

Drug Crime

A dagger at the Heart of the Working Class

**Policy Document from
The Workers Party of Ireland**

Drug Crime

A dagger at the Heart of the Working Class

**A Workers Party policy document
on
Crime, Policing, Detention,
and
Civil Liberties
in a changing society**

**The Central Executive Committee
The Workers Party of Ireland
January 2001**

The Crisis Now

Crime from drugs is now a dagger at the heart of the working class. It is stopping a proper response to the core issue in society now- the fact that wealth and want are soaring side by side. In the strict sense working class communities are the only communities ravaged by addiction and the killer greed of those who get fat on it. The Workers Party is clear on this issue - regardless of class - addiction always ravages and cheapens a person and destroys a family. But only among the working class does it take hold so powerfully that it threatens and ruins the quality of life of the Community.

Why does addiction flourish among the deprived? Why do the drug capitalists flood deprived places-including jails- with their killer products? Because that's where the market is. Their market is the need for escapism and is born of hopelessness.

Media coverage of crime and the courts has led to the names of working class communities being automatically linked in the public mind to drugs, crime, violence and danger. Please note this: The working class is not somehow "given" to criminality. But it is much harder to see to it that a vulnerable young person is strong enough to say NO to drugs when they have so little in their life to say YES to. Again the class system is a jail- if you do not have the money to buy your way out through learning and earning.

The Workers Party asserts that there is a humane way between vigilante rule and coldly turning away from the misery. The Workers Party was the first organisation to say that property developers and big business were routinely bribing and controlling political parties. We have no hesitation saying unless we act collectively, with strength and planning that in a few years, if unopposed, it will be the major drug dealers who will carry on or add to this squalid tradition.

Drug Crime: Winning Back Dignity

Issues that attack democracy are raised by drug crime. In parts of Dublin, other cities and it must be stressed scores of towns and villages across Ireland, angry citizens find themselves having to be careful of what they say in pubs, shops and most crucially at public community meetings in case they discommode drug dealers, large or small. They face intimidation or worse. There is hardly a parent who does not worry and fret about their children falling into the pit of drugs,

crime and the living death of male or female prostitution. The fear is worse in the most deprived areas where heroin is as common as a packet of crisps.

Towards Solving It For Good

Smart people know that if you help an addict beat addiction with moral and medical backing, and educate the children properly against drugs, the dealers will in time have many fewer to deal to in your community. Drugs have transformed Dublin and other cities. I don't hesitate to repeat that every town and village in Ireland - and probably more and more families - must be given the leadership, common sense education and back-up if needed to face drug abuse in the home, in the school, and if addiction and dealing is not taken on now, on the streets everywhere.

Work With The Gardai

There is a golden rule if you want to play your part as a lawful and successful movement against drugs and the widespread anti-social crime that goes with drugs, from the muggings to the murders. Work with the Gardai.

The Job Of The Citizen

On the drugs issue especially, policing is not a matter only for the police. It is a matter for every citizen whose duty it is to back the police on this crisis, quietly, patiently and by keeping in touch with gardai, who know best how to hit the godfathers where it hurts them.

Steady Advances Always Last

On the cancer of heroin the steady advances made by an alliance of citizens and gardai against drugs and drug crime would itself be criminal to ignore. Once again, as soon as the community decision is taken to fight for a better life it is unstoppable.

Exploiting The Crisis

The so-called "Liberals" in upper class and socially insulated independent republics could be in for a shock at the next election. The provisionals use sectarianism to get their cut of power in the north. They are trying to win the same

power in the South by exploiting the genuine drugs scandal. If they get away with it and get influence it will not take the stupid 'liberals' who can't welcome them enough into "democratic politics" long to learn that leopards live by jungle law - and that this particular Provo leopard has not changed its spots.

The Best Gardai Police For Peace

Gardai along with many clergy, social workers and community activists give great commitment to the Ballymun Drugs Task Force because it makes their jobs better. We found decency and enlightened thinking and a great desire to give respectable people a respectable community. But what impressed all involved most was that the Ballymun Strategy worked. Simply, the community passed on information about what they had seen personally - usually open dealing in a part of the estate. Who better to know what's going on in an area than the people who live there? Sometimes the gardai went to the scene, made arrests and broke it up. But if citizens or the gardai built up enough information over time to find a pattern, it was very possible to catch and prosecute the criminal who supplies the suppliers.

