

It is not intended formally to include the valid points raised at the 22 regional meetings that have been held in the course of April and May of this year. This would be a time-consuming and impractical exercise.

It is, however, intended to summarise them here as an aid to the discussion on the three major issues which have emerged.

It is also intended to produce an *Ireland Today* document for public consumption, which will serve a purpose similar to the Democratic Programme of the first Dáil. The points raised in the current discussions will be of great value in helping to formulate this programme.

(A) POINTS ON ANALYTICAL SECTION

There was general approbation of this section: it did not appear to conflict strongly with anyone's experience.

1 OMISSIONS WHICH EMERGED were:

(a) the failure to evaluate the language movement and cultural movement as one of the great potentially progressive forces. This is a serious omission which will be made good in the public document. By way of apology from the drafters of *Ireland Today*, let it be said that the internal politics of the language movement was not such as to enable an uncontroversial evaluation to be written down in a short paragraph. This situation, however, appears to be changing for the better.

(b) the failure to stress the co-operative movement as a mass democratic organisation with radical potential.

(c) the lack of reference to the special position of the Roman Catholic church under the 26-County constitution, and the negative influence of this factor on the development of democratic thinking among the northern Protestants. Coupled with this was the feeling that the lack of an integrated educational system was a factor preserving religious sectarianism. It was considered desirable to have an analysis of the various groupings among the emigrant Irish population and the organisations that they support, along the same lines as that done for the Irish in the Six and 26 Counties, together with an evaluation of their role in the national liberation struggle. It was suggested that the 'old' emigrants who had become relatively integrated had a special role to play in influencing the English trade union movement to press for a Bill of Rights for the Six Counties, and suchlike democratic demands. It was pointed out that the task of involving the English working class, organising the Irish in England, and supporting the Movement at home, were three complementary aspects of a single task, and that the various bodies severally active should co-ordinate their efforts.

2 POINTS REQUIRING ELABORATION were:

(a) the analysis of the farmers' organisations and the basis for the worker/farmer alliance.

It is not possible to do this without further work based on regional conferences of active farmers in the Movement who know and understand the local farmers' organisations. As a result of these Commission conferences, perhaps the local members will see that there is a need for the setting up of regional specialist committees to take care of this type of development. As a general guide to action it may be stated that whichever body locally has the most effectively democratic structure, enabling the small farmer to express his point of view, should be joined and supported.

(b) the role and status of the various other radical groups envisaged as being part of the national liberation movement. The Movement outside the three main urban centres seemed to think that too much weight had been placed on this question. At this stage it is sufficient to state that the issue is important in the main urban centres, that it *does* merit close analysis for that very reason, and that while it is not a problem for the other regions, it is necessary for the Movement as a whole to know and accept that in the urban centres, and in some smaller provincial centres such as Sligo, the make-up of the national liberation movement is likely to be composite. There is more on this question in the following sections.

(c) the role of the Orange Order in cementing the Protestant working class to unionism. This again requires more detailed first-hand knowledge than the Commission had got. Experience of this nature can only be derived in the course of contact with Protestant radicals; this is already developing in the course of the NICRA work. Specialist committees composed of trade unionists devoted to the task of getting mass official trade union support for NICRA demands can serve as a means of developing this understanding.

(d) 'working class' and 'working people': broadly speaking, the former are those who are eligible for trade union membership, while the latter includes the self-employed, farmers and working owner managers, but excludes those who derive their main income from investments.

It is necessary to stress that the boundaries between 'organised working class', 'self employed' and 'working owner managers' are fluid and there is considerable ideological overlap; many workers have got 'get rich quick' ideas while some small businessmen have been forced into that category during the heavy unemployment periods of the past; such often retain both working class outlook and trade union membership in unions which cater for self-employed and part-time workers.

(e) There was a need felt for a further analysis of the Labour Movement, with particular reference to:

(i) the role of the trade unions in the 26 County Labour Party structure: can this be made into a revolutionary force?

(ii) the role of the NILP in the Six Counties. This has assumed more importance now that that body has given support to the Belfast NICRA committee.

To summarise, we do not know all the answers to all the questions, but we do know how to organise to get them in the course of future work.

(B) POINTS ON STRATEGIC SECTION

There was unanimous agreement on the need for a 'national liberation front' type of movement. There was some unease at the use of the word *front*: this usage, however, has no possible significance at present, so that it can be left in existence during these discussions. When the various bodies are called together, it is likely that a suitable name will emerge.

There was, naturally, unanimous rejection of the vote-catching 'Clann' road, seeking alliance with the Labour Party under its present opportunist leadership. There was appreciation of the need to smooth the way for rank-and-file members of the Labour movement, north and south, to come into the NLF. There was no significant support for a reversion to the strategy of the fifties. There was a feeling that the national cultural movement had a significant role in the NLF structure.

