

The Plough

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Seamus Costello Special

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Costello Commemoration 2003

(Speech by Ard –Comhairle Member Pol Little)

Comrades and friends we gather here in Bray today to not only remember our founder and political visionary - Seamus Costello - but also to celebrate the political legacy that he left to us, the Irish Republican Socialist Party and Republican Socialism.

Over the past few years former INLA prisoners, many who are here today, through Teach Na Failte have embarked on a program of erecting suitable memorials to our fallen comrades across the country. That work is ongoing and will continue until all are recognised for what they were - Republican Socialists, Soldiers in a volunteer

revolutionary army that fought with great courage the mercenary forces of British and international imperialism.

Over the past few years the INLA whilst adhering to its ceasefire has had to take defensive measures in defence of the Irish working class, which has come under attack from the reactionary sectarian campaign of loyalists. The INLA whilst not relishing this role will not leave vulnerable working class communities unarmed or undefended.

We salute the courage of each and every man and woman who makes a contribution to the struggle!

Today the IRSP has to face into the struggle for a socialist republic based on democratic principles, equipped with the integrity of republican socialist politics. This alongside our determination to achieve Irish freedom, full social equality for all, and self government are the arms required for today's struggle. The political conditions not only in Ireland but also internationally in 2003 demand that our response is measured and tailored to achieve victory, not wallowing in a self righteous indignation engaged in a fruitless armed campaign that our enemies long ago learned how to minimise and negate.

Times and conditions change, that the Republican Socialist Movement moved with those times and conditions is a political imperative. We serve notice on our opponents today - In armed struggle the RSM was tenacious, determined, ingenious and confident. In peace, we are equally tenacious, determined, ingenious and confident, these were the attributes of Seamus Costello and we are proud to have inherited them.

Whilst the political conditions and the combined will of the Irish people expressed in 1998 demand that we use only peaceful methods it would be wrong for our opponents to see this as a defeat or weakening of republican socialism.

We listened to the combined wishes of the Irish people which is more than the current Irish government did when it enabled the Anglo/American invasion of Iraq: An invasion that has led to the decimation of the Iraqi people and the plundering of their countries collective wealth, all to satisfy the lust of Anglo American capitalism.

We listen to the Irish people in regards to the morality of war not George Bush, Tony Blair or Bertie Ahearn, hypocrites one and all. Unlike them we have no fear of peaceful political struggle or democratic principles, indeed, armed with republican Socialist politics it is our strength and we look forward with confidence to the future. The question is- Can they cope with a confident and successful republican socialist program without resorting to their old trusted methods of subjugation, oppression, exploitation and marginalisation? We shall see!

The IRSP are determined to present a real choice to the Irish working class, the choice between social equality and prosperity for all and the present class system, which condemns millions to poverty and misery with the crumbs off the table of the greedy.

Have no doubt comrades we do not only want the loaf of bread but we mean to take the entire bakery. The demolition of capitalism, exploitation and the class system was and is our aim!

Our opposition to the Good Friday Agreement is well documented and the present bartering of democratic institutions against long silent Provo weapons is but the latest example of the failure of real politics in the failed entity that is the north. If the current batch of wannabe statesmen and women, that represent politics, in Ireland represent the future then god help the Irish working class. Sure we know they can talk the talk but precious few if any know how to take a single step.

We recognise the new political climate that the agreement has created. It has created space and room for dialogue that in the end can only be for the common good.

We also recognise the bad, whilst the creation of sectarianism cannot be laid at its door its rapid development throughout society as a whole in the north cannot and should not be ignored. Sectarianism is through society as a whole but its violent manifestation has maximum effect in working class communities and is the cause of much secondary discrimination in the areas such as employment, housing, education and health provision.

In north Belfast there is housing crisis for the catholic community. The statutory social housing provider the housing executive if it was honest would admit that it has no real strategy to combat this discrimination in housing provision, it cannot even get the language correct it calls North Belfast an area of high housing need, no its not, its an area of poor social housing provision because of sectarianism.