With the Ballymun Strategy committed modern gardai - working with citizens, social and community organisations- can see their work rewarded.

Civil Rights And The Rights Of Society

Delegates at the Workers Party's last ardfheis (November 2000) were clear and firm on drugs and crime, sentencing, the use and possible abuse of new laws and Garda powers. And they were angry at the stupid lack of support for addicts who want to quit while Justice Minister O'Donoghue appears proudly in endless newspaper photographs opening multi-million pound jails and reopening "refurbished" areas of Mountjoy when it should be pulled down and rebuilt with the intention to help offenders not to offend again.

At the same time massive resources must be put into effective and humane rehabilitation structures in jails and affected communities. The families of addicts must also be supported.

School-based education programmes involving addicts who kicked active addiction should be standard in every school in the State.

While we understand the depth of the drugs crisis for those sometimes already on the ropes through the class system, it is still crucial to protect civil rights and civil liberties and call to account gardai who abuse these powers, and corrupt gardai. We therefore call for the membership of specialist Garda units with special powers to be rotated every three years to prevent any sense of elitism developing through long familiarity.

The Workers' Party Policy at a Glance:

- (1) It is harder for a young person to say no to drugs if they have so little to say yes to. Spending on education must soar and a structured path to third level education put in place.
- (2) Spending must be substantially increased on Garda anti-drug staffing and resources. The citizen must do their job, communities must band with the garda if there is to be success.
- (3) Any person convicted of having drugs worth over £20,000 must be subject to the maximum of 20 years in prison.
- (4) Rehabilitation, especially in the scandalous jails must be put at the top of the agenda.
- (5) Smart working-class communities will see that it is in their interests to take on the "not in my back yard" attitude to treatment and treatment centres in their areas.

Sean Ó Cionnaith
Spokesperson
Justice, Equality and Law Reform
Chairman
Ballymun Branch
The Workers Party
January 2001

Crime and Policing

In formulating and developing our policies aimed at combating crime we recognise as an imperative that the social, economic and environmental factors which greatly contribute to crime (in particular petty crime) be addressed with as much vigour, if not more, than the fight against crime.

Over the past decades, in common with many other areas of Irish life, a huge change has occurred in the nature of crime, the policing response to this fact and flowing from these two factors the impact on society. Without doubt the two most serious criminal actions of the past decades has been terrorism and drugs. Terrorism in the main has been confined to certain parts of the country whilst drug dealing and drug taking on the other hand has escalated beyond the major cities. Today no town or even village is without its drug problems.

The response of the Gardai to these two major problems has been to create special units which are trained and equipped to deal with each particular problem. This has led to some success in combating terrorism and drug dealing.

However the issue of drugs and drug dealers poses a different type of threat to society than terrorism and therefore needs a different approach based on the reality of the situation. The profit from drug dealing is so huge that every time one drug dealer is arrested, or is killed by competitors, another one is ready and willing to take their place. Death threats or imprisonment do not appear to deter them.

A disturbing and increasing level of violent street crime, characterised especially by attacks on the person, poses another serious problem for society North and South. Death and serious injury has become a common feature of nightlife in our major cities and towns. We must also take notice of the growing and alarming number of racist attacks on asylum seekers and refugees.

Many of these attacks are linked to excessive use of alcohol and drugs. We call for greater police supervision of pubs and clubs where young people socialise. We welcome the proposed introduction of a licence system / registration for people acting as security at social events to be instituted by the police. Such a system must ensure that all those engaged in such security work have no criminal or paramilitary connections, are properly trained and monitored.

It is essential that there be adequate numbers of police on the streets at the time when pubs and club premises are being cleared. The Garda 'Operation Oiche' should be expanded. Again, inadequate public and private transport services contribute to thugs instilling fear in people attempting to make their way home. This is an area where the problem can be solved without the investment of huge financial resources but rather through the application of some imagination, energy and action by the authorities.