However, the discussion on this section homed in on two crucial questions: the relationship of the socialist objectives to the anti-imperialist struggle; and the details of the specification of various organisations including the 'radical groups' suitable for inclusion in the NLF.

(a) Socialism and nationalism

While there is general acceptance of the social-revolutionary objectives of the Movement outside the main urban centres, there is unease that raising revolutionary social demands prior to the achievement of national liberation may alienate support for the latter. For example, nationalisation demands have to be spelt out in such a way as to win support and not hostility from small-scale local entrepreneurs. In other words, the 'selling' of social-revolutionary ideas needs to be done precisely, with local allusions, without jargon, catch-phrases or labels, avoiding the left-sectarian pitfalls into which the Labour Party has fallen. The precise *degree* of social-revolutionary objectives needs to be adapted to the need to unite all national-minded people against imperialism, concentrating on demands for nationalisation of alien-owned property.

This point needs to be particularly noted in Dublin, where the danger is that in the general explosion of advanced radical thinking, the Movement may become too advanced in its demands, and alienate its rural basis. This point emerged independently in a number of regions.

(b) The NLF

The 'NLF' which has emerged from these discussions may be defined as a body with structure of its own, arising from a convention of existing organised groups having common anti-imperialist aims. Such a body might have an annual conference, quarterly representative executive meetings, and an officer board, financed by affiliation fees. Its function, in between executive meetings, would be to see that affiliated bodies were informed about each other's activities, and to generate activities whereby the individual membership of the affiliated bodies could be encouraged to 'cross-fertilise' rather than act in isolation and at cross-purposes.

An NLF-type structure is not envisaged as arising fully-fledged on a 32-county basis; rather it is expected to arise on a *regional* basis, the Republican Movement providing the initial necessary element of 32-county unity, and guiding the partial NLF bodies towards an ultimate overall 32-county unity.

To focus ideas, both the NICRA and the Defence of the Nation League may be regarded as containing the germ of the NLF idea.

Bodies suitable for affiliation to the NLF may be classified at three levels: (1) political; (2) socio-economic; (3) cultural.

An NLF-type body may be practical politics in the Autumn of 1969. Bodies which would participate are:

- 1/ Political groups satisfying certain criteria:
 - (a) having objectives not in conflict with those of the Movement;
 - (b) having a disciplined and well-defined organisation that sticks to and implements agreed decisions;
 - (c) having an accepted standing among the mass organisations, at least as regards appreciable numbers of their members;
- 2/ Socio-economic groups: some trades councils, tenants associations and co-operatives
- 3/ Cultural groups: the student groups (Republican Clubs, Scoil na gCeardchumann); the language movement (including the Gaeltacht political movement); Wolfe Tone Societies, Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, NCA, GAA, etc (locally or nationally).

The NLF ideal in practice means groups with which the Republican Movement has already established a local arrangement. The name of the final association would be in Irish.

A suitable form for such a convention would be a weekend, with four sessions: to hear three policy statements on the three major fields, culminating in basic demands expressed in a resolution, to be as unanimous as possible a view. The final session might then be devoted to an organisational resolution embodying proposals for setting up a co-ordinating committee to ensure the maximum organised implementation of the demands of the various bodies.

The demands, in the form of a *Freedom Charter*, would need to be circulated well in advance to the various bodies which were considered likely to come.

It would be politic that the initial invitations should come from a preparatory committee composed of representative individuals, rather than from Sinn Féin as such.

It cannot be over-stressed that the NLF is not to be considered as a political party, but as a broad national movement with certain simple basic demands around which agitational support can be used to build all the affiliated organisations.

It must also be stressed that if the NLF which emerges from this is sufficiently convincing, the radical youth will be attracted to it, and the apparent need for left-wing splinter groups, to assent 'young' radicalism against the alleged conservatism of more experienced revolutionaries will cease to exist so sharply.

There was appreciation in the North of the need to get away from the 'armed wing of the Catholic church' image, and the need to get to grips with the basis of religious sectarianism. This is basically the same point as touched on in A(2)(c) of this addendum.

The danger of the Movement being submerged in broad bodies like the NICRA was stressed; the need for independent open activity under the

Republican banner was repeatedly urged, so as to prevent an independent image of the Movement before the public.

There was need felt for guidelines for collaboration with other bodies. These have already been laid down in Section B. It is, however, necessary to add that in the case of bodies where the area of agreement is very limited (e.g. basic civil rights) the tactic is to keep out the politics and concentrate on the limited objective, attempting to use the discipline of the broad-based body to make the others do the same. Thus the attempt by PD, under ISM influence, to make the NICRA into a social-revolutionary political body is retrograde. Keep to the moderate demands for which there is widest agreement. If this is conceded, have the next one ready that will keep as much as possible of the support.