The IRSP are extremely concerned at secondary discrimination and its effects on securing a peaceful future for all. We do not remember any exclusion clauses in the Good Friday agreement and if any people deserve peace it is the good people of North Belfast, an area in which one quarter of all the deaths in the conflict lost their lives in one square mile.

In Coleraine this week a Catholic family was forcefully evicted from their home of twenty years after having the audacity to fly a Tyrone GAA flag in celebration of that counties success at Croke Pairc last Sunday. For this they had their windows smashed and volley of shots fired into the house, they are now housed elsewhere the local media inform us. Nobody asks why anymore? It is easier to brush it under the carpet and try and get the big house up in Stormont working. Well we in the IRSP are asking not only why but what the hell are they going to do about it!

The current wave of attacks on schools and school children across the north is abhorrent and we call on them to cease immediately. Only the cause of sectarian hatred is promoted by these attacks.

Across the country IRSP personnel are involved in working class issues that have real effect on ordinary peoples lives from the campaign against the introduction of a bin tax, in the South to the campaign against the introduction of water charges in the north you will find the IRSP. We commend socialist TD Joe Higgins for his principled stance on the Bin Tax, but one can but wonder if he would have been sent to prison if he held an

offshore bank account! Lying, corruptions, bribery, embezzlement, tax evasion all seem to be the passport to power in Ireland under the Celtic Tiger.

The IRSP are also to be found in the trade unions, the community associations and in every working class issue you will find an Irps. Not bad for a group of people that our enemies had written off as social misfits, profiteers, psychotic murderers and a rag taggle band of braggarts whose only concern is personnel gain. I know of no current Irp who has profited from their membership of this organisation. Indeed personal sacrifice for the collective good has always been our way and so it shall remain.

Seamus Costello founded the RSM, a volunteer army and a subscription based political party, The IRSP is self funded, we are not in the pocket of any self interest group or foreign government. We are what we say we are - a working class political party, we serve no other interests only those of the Irish working class.

Those who see the lack of personal ambition of individual members of the IRSP for the baubles and titles of Western democracy, as a weakness in our movement are wrong once again, It is our strength. We remain uncorrupted by the lure of the easy life paid for by the honest toil of others. Whilst we may not lust after the Baubles and titles, we do possess a collective ambition and determination that by far out strips any personnel ambition. Republican Socialism represents the opportunity for the maximum amount of personal freedom within a collective responsibility.

Like our founder and the man we remember here today Seamus Costello, the only title that we crave is that of all free workers in a free society, the highest accolade of all, that of - Comrade citizen!
Comrades we have much work to do go out and preach the blessed gospel of discontent!
organise - Onwards to victory.

Irish Republican Socialist Party
International Department
4 October 2003

**In Memory of Seamus Costello:
Statement of the Irish Republican Socialist Party's International Department**

At the funeral of Seamus Costello, Nora Connolly-O'Brien, daughter of Ireland's greatest Marxist revolutionary leader and herself a life-long activist, republican, and socialist, said of the fallen IRSP leader:

"He was the only one who truly understood what James Connolly meant when he spoke of his vision of the freedom of the Irish people."

The greatest interpreter of the political brilliance of James Connolly alive in Ireland at the time; the "Boy General", a man elected to the Wicklow County Council, County Wicklow Committee of Agriculture, General Council of Committees of Agriculture, Eastern Regional Development Organisation, National Museum Development Committee, Bray Urban District Council, Bray Branch of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union, Bray and District Trade Unions Council (President 1976-77), the Cualann Historical Society, Chairperson of the IRSP, Chief of Staff of the INLA, lay dead at the hands of the Official IRA.

Just three years after founding the Irish Republican Socialist Movement, Seamus Costello was dead and buried.

The Garda and Special Branch attacked the party's offices, assaulted its members, and arrested 40 of its leader members. Our second chairperson and a gifted mass leader, Miriam Daly, was stolen away from us a brief three years later, murdered by the SAS masquerading as loyalist thugs and within months of her murder, the intelligent, energetic, and capable Ronnie Bunting and Noel Little too were felled by SAS assassins. In 1981 the loss of O Hara, Lynch, and Devine alone would have been a devastating to many movements, but we lost a number of others in Shoot-to-Kill murders by the state, death on active service, mass arrests on the evidence of Super-grass perjurers.

