pursue their objectives by political means. But the basic objective of the Provos - Irish unity - is incapable of being pursued by political means. The realisation of Irish unity would not advance the objective material interests of any significant section of Ulster society. The only case for Irish unity that can be made out is a case based on myths and legends and myths and legends will not attract many voters. And the Provos have not displayed any willingness to retreat from their basically unrealistic commitment to Irish unity. They possess neither the ability nor the guts to face reality and to participate in realistic politics in Northern Ireland. They have nothing to contribute to the working out of a new constitution for the Government of Northern Ireland as a province of the United Kingdom. The working out of such a constitution will be the central issue in Ulster politics in the immediate period ahead and any political group which has nothing to contribute to the debate on this issue will quickly become irrelevant. Clearly, the Provos have no future in Ulster politics. The Provos inability to participate effectively in politics will probably drive them back to violence. But their ability to wage war will have been at least marginally weakened by the experience of the ceasefire.

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THE CEASEFIRE.....Continued from Page One.

INTERNMENT - WHO'S RESPONSIBLE ?

In responding to the ceasefire, the British govt. have placed responsibility for the continuation of internment and Army "harrassment" firmly on the shoulders of the IRA. While refusing to make significant changes in security policy in response to a temporary truce, the Govt. have made it clear that they wish to end internment and take the troops off the streets. And they have made it clear that this will be done if the Provo declare a permanent ceasefire. In his New Year Message to the people of Ulster, Merlyn Rees said: "I intend during January to set out more fully how the permanent cessation of violence would enable the Army to make a planned orderly and progressive reduction in its present committment and how once violence has ceased and is seen to have ceased it would also be possible for those who are detained to be progressively released." It has been made clear to the Catholic community that it is the IRA which is responsible for the continuation of the present security policies. This can serve only to further weaken the extent to which the IRA is supported and tolerated within the Catholic community. Furthermore, the ceasefire has enabled the Catholic community to enjoy a period of peace and relative freedom from "harrassment" and retaliation. The Catholic community will not take kindly to a resumption of a campaign which will turn their areas into battlefields once again and which will inevitably provoke a resumption of indiscriminate reprisals against Catholics.

THE END IN SIGHT

If the IRA refuse the offer to "go political" which has now been clearly made to them by the Govt., they will put themselves in the wrong more clearly than ever before in the eyes of British and world opinion. This will make it politically possible for the Govt. to adopt tougher and more realistic security measures in a final drive to mop up the remnants of a guerilla army which has now substantially lost its mass basis of active support.

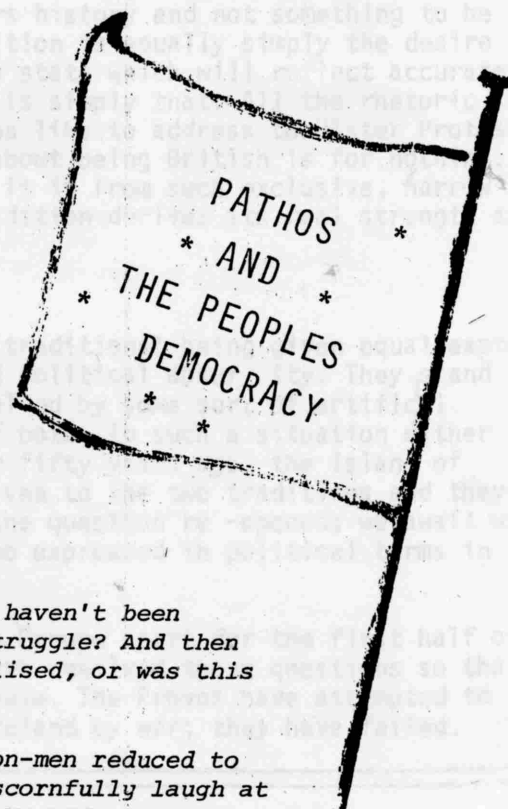
Only ill-informed action by the Unionist community could possibly prevent this from happening. But we have little fear of this. The mass of the Unionist community is paying little attention to Paisley's empty ranting about "sell-outs" and "betrayals."