For the Workers Party the involvement of the citizen in the fight against crime is essential to ensure success. There have been a number of very positive measures introduced over recent years. The concept of Community Policing is especially welcome and has our full support. Coupled with this initiative the Neighbourhood Watch and Community Alert projects have proved of great value and benefit to communities, particularly to many elderly people living alone in urban and rural areas. A major and ongoing task of the Garda Authority is to encourage and develop this particular aspect of policing. Fundamental to these initiatives is the confidence and the trust of citizens in the Garda Siochana. Recent years has seen a marked improvement in Garda-Community Relations which are to be welcomed. Time and time again we make the point that it is the combined efforts of the Gardai and citizens which will defeat criminality and most especially drug dealers.

We recognise that the Gardai are under-financed, under-resourced and also on many occasions ill-equipped to deal with criminal activity in all its many forms in society today. Much improvement has taken place and much progress continues to be made in the structure, organisation and funding of the Garda Siochana but much more remains to be done. In every Garda District we need modern, well-equipped Garda Stations with good living and working conditions. Now with the 'Celtic Tiger' economy bringing so much revenue to government it is time to invest sufficient resources in ensuring that Gardai have all the necessary means, accommodation, transport, equipment, and technology to perform their duties. Ultimately as we have said the success of the Gardai in the fight against crime depends on the active co-operation and involvement of the citizens alongside of the Gardai in this fight.

This is especially true today when, as we said earlier, society confronts one of the most evil and most deadly of problems - the issue of drugs and drug dealers. Flowing from that problem we are faced with the crisis of a rising rate of drug related crime affecting every town and city in Ireland. We are of the view that

Society, and the Gardai who are in the forefront of this fight, have the right to take whatever measures are deemed necessary, where such measures conform to respect for human rights and dignity and respect for law, to defeat these gangs who control and trade in drug dealing. We have no hesitation in making the demand that there should be a maximum sentence of 20 years for any drug dealer convicted of being in possession of hard drugs to the street value of £20,000 and of dealing in these drugs. We also demand that any monies seized from convicted drug dealers should be distributed by the Gardai to community groups in the district where such monies are seized.

We reject completely the actions of so-called vigilante groups who, in many cases, provide cover for other drug dealers to divert attention from their own evil actions. We condemn the marches on homes and houses of so-called suspected drug dealers. It is the Gardai and the court's task and duty to deal with criminals and it is essential that these agencies of the state receive full support from the public. In recent years we have seen how ex-terrorists and active terrorists have become involved in this evil trade. These groups have, through intimidation and murder, carved out for themselves the leading position as suppliers of drugs and also protectors of other drug dealers who pay them commission. They have spread their tentacles into all areas of crime, transporting unfortunate refugees, running very profitable protection rackets etc.

The famous French author Balzac's comment "Behind every great fortune there is a crime" has been well proven in our country over the past years. The exposure of many 'respectable persons' engaged in criminal activity highlights the fact that crime is not only a problem of the poorer sections of society but is in fact, as it has been for centuries, the pursuit of the 'powerful' in society. Leading politicians, wealthy 'self made' businessmen have been caught with their hands in the public purse. We have had numerous tribunals established in order to root out the guilty. Whilst we welcome every step taken to ascertain who was engaged in robbing the state and the people we note that so far the principal people to gain have been the lawyers. We have learned much but so far little justice has been done. When one considers that most of the corruption was being practiced by the wealthy and powerful while workers and their families were being deprived of adequate medical services, proper educational facilities and on top of this being taxed to the hilt it will take a lot of justice to make up for all the crimes of the Haugheys, Dunlops, Redmonds, Gogarty, Ellis, Burke and the many more still unnamed crooks. The Workers Party restates its firm and total opposition to criminality in all its forms and we oppose all those in

society, no matter where placed, who deprive citizens or the state of their legitimate goods or cash.

We are concerned that society should use all its resources, human, technical and financial in the fight to defeat criminality.

We put forward these proposals which we believe will help society to win this war:

A. Greater resources to be allocated to the Gardai to promote Community Policing, Neighbourhood Watch, and Community Alert combined with an ongoing education programme in schools, colleges and on T.V., Radio and newspapers highlighting how the citizens can play a greater and more effective role in this task.

B. We believe that the concept of a Garda Reserve should be examined as an aid to the Gardai. Such a reserve can be used for secretarial work, for staffing stations, for traffic control and allowing greater use of Gardai on the streets. Retired Gardai should be considered for such work giving their experience and knowledge to their serving colleagues. Such a reserve would also be invaluable in assisting with Community Policing, Neighbourhood Watch and Community Alert.

