

SLP's confusion

"In its political philosophy, if one can call it that, Irish Republicanism bears no relation to any kind of social democracy or socialism that I know of," said Dr Noel Browne in a widely-reported recent speech. But what kind of party does Dr Browne think he is Parliamentary spokesman for? In fact the Socialist Labour Party commits itself by its constitution to the full traditional programme of Irish Republicanism with all its narrow fanaticism and conservatism.

"The Socialist Labour Party commits itself to securing a withdrawal of the British presence in all its forms from the 32 counties of Ireland, including the withdrawal of British troops from the 6 North-Eastern counties of Ireland." This is the traditional programme of Irish Republicanism expressed in the most extreme form possible, in a form more extreme than many other Republicans would accept. It is interesting to consider some of its implications.

The organisation of British-based unions in Ireland is undeniably one of the forms of the British presence here. Republicans have always taken particular objection to this form of the British presence, and periodically launched attacks on it - precisely because it is one of the most popular forms. It follows from the SLP Constitution that Matt Merrigan, chairman of the SLP, is bound to campaign for the withdrawal of the Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union, of which he is secretary, given that it is a British-based union and therefore a form of the British presence in Ireland. Either the SLP is being utterly hypocritical in professing this fanatical Republican aim, or else provisions like these were railroaded through by a fanatical minority within its ranks, without the general membership being aware of what they implied.

Another implication of this policy must be considered. A million people in Northern Ireland demand that the province should retain its political link with Britain, and explicitly consider themselves British. What are they but a human form of the British presence in Ireland? Is the SLP prepared to maintain, as certain extreme Republicans are, that if these people do not abandon their pro-British attitudes they must be physically removed from Ireland along with other forms of the British presence? (And if so, how does it propose to do the impossible?)

In another of its constitutional "commitments" the SLP draws back from its extremism, and contradicts what it has already given commitment to. "It shall seek to achieve the unification of the working class throughout the entire island as a essential part of the struggle for a United Socialist Ireland." This is only a piece of humbug. The struggle for a United Ireland of any kind separate from Britain is a certain cause of division between Ulster Protestant workers and Catholic workers. "A United Socialist Ireland" only means Eire Nua in its latest disguise. If socialism is really what is at issue, there is no reason whatever why workers from the majority community in Ulster should fight for a United Socialist Ireland rather than for a Socialist Britain.

Socialists Against Nationalism is a pressure group which exists to oppose nationalism and promote class politics, in the Republic of Ireland. We believe that the ruinous effects of nationalism on the working class and socialist movement throughout Ireland are there for all who wish to see them. We demand that the Government of the Republic recognise as legitimate the present constitutional status of Northern Ireland. To this end we demand that Articles 2 and 3 of the Republic's Constitution, which lay claim to the territory of Northern Ireland, be dropped. We oppose the call for the British Government to declare its intent to withdraw from Northern Ireland. If this were done the most likely outcome would be general civil war.

We invite all socialist organisations and individuals who agree with the group's aims to join us in our activities. Information about Socialists Against Nationalism can be got by writing to: Socialists Against Nationalism
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