THE F.D., THOSE DAUNTLESS CHAMPIONS OF THE WORKING CLASS STAGED A PROTEST MARCH IN ARMAGH ON NEW YEARS' DAY - PROBABLY TO REMIND THE WORKERS THAT THEY WERE STILL AROUND.

Back in the good old days of '69, '70 and '71 they could have held a monster rally and got a pretty vicious riot going afterwards; this time only two dozen monsters turned up and it seems they didn't feel much like smashing the State forces. Remember their slogan of yesteryear about tearing down the State with their bare hands? Heady stuff this Catholic Nationalism - particularly when the rabble-rousers keep their skin whole and let the masses take the knocks.

Which brings us to another sad aspect of their march, the Red Guards or whatever they entitled them were conspicuous by their absence. Surely they haven't been demobilised in the middle of the anti-Imperialist struggle? And then the dark doubt rises and asks: "were they ever mobilised, or was this just more hot-air?"

It's very gratifying to see that obscene crowd of con-men reduced to their present state and remember when they used to scornfully laugh at the Two Nation theory. HE WHO LAUGHS LAST WE WISH THEM COMFORTABLE OBLIVION IN THE RUBBISH BIN OF HISTORY.



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SQUARING THE CIRCLE

"IT MUST BE STATED CLEARLY AND UNEQUIVOCALLY THAT IF THE ABANDONMENT OF IRISH TRADITION, OF IRISH ASPIRATION AND OF IRISH ALLEGIANCE IS THE PRICE OF INVOLVEMENT IN THE GOVERNMENT OF NORTHERN IRELAND, THEN THAT PRICE IS TOO HIGH TO PAY." *Irish Times 24.12.74.*

The quote above is an extract from a speech by Paddy Devlin in what presumably was a counterblast to those waverers in the ranks of the SDLP who have been voicing the possibility of abandoning the very aspiration which Paddy is waxing eloquent about. It is a significant speech since it clearly reflects a certain amount of doubt within the SDLP about the advisability of pushing on with the Irish dimension. Paddy Devlin has had to don his most republican colours and has demanded in the speciously democratic phrases which the SDLP have worked so hard to perfect; 'that the British dimension should cease to be the predominant tradition' and that presumably for the sake of balance, the Irish tradition shall be allowed expression in the organs of the State. Rather like the Archangels demanding that a little sin be allowed in Heaven in order to give expression to a tradition which had been rather rigorously excluded up till then.

LOVELY FEELING

Of course in his whole speech, Paddy Devlin chooses very carefully not to define precisely what is meant by the Irish dimension. He of course rambles on about traditions and aspirations and of 'feeling Irish! Never once, however, does he explain in concrete terms exactly what is meant by all this verbiage. And of course, he cannot; for to do so would destroy the nicely balanced democratic argument he is at such pains to construct. To talk about the 'British tradition' and the 'Irish tradition' as if they were different brands of soap-powder to be accepted or rejected by people on the basis of equal indifference to both, is a complete charade of the actual situation. The 'British tradition' is quite simply the overwhelming conviction of wishing to belong to the UK state, of participating in its democracy, of sharing its attitudes and its institutions; it is the result of hundreds of years history and not something to be discarded in a fit of bored ennui. The Irish tradition is equally simply the desire to separate from the British state and to create a state which will reflect accurately the feelings and attitudes of Irish Catholics. It is simply that. All the rhetoric about secularism and independence which republicans like to address to Ulster Protestants in the vain hope of making them feel uneasy about being British is for nothing. The reality has been created in Southern Ireland; it is from such exclusive, narrow and inbred Catholic nationalism that the Irish tradition derives its real strength and purpose.

TOTALLY CONTRADICTORY

Therefore for Paddy Devlin to talk about the two 'traditions' being given equal expression in the Northern Ireland state is a logical and political absurdity. They stand in totally mutual contradiction and they are not resolved by some sort of artificial creation which purports to allow the expression of both. In such a situation either one or the other will be expressed, not both. Over fifty years ago, the island of Ireland was divided in order that expression be given to the two traditions and they went their separate ways. Now Paddy Devlin wants the question re-opened; we await with interest how he intends the British tradition to be expressed in political terms in the Republic.