The criterion to decide who can be collaborated with in broad groupings follows from the above. Accept collaboration with those bodies which are prepared honestly to accept the discipline of the joint committee in the area of common interest. The failure of the PD to fulfil this condition has given rise to difficulties. Where a joint committee results in stalemate and inaction, some form of unilateral action may be necessary; this should be chosen in such a way as to increase the basis of support for action, and move the joint committee forward in unity rather than to split the joint committee by 'getting rid of the moderates'. We want to bring the moderate forward to a more radical position, not to get rid of them.

Educational work directed at the people should be in the people's language. At all costs, socialist labels should not be allowed to confuse the people and prevent them from making the basic democratic demands. In particular, any tactical changes brought about as a result of the work of this commission needs to be completely and fully explained to the people.

(C) POINTS ON TACTICAL SECTION

The arguments on electoral policy drew forth a wealth of useful and fruitful discussions, without appreciable acrimony. The documents had clearly been read and understood.

The following reflects the relative weight of the arguments on both sides.

1/ There were basically different attitudes to Westminster, Stormont and Leinster House, reflecting an increasing degree of possibility for independent action. Some, however, thought that adopting different tactics in the Six and 26 Counties would detract from the 32-county nature of the Movement. It was quite clear that in the 26 Counties, people regarded Leinster House as their own, and that they wanted to use it.

2/ The importance of the time factor if the Movement as a whole had to decide on a tactical step, by a procedure such as has been adopted during the last six months. The energy of the leadership would be diverted from the continuous tasks of the current situation, allowing opportunities to slip. If, on the other hand, the Movement decides to open the options and to trust its leadership to use them in a principled manner, the full energy of the Movement can be devoted to building its membership and influence.

3/ The development of the Movement is essentially uneven; some areas fulfil the conditions necessary for the control of elected representatives before others.

The old idea of going in one step to an absolute majority before taking seats is therefore not practicable, except by lowering the standards and opening the way to loss of control of deputies by the Movement.

4/ People in favour of retaining abstention conceded that an extraordinary change in people's attitudes would be necessary before a successful election became a possibility.

5/ It came up repeatedly that those in favour of abstention should produce a credible programme. The coupling of agitational work with building a 'dual government' situation was seen as such a road.

The credibility of this argument is undermined, however, by the repeated observation that in the absence of independent Republican political participation, the Labour Party and, in the Six Counties, liberal moderate elements, build themselves up on the backs of the agitations.

6/ Some of those most strongly in favour of the abstention policy agreed that there was now a need for the Movement to have political participation under some guise. The point was made that Sinn Féin should be retained as a traditionalist wing of the Movement, and that another political organisation be formed to contest elections. While appreciating the thinking behind this idea, the Commission feel that it would in fact be deliberately creating the split mentality which the Movement must endeavour to avoid.

7/ Methods of control of elected representatives took up some considerable time in all discussions. The dangers of allowing the leadership to be dominated by the parliamentary group were appreciated. Control by salary was found acceptable, but it was felt that there should be a certain minimum salary retained by the representatives, rather than have it restricted to the pre-election salary. The need to choose candidates of tried revolutionary integrity was stressed.

8/ The 'danger of split if policy changes' argument did not receive much attention. It emerged that there was such a danger if the policy did not change.

D. POINTS ON THE STRUCTURE OF THE MOVEMENT

There was less opportunity to discuss this section, as by the time it was reached, most meetings had become tired.

However, it was evident from the points that were raised that there was little clarity on what was involved in the transfer of state power held in trust for the Republic by the Army Council to the shadow democratic state as soon as such could be credibly constructed. The general feeling was that the Republic should remain with the Army Council for the foreseeable future. The politics of this obviously needs further elucidation in the NLF context.

It was felt that the existing progressive leadership of the Army could be trusted to allow the development of an unforced system of democratic control within Sinn Fein, and that the governmental powers should be held in reserve so as to allow the NLF to develop into a body capable of forming a credible revolutionary government in an appropriate situation.

A case was made for the examination of the role of the emigrants and the nature of the connection of the emigrant bodies with the movement. In brief this can be approached similarly to the developments in the home movement envisaged here: form united action groups on specific issues with other emigrant bodies having similar objectives; look for support from the English working class on grounds of common interest.

The need was stressed for the national executive to have the right to ratify regional staff appointments. There was some feeling for a new name for the integrated movement, some were worried about the security angle arising from integration. One proposal involved the development of a new political movement back-boned by the Army, leaving Sinn Fein with its existing constitution. A further proposal involved the setting up of a sort of 'senate' of older members for the purpose of safeguarding the continuity of experience.

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