The smoke from the cordite slowly cleared and the IRSP and INLA were still standing. Bruised and bloodied, but with head unbowed; we were still standing.

The sight of that must have been quite vexing for some. It must have driven some malignant mind within the pack of snarling dogs the system of capitalism maintains to the limit of his patience. Because then a collection of ex-members of our movement, who generally couldn't stand the sight of each other, were seized up and brought together, for no good purpose, christened the IPLO, armed and sent to destroy this movement by equal parts senseless violence and shameless misrepresentation. If the death of comrades of the stature of Ta Power and others had not done damage enough, the droning chant of the word "feud" in the capitalist media and by erstwhile Irish republicans now dressed up in the ill-fitting clothes of politician and statesman served to besmirch the proud name of the Irish Republican Socialist Movement to such an extent that reactionaries and curs felt capable of attempting to take away from us our association with our founding chairperson and tireless leader.

We saw to it, comrades that they did not succeed.

But we did reel in a prolonged and bleak period of darkness. Fear kept comrades behind locked doors, party stalwarts formed external discussion groups and took brief sabbaticals from party activism. What was left of the movement was chiefly the prisoners of war and the supporters abroad, assisted by a mere handful of party members and prisoners relatives, who leaned heavily on the volunteers of the INLA to ensure that the very name of our party did not disappear from the annals of Irish republicanism.

Out of that darkness stepped yet another intelligent, brave, and charismatic individual the latest in a list far too long for such a tiny party, struggling to remain alive on the revolutionary margins of Irish politics. And once again, the party comrades and the INLA's volunteers, the prisoners of war and the recently ex-prisoners, the scattered

supporters abroad returned to raise our standard, the Starry Plough, once again. I recall that a good comrade of mine said to me, "once more into the breach, my old friend."

And as surely as any keen observer of Irish history might have predicted, a handful of wasters seized the blood money offered by the enemies of our nation and our class and killed yet another leader of the Irish Republican Socialist Movement, but this time that movement did not waver, not even for a moment. This time, despite the lies and slander spewed forth in the press, despite the deliberate efforts to re-tar our movement with the charge of feuding, despite the blood of yet another martyr who had restored our pride and determination, despite all this, we did not stagger and we did not reel. We did not bow our heads, but kept marching forward. This time we did not allow ourselves to be bullied by lesser men with more weapons and we did not retreat to the safety of the political sidelines. And we have not done so yet. We continue to march forward, sure in our allegiance to the working class; sure in our commitment to the class war which is its right and duty to wage; sure that we are following in the footsteps of giants and that we are forcing ourselves to grow with every step so that we might fill those footprints.

Reactionaries and cowards killed Seamus Costello, comrades and friends. Ever since that day, their allies have sought to destroy Seamus's legacy, which is the Irish Republican Socialist Movement. But we who have been orphaned more times than we can count have come of age. There has been a fitting memorial built to the founder of our movement and that memorial is that very movement which he helped to forge. We have come through a baptism of fire and blood and wind and storm and as we stand here today, we serve as a living commemoration of Seamus Costello's memory.

We have openly admitted our mistakes. We have found the courage to mend those parts of our movement that had, in haste, been constructed poorly. We have had the courage of our convictions sufficient to stand not on the trappings of a heroic but at times ill-guided history of struggle in arms, nor in the glittering ornaments of bourgeois respectability. No, rather we have found our strength in the reality of the honour and justice inherent in the struggle of our class for its liberation, as women and men. We have found our footing by keeping our feet firmly on the earth, our heads proudly in the air, and our eyes fixed upon the goals of equality, justice, liberation, human dignity, cooperation, mutual concern, and genuine compassion and concern for all those who suffer and languish under the heel of oppression.