C. We propose that Local Councils and Corporations should elect Local Police Committees to liaise with Gardai and, on occasion, advise and support Gardai. Such committees could play a role in ensuring that good community relations are maintained between the citizens and the Gardai.

D. The Drug Task Forces have proved effective in those areas where they have been operating. Therefore we propose that Drug Task Forces are established in all major population centres.

D. The establishment of Special Garda Units and Agencies whether to deal with terrorism and drugs, two of the most serious problems confronting society, whilst welcome and indeed necessary, must at all times be strictly controlled and monitored. It should be a matter of principle that the membership of such units be rotated on a regular basis in order to avoid any elitist mentality or behaviour.

E. We would also propose the establishment of local Criminal Assets Bureau

units to deal with the local drugs barons who, very often, are able to escape the national net.

F. The establishment of an independent National Police Authority. The Government must initiate a comprehensive independent review of policing similar to that undertaken in Northern Ireland.

G. There must be an Independent Garda Complaints Board in order to ensure that any citizen's complaint is not only judged impartially but that such procedure is seen to be impartial. We call for the extension of the democratisation of the police service as contained in the "Patten Report" to the Gardai, e.g. independent complaints and greater accountability. It is essential that, at the end of the day, the Gardai are democratic and accountable to the citizens.

Human Rights

We see it as a priority that all repressive legislation must be abolished. The situation whereby more than sixty years after its introduction the Offences Against the State Act is not only still in force, but has been amended a number of times and strengthened is deplorable in a democratic society. We recognise that Terrorism and Drug Dealing have to be combatted with all the resources and power of the State but it is essential that laws created for a specific time and specific events should not be misused as a cover-all for every type of crime. Over the past years the O.A.S.A. has been used in cases of armed robbery and murder where it was clear that there was no subversive threat or connection. In such cases it was used as a convenient weapon to make the task of the Gardai and D.P.P. easier. This must be condemned and the practice stopped. The best way to ensure this is done is to abolish all repressive legislation. Let us frame laws aimed at terrorists and drug dealers in a mature and sober frame of mind not in any hysterical atmosphere created by the media or the actions of any criminal gangs.

The establishment of Human Rights Commissions in both Northern Ireland and the Republic was one of the commitments of the Good Friday Agreement. Unfortunately the government in the Republic fell at the very first hurdle by creating a quango instead of an accountable body that could win the confidence and trust of the people the Commission was intended to protect. The government

established a selection committee to look at recommendations and applications for the Human Rights Commission, but yet saw fit to ignore all but one of its nominations. The Minister proceeded with his own appointments to the Commission on the traditional basis of cronyism and 'jobs for the boys'. He attempted to divert the subsequent furore by increasing the size of the commission from 8 to 14 and including some of those proposed by the original selection committee. This is an entirely inauspicious start for the Human Rights Commission and shows clearly the lack of commitment by the present government to the concept of transparency and accountability.

We welcome the introduction of the Human Rights Act in Britain and Northern Ireland as an important contribution to the framework and culture of human rights. While The Workers Party continues to have concerns about the interpretation of rights in a manner which may conflict with collective rights, for example trade union and political rights, the Party awaits, with interest, the construction of this legislation by the Courts. The Workers Party remains committed to the creation of a dedicated Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland and to the principles and methods of enforcement set out in the Party document on a Bill of Rights.

At a time when the police, local authorities, private corporations and individuals are increasingly committed to the installation and use of closed circuit television [CCTV] systems and in conditions where such systems are introduced with little or no reasoned debate, the Workers' Party expresses grave reservations concerning the unrestricted and unregulated growth of CCTV.

Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights [ECHR] provides the right to freedom of expression and Article 8 of the Convention, sometimes viewed as a competing right, enshrines the right to respect for private and family life. These rights are subject to general exceptions, such as national security, public safety, the prevention of crime or disorder or the protection of the rights and freedom of others.

The introduction of CCTV may have a serious and deleterious effect on both these rights. The Workers Party believes that as a socialist party we have the right to organise, recruit and disseminate information, free from the surveillance and interference of the capitalist state and its intelligence agencies. The use of CCTV, whether directly or indirectly, to survey, monitor, gather intelligence or to control or impede legitimate political or trade union activity is unacceptable

and The Workers Party remains implacably opposed to the use of CCTV for such purposes.