The questions of nationalism and 'traditions' tore Europe apart for the first half of this century and resulted in two terrible wars. Wars resolved these questions so that Europe today, the problem, if there at all, is minute. The Provos have attempted to resolve the question of 'tradition' in Northern Ireland by war; they have failed. Has Paddy Devlin some other suggestion to make?

THE NIC AGAIN.....Continued from Page Four

Senator Mullen, Andy Barr and Jimmy Graham hold views which are anathema to the majority of N.I. trade unionists. We have no confidence in Billy Blease and the N.I. Committee and call for their resignation.

.....Mullens views and made it

.....trade union movement that.....Continued on Page THREE

It was reported in the Irish Times on the 20th Dec. 1974 that the General Secretary of the Dublin based Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, Senator Michael Mullen had written to all the "non-Tory" members of the House of Commons and to the general secretaries of all trade unions in Britain urging "a new initiative for peace" in Northern Ireland on the part of the British government.

Senator Mullen is an influential member of the Executive Council of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions who is known to be actively sympathetic to the anti-partitionist movement and who has on many occasions used his position in the official trade union leadership to further this cause.

His letter called for an end to internment and for the enactment of a Bill of Rights in Northern Ireland. It also referred to an open letter which was signed by himself and by the current President of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, Andy Barr and other Northern Ireland trade unionists such as Betty Sinclair, secretary of the Belfast Trades Council and Jimmy Graham, district organiser of the A.U.E.W., and sent to Harold Wilson last May at the end of the U.W.C. strike. The open letter called for the British government to disengage from N.I. after they and the Irish government had worked out a "constitution and institutions appropriate to an All-Ireland situation."

Senator Mullen repeated this demand urging that the British government should cease to recognise the right of the unionist community to opt out of a united Ireland. If the British government did that, he argues, loyalist opposition to a united Ireland would be undercut, and the way would be open to a united Ireland in which all the "legitimate needs, claims and aspirations" of the Northern Protestants would be recognised?

It is intolerable that Senator Mullen and other members of the Executive of the ICTU such as Andy Barr etc. should be allowed to use their position in the official trade union leadership to disseminate Catholic nationalist propaganda in the British labour and trade union movements.

The vast majority of Northern Ireland workers belong to unions which are affiliated to the ICTU. The vast majority of trade unionists in Northern Ireland are completely opposed to the propaganda being put out by members of the Executive Committee of the ICTU.

What is even more intolerable is that the N. Ireland Committee of the ICTU has not disassociated itself completely from Senator Mullen's remarks. If they were doing a proper job of looking after the interests of their members they should be making it clear that Senator Mullen and Andy Barr's proposals are a recipe for civil war. Instead, their silence confirms what has been clear for some time. The role of the Northern Ireland Committee of the ICTU is to act as political stooges for the aggressive Catholic nationalism of the ICTU.

The Workers' Association believes that there is a need for a major reform of trade union organisation in Northern Ireland. The official trade union leadership is politically at loggerheads with its rank and file.

Two major changes are required. Firstly, there is a need to set up an Ulster T.U.C. with close links to the British T.U.C. to replace the current N.I. Committee of the I.C.T.U. An Ulster TUC would provide a forum for Northern Ireland trade unionists to deal properly with their local problems. It would also be able to express accurately the views of the Northern Ireland trade unionists.

Secondly there is a need to democratise the trade union leadership so that trade union officials reflect the views of their members. This can be done by expressing votes of no confidence and generally harrassing officials who have lost the sympathy of their members. The Workers' Association calls on Billy Blease and the N.I. Committee to explain why they have not publicly challenged Senator Mullens views and made it clear to the British labour and trade union movement that.....Continued on Page THREE

THE
NORTHERN IRELAND
COMMITTEE
AGAIN

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