Look around us here today; see the comrades that you have around you today. That we are here at all is a worthy tribute to Seamus Costello. That we return each year to honour the memory of this leader and champion of the Ireland's working people, testifies to the accomplishment of this heir to the tradition of Connolly. And, comrades, remember as you leave this graveyard today, that this grave may contain the flesh and blood of Seamus Costello, but that his spirit soars in every corner of this island where the Starry Plough ripples in the breeze. We will not simply respect the memory of Seamus Costello; we will live it. We have come to this grave-side today to say to the world at large, we are the children of Connolly, of Larkin, of Costello, but we are now grown and standing on our own feet. But, as long as the IRSP continues its fight to liberate its nation and its class, Seamus Costello yet lives and breathes.

Long Live the Spirit of Connolly!

Long Live the Spirit of Costello!

**Long Live the Irish Republican Socialist Movement!
ENDS**

Fraternal greetings from the Scottish Republican Socialist Movement

There is little that could be said about Seamus Costello that has not been said before. Be it as a trade unionist, a republican, a socialist. Be the field of struggle be local, regional, national or international. Working with tenants groups, small farmers, women, trades councils or prisoners. Seamus Costello stands apart as the personification of the class struggle and the struggle against British Imperialism and Capitalism. Nowhere is this better represented in his simple statement that 'I owe my allegiance to the working class'. Eight simple words but what they represent is the embodiment of our struggle. The embodiment of our struggle internationally be it in the slums of Gaza, the prisons of Istanbul, the Coca-cola factories of Colombia. Everywhere our class is in struggle you will find the spirit of Seamus Costello. Many socialists declare that 'we have no heroes'. But this abstract position fails to reflect the almost super-human contributions of certain individuals to the fight for the emancipation of the world's workers. So Costello deserves to take his place alongside the likes of Connolly, Larkin and MacLean. Not as iconic figures of reverence but as symbols of resistance, symbols of struggle and symbols of the coming day when we, the workers of the world, take back what is rightfully ours. And when we do then Costello along with all the other martyrs of our class will be remembered with the pride and respect that they are due. We can think of no more fitting tribute.

All Hail the Irish and Scottish Workers Republics.

Donnie Fraser
Secretary SRSM
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Dessie O Hare Campaign

Statement on behalf of the Free Dessie O Hare Campaign, delivered at the Seamus Costello Commemoration By John Murtagh, Ard –Comhairle member IRSP

Desmond O'Hare was born on 26 October 1956 and comes from a staunch Republican family. Dessie's Grandmother did six months in Holloway Gaol for "keeping

Republicans". His father and six of his uncles were interned between 1940 and 1944. One uncle died while interned on the Isle of Man.

Dessie became active in the Republican struggle from the age of 16 and one of his Officer Commanders in the IRA was John Francis Green, later assassinated by Captain Robert Nairac.

Dessie was jailed for life in 1988 and is currently the O/C of the INLA prisoners in Castlrea Prison. He has endorsed and fully accepted the INLA ceasefire. That statement said among other things:

"That the conditions for armed struggle do not exist". "We acknowledge and admit faults and grievous errors in our prosecution of the war". "Innocent people were killed and injured and at times our actions as a liberation army fell far short of what they should have been. For this we as Republicans, as Socialists and as Revolutionaries do offer a sincere, heartfelt and genuine apology".

Organisations, which are on ceasefire, are entitled to the early release of its members under the Good Friday Agreement, which says that all political prisoners convicted of offences committed before April 1998 should be released. Dessie O'Hare was not released on that date.

The Irish government has refused to free him in contravention of the Good Friday Agreement even though Dessie was a leader of the INLA at the time of the kidnap. Indeed the former Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Mr John O'Donoghue, has publicly stated, "He is a qualifying prisoner".

The GFA in its entirety includes the early release of 'qualifying prisoners' meaning those prisoners whose organisations are 'maintaining a complete and unequivocal cease-fire'. Dessie O'Hare is such a prisoner who has been denied the benefits of the early release scheme as laid down in Annex B, Section 2 of the Agreement which the Irish electorate voted for.

Dessie has been demonised by the media and by certain politicians who labelled him the "Border Fox". He has been seen by experts at the request of the Irish Government in an attempt to keep him imprisoned on the grounds of his mental state. They could find no such grounds for his continuing incarceration but this was an attempt to emulate the tactics of Stalinist USSR in labelling opponents of that regime 'mad'.