The Workers' Party also has grave reservations about the general intrusive implications of CCTV systems. The capacity to intrude into private life and the work environment and even the facility to monitor citizens in a public place and subsequently use this for ulterior or entertainment purposes is a serious and dangerous threat to civil liberties. The right wing observation that if one is doing nothing wrong there is nothing to fear is redolent of the old threat of intimidation and disrespect for human rights.

However, The Workers' Party acknowledges that the victims of crime are most often the more vulnerable sections of the working class: the elderly, the sick and working families living in economically and socially deprived and excluded public housing estates. In such instances, where a police presence is rare or wholly absent, workers and the vulnerable may derive a feeling of security and protection from the presence of CCTV. While The Workers Party remains opposed to the privatisation of public security and recognises that cameras cannot and should not replace effective, efficient and responsive policing, in those circumstances and subject to the consent of the people living and working in those areas, a comprehensive consideration of the general principles of human rights and civil liberties, a properly accountable and democratically controlled and regulated system of CCTV may be acceptable.

Accordingly, The Workers Party calls for an informed and reasoned debate on the issue of CCTV systems, an end to the unrestricted development of CCTV as a matter of policy and proposed panacea for social problems. The Workers Party demands that the Government takes immediate steps to render CCTV systems subject to rigorous statutory regulation and control.

Prison and Detention

Society is judged by the manner in which it treats those in prison. It is only in recent years that any improvements have been made in the way Irish society treats those it commits to prison. Over that period of time we have seen the emergence of a small number of people concerned to establish a modern and humane prison system. For too long society has ignored the plight of the greater number of people imprisoned preferring to leave it to faceless bureaucrats and judges to administer and send people into a system geared to punishment not rehabilitation.

The prison service has been maintained and improved because there are many dedicated men and women who are concerned to improve the life and realise the potential of those imprisoned. These professionals have been struggling for a long time with many difficult problems which successive governments have ignored. The plight of prisoners and their families is way down the priority list of Ministers of Justice and their professional bureaucrats. They are more concerned to make political capital with newspaper headlines when they make a speech about hard-line action against criminals. Never do they stop to think about creating a different atmosphere in society about criminals and punishment and setting out a policy for crime prevention not revenge.

The reality in Irish society today is that there is not a coherent policy to cope with the large and growing numbers of people incarcerated. In fact prisons are now used by government and society as dumping grounds for those who, in many cases, are unable to cope with life. The majority of those in Irish prisons are drawn from the same level of society - the section that is most deprived - with poor housing, inadequate educational facilities with a huge problem of illiteracy, and no prospect of a decent job. These are therefore the most prone to fall victim to drug addiction and, flowing from that, to begin a steady decline into crime and criminality.

There are, of course, criminals who do not belong to this category - professional criminals from all levels of society who take the calculated risk of imprisonment as part of their life. These represent a tiny fraction of society. And of course we have cases like the Sheedy case - imprisoned for drunken driving and killing a pedestrian but who have influential friends outside jail and within the system who can ease matters for them.

The most serious question facing society, government and the prison service is the issue of escalating drug addiction and its prevalence among prisoners and in society. The serious nature of the problem is reflected in the fact that out of almost 800 prisoners in Mountjoy Prison - the largest prison in the State - two-thirds are addicted to drugs, and one in four are serious drug addicts. Due mainly to the work of the prison staff one half of these prisoners become drug free during their prison term but how many remain drug free is a moot point. As has been repeatedly stated the greater number of prisoners come from an unstable background, they have low self-esteem, no confidence in themselves. They naturally look upon prison as a place to avoid but if it happens it is accepted as some other obstacle life has thrown in their path. In these cases drugs seem an escape from reality which indeed they are, but only for a short time.