Dessie's "crime", if 'crime' it was, was to be an active Republican.

His co-accused, Edward Hogan and Fergal Toal, have already been released under the Agreement even though they were convicted of the same offence.

Dessie is being victimised, discriminated against and demonised by the state authorities. And yet his activities were no different from those of hundreds of others released under the GFA. We will, over the coming weeks be stepping up our Campaign, where pickets and protests will be placed on constituency offices and private residences of those Politicians those who are charged with enacting the Agreement in its entirety but who have failed to acknowledge the democratic will of the people.

Dessie O'Hare is no different from hundreds if not thousands of Republicans. He played his part in the struggle. It is now time he was released. The Governments started releasing the first POWs under the terms of the GFA four years ago and Dessie is beginning his 24th year behind prison bars. Dessie has been in jail continuously since 1979 (with one years exception 1987) and in all of them 23 years he hasn't been given a single days temporary release despite many family tragedies including the death of his father (RIP)

The case of Dessie raises issues over and above either the personality or deeds of Dessie O'Hare. Fundamentally it goes to the heart of the Good Friday Agreement. We in this campaign have been sceptical about that Agreement but we say now implement not just the spirit but also the letter of the GFA. Carry out the wishes of the Irish People and Release Dessie O'Hare now!!!

Democracy and the Mass Movement. A lecture delivered by Seamus Costello at a Sinn Fein education conference in Sheelon Sharrock Hotel held on 23 February 1969.

Mr Chairman, Comrades,

- 1. My intention is to demonstrate during the course of this lecture how the working of democracy at both local government and national government level can be related to the work of mass movements.**
- 2. I will deal first of all with the experiences to our Movement at local level, showing the effects of our activities both inside and outside the local authorities.**
- 3. I then propose to relate those experiences to our Movement at national level, showing what I believe would be the likely effects of our involvement in parliamentary action.**

In order to understand the present position of the Movement in Wicklow it is necessary to first of all trace the history and development of the Movement in that area since 1954. You may ask why 1954 ? The answer to that is that the first attempt made in modern times to re-establish the Movement in Wicklow was in 1954. At that time there was absolutely no Republican organisation in County Wicklow. In fact

the last period during which organised Republicanism existed in Wicklow was during, and for a short period after, the Civil War.

This meant in effect that when the Movement was reorganised, and indeed right up to the present moment, that none of our members were drawn from traditional Republican backgrounds. We had to start with completely new people who had no experience of, or preconceived ideas about revolutionary political action. I feel that this point is worth mentioning because of the effect it has had on our methods of operation. The main effect as far as I am concerned is that we have been able to approach every phase of our activities with a completely fresh outlook unhindered by any adherence to unnecessary taboos, except those imposed upon us by belonging to a Movement that has in the past and indeed to a certain extent in the present, been guided in its activities by past history, rather than by completely different circumstances of the present. The first Sinn Fein Cumann was started in Bray in May of 1955. At that time, we had 6 or 7 members, most of whom had been members of the Cumann in Dun Laoire for a couple of months before that date. From the time the Cumann was formed until the end of 1955, our only activity was the sale of the United Irishman in the town of Bray.

The position in Wicklow remained the same up to the end of 1957, except that we had a slight increase in membership, and we managed to spread the sale of the United Irishman into most of the other populated districts of the county. This was done by groups of 3 or 4 people in cars who managed to cover about 75 percent of the public houses in the county between 8pm and closing time on Saturday nights. In this way we managed to get the paper sold and build up our finances out of the profits after having paid our petrol expenses.

There was no significant change in that position between 1957 and the end of 1959 except that a small number of our members were imprisoned and took part in the campaign. We still only had one Cumann in the county, and the campaign was simply a new topic for discussion in the pubs on Saturday nights. The only effect the campaign seems to have had on the public during this period is that they seemed more anxious to buy the United Irishman. I often suspected that they did this in order to keep themselves informed of the sensational happenings in the North, in the same way as they bought the News of the World to read about other sensational happenings in London or Glasgow.