The reality for prison staff and for prisoners is that there is no long-term prison policy. Given that it is now recognised by all serious commentators that drugs are a major cause of crime one would expect that this is one area where a long-term strategy would be in place. We have a situation where the whole question of drugs and crime is at best being neglected and at worst ignored.. The Department of Justice and the Department of Health, the two government Departments concerned with prisons administration and treatment of drug addicts, are pulling a con job on the public. They are pretending that they are implementing a drug treatment policy whereas there are in fact playing politics with the situation. If a Minister decides that his profile or constituency rating requires a certain spin on prison policy then the various department bureaucrats willingly oblige. Most often this spin will be of a hard-line speech or action on crime and punishment. The record of government and bureaucrats demonstrates that they do not care, they have neither the courage nor desire to promote and implement a humane prison policy.

We endorse the broad proposal made some years ago to establish an Independent Prisons Agency which would free the administration and management of all Penal institutions from the conservative shackles of the bureaucrats in the Department of Justice. Regrettably the Minister and his Department have not pursued the proposal to the point where it can be seen to be independent or effective. The interim board appointed by the minister does not give any confidence that it will make any radical reforms or sweep away the bureaucratic mindset which has been the hallmark of prison administrations for centuries. What is required is a Prison Agency which will be made up of people with real life experience of dealing with prisons and prisoners. Almost two years after an

interim board was appointed to the Prison Agency we still do not have any structures established or any involvement in the prison service. We have a director appointed who does not yet have any staff, office or legislation giving him the necessary power or resources to act.

At the end of the day it is society that is responsible for the way our prisons are run. Because there are no votes from the public in being seen to be 'soft on crime and criminals' politicians take the easy option, the coward's way, and make loud noises about the need to protect the public from dangerous elements. Nobody would deny that it is essential and necessary to detain criminals, especially those convicted of violent crimes, those involved in drug dealing etc. In doing so there is an onus on society to ensure that those imprisoned are given the opportunity for rehabilitation so that on release they do not fall back into bad habits.

It is our view that it is the working class which is most discriminated against, which suffers most from criminal activity, and which is also the class from which the majority of prisoners come. No matter what city or town one goes to we find the common factors in regard to prisoners. Poor social and economic conditions plus inadequate educational facilities which provide breeding ground for criminality. It is clear to us that governments of yesterday and today had, and have, no serious intent in tackling the sources and cause of criminality. So long as we have faceless bureaucrats determining prison policy at the whim of petty politicians we will continue to have a growing problem of crime and drug addiction.

To win this war against drugs and crime we must begin to involve the public, to inform people of the way in which people become criminals and how they are treated. We must start with how to prevent crime happening. We must look at the person in prison their home, schools, and their environment. We must recognise that it will require a very large increase in resources to build suitable facilities for holding prisoners to help them become educated, equipped for life, to have well trained staff decently paid, to have sufficient drug counsellors in every prison. It is our view that in this society there is an overuse of prison. It is too convenient for judges and government to lock away the problem and leave it to someone else, namely prison staff, to solve. Here much more use must be made of such methods as restitution to victims and community service. We welcome the establishment of the Drugs Court opened in Dublin in January 2001. Once again this measure is not adequate to deal with the serious problem that exists. It

has all the appearances of a stop gap measure reflecting the need to deflect adverse publicity rather than a change in the departmental mindset.

Imprisonment often means severe difficulties and problems for the families of prisoners who are most often innocent victims. In many cases imprisonment can lead to the destruction of the family, can mean reduced employment opportunities for ex-prisoners who wish to change. Also imprisonment leads to increased demand on social welfare services by families of prisoners, resources which could be channelled into other areas if we had a proper long-term strategy for prison reform. We must provide thoughtful professional programmes for those who are willing to change. It is sensible and realistic for society to encourage integration of ex-prisoners into society. This can only be done by providing opportunities for vocational and educational development. In particular the plight of young offenders needs urgent attention. There is a great need for suitable, supervised accommodation for young offenders. Young lives have been lost due to the absence of suitable accommodation. It is imperative that young offenders are not incarcerated with older prisoners.

Prison Visiting Committees, which were established many years ago as a means of having outside persons inspect and examine treatment of offenders, have totally lost their way. It is now part and parcel of the political patronage system of 'gifts' to be handed out by the politicians to some crony or party hack who needs to be kept in line. We have a ludicrous situation whereby a person from Donegal is appointed to a Cork Prison Visiting committee and travels from Donegal to Cork for expenses. If we are to have such committees concerned about prison conditions then they should be made up of experienced persons - former prison officials, members of Irish Council of Civil Liberties, members of Irish Penal Reform Trust, plus rehabilitated prisoners. Furthermore we should examine whether we could have a method whereby serving prisoners can elect a member on to their Visiting Committee.

The Workers Party therefore demands:

- A. Well trained and adequately paid staff in all penal institutions.
- B. Sufficient drug counsellors. We would propose a maximum of 50 addicts/patients to one counsellor.

- C. Expanded education prospects for prisoners with more teachers and courses
- D. Less use of custodial sentences for many types of petty crime.
- E. Courts to make greater use of community service for offenders and also of restitution to victims.
- F. Improved probation and welfare service, with specific emphasis on the care and rehabilitation of released addicts.
- G. Restructured prison visiting committees.
- H. Urgent completion of legislation and staffing for the new Independent Prison Agency.

Appendix

Speech delivered by Sean Ó Cionnaith, Ard Comhairle delegate, introducing policy document on Crime and Policing at the Workers Party Ard Fheis on 18th/19th November 2000.

This policy document sets out the approach of the Workers' Party to the question of crime, policing, detention and civil liberties. Our proposals are based on our discussions and experience with many organisations and individuals involved in combating crime, and implementing a policy of punishment and rehabilitation for those involved in crime. In particular we draw on the experience of Workers Party members in many cities and towns who have been actively involved in fighting the scourge of drug addiction and drug dealing which has plagued working class communities throughout the country.

Crime and punishment are two major questions which society has been attempting to answer for many centuries. In our modern developed society we have many categories of crime. Some, like computer fraud, or internet based paedophile rings are new and dangerous by-products of modern technology. Other crime, like white collar crime or the institutionalised abuse of children have been with us for a long time but have only recently been exposed. We are faced with a situation in regard to the nature, scope and depth of the crime problem of which our parents and grandparents could never have conceived. Today, also, we are faced with a widespread problem of alienation, whereby many young people are isolated from society and turn to crime and drugs in an attempt to solve their problems. The scourge of drug dealing and addiction is one of the most serious problem that confronts society today. Coupled with this we have an ever increasing problem of violence, domestic violence, random vicious street violence and, of course, the ever present problem of terrorism.

The most immediate and deadly of these crimes must be the issue of drugs which devastates not only the individual, but entire families and indeed communities as we know from our work among the working class. The scale and extent of drug dealing and addiction is, at this stage, very acute and is present among all sections of society and found in almost every town and city of our country. Addicts can be cured with the proper programmes, resources, and time. What is required is for the state to recognise the serious problem that now exists and allocate the necessary resources, in money and trained personnel, to deal with the problem.

How to deal effectively with drug dealers is a more serious matter. We make it clear in our document that drug dealers must face the full wrath of society. There can be no hiding place for drug dealers. Society cannot afford to treat drug dealers with any kind of leniency. As a Workers' Party, whose class has suffered most from the actions of drug dealers, we must have a clear position and give leadership to our community on this issue. In the fight against drugs there can be no shilly-shallying. It is the Gardaí who stand in the front line in this fight but they need, and must have, the total backing and support of the community. The proposals we make for various initiatives to assist the Gardaí are designed to protect and make our society a better place for all. No longer can there be an 'us and them' attitude. That is why we call for more involvement by the citizens with the Gardaí in community and neighbourhood schemes so that the most effective ways can be developed to defeat crime.

The issue of what happens to those who are imprisoned is another matter that has for too long been neglected. As the document states, we are aware that much work has been done by many individuals involved in the prison service to help those who are in jail. The attitude of the government - every government to-date - has been to use the prison issue as a political football to grab headlines about hard-line policies which the media will use to sell papers. The central plank of government prison policy is one of incarceration, not rehabilitation. The recent opening of new prisons without proper welfare or probation services just highlights that reality. We stress the problem in prisons concerning drug addiction but again to solve this problem requires spending money on counselors and programmes with all the back-up necessary to achieve success. The necessary people with the right qualifications and, most importantly, the right attitudes to rehabilitation and the resources to do the job, are the essential ingredients for success.

Published by:
The Workers Party of Ireland
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www.workers-party.org

Title: Drug Crime: A Dagger at the Heart of the Working Class

Organisation: Workers' Party

Author: Sean Ó Cionnaith

Date: 2001

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