Between 1959 and 1962 the organisation in Bray began to show signs of disintegration. We were reduced to about 4 or 5 active members and the sale of the paper in other parts of the County outside Bray was discontinued. At the end of 1962 we were selling about 14 United Irishman, all in the town of Bray. The morale of our members seems to have declined in direct ratio to the progress or otherwise of the military campaign. When the campaign ended in February 1962 we again set about putting the organisation on its feet, and by the middle of 1963 we had recruited about a dozen very active people, and had succeeded in re-establishing the sale of the paper throughout the county. In June of 1963 Joe Doyle was released from prison in England, and we availed of the opportunity to publicise the existence of our organisation in Bray. We did this by having a torchlight procession and a rally afterwards. I have always felt that this was the first occasion on which the

people began to develop an interest in our existence. We had a number of new recruits following Joe Doyle's return, and for the first time since 1959, the national collection was carried out on a county basis. We had already had a very successful year with Easter Lilies sales, and our financial position was quite sound.

Our activities between the end of 1963 and February 1966 were the same as in 1963, except that we re-established the Easter commemorations for the first time since 1924. We also established our first links with the trade union movement during this period and managed to get one of our members selected as a delegate to the Bray Trades Council, representing the Workers Union of Ireland. There seemed to be a growing awareness on the part of our own members at this time of the necessity for involvement in the work of other organisations. This was due in the main to the creation of new policy in the Movement as a whole.

This new policy was brought a step forward in February 1966 when the local Sinn Fein Cumann called a public meeting of all Council Tenants in Bray for the purpose of forming a Tenant's Association. The immediate result of this meeting was the formation of a very active association with 4 or 5 of our members in key positions on the committee. It also had a very favourable effect from our point of view on the course of the local elections in the following year. I will explain how this came about later in this lecture. We also strengthened our links with the Trade Union movement in 1966 by inviting the Bray Trade,s Council to officially participate in the 1966 Easter Commemorations. They agreed to march and they appointed Roddy Connolly, the son of James Connolly, to speak on their behalf from the platform. Their participation in the commemoration served to link the organised working class movement with our movement in the eyes of the people, and subsequently helped us in the local election of 1967. By the beginning of 1967, our organisation in Bray was well poised for the local government election contest. We were still the only Sinn Fein Cumann in the county, however we were in a very strong position both from the point of view of finance and influence with the working class people. The latter was due mainly to our contacts with the Trades Council and the Tenant,s Association, both of which represent large number of working class people. The Tenant,s Association represents about 800 families in the town and the twenty unions affiliated to the Trades Council represents approximately 1500 workers in Bray and the surrounding area. We managed to acquire the support of the Tenant,s Association by holding a meeting of our own members who were on the Tenant,s Committee and drafting a questionnaire which was to be circulated to all candidates in the election by the Tenant,s Association. The Association also informed each candidate that their answers to the questionnaire would be circulated to every tenant in the town and that the people could draw their own conclusions.

The questionnaire dealt with a number of problems about which most tenants had a genuine grievance, and our people on the committee took steps to ensure that the Sinn Fein candidates were the only ones who could give answers that were favourable to the tenants. The result was that the tenants received copies of the answers from all candidates and large numbers of them supported us because of our

policy on housing matters. At this stage it may be of benefit to give an outline of the main points from our Election Programme and indicate briefly how the election was fought. The main points from our programme were as follows:

1. That all building land would be brought under the control of the local authorities and that they would be the sole agents for the purchase and sale of such lands at prices related to its agricultural value.
2. That housing should be treated as an essential social service and financed on a non-profit making basis.
3. We stated also that we would organise the homeless people (about 300 families) to pressurise the council into building more houses.
4. That we would fight for the introduction of a purchase scheme for all council tenants.
5. That we oppose the introduction of differential rents.
6. That we would seek to have repairs to all council houses done through a direct labour scheme.
7. We advocated the completion of a flood prevention scheme for the Dargle River.
8. We also pointed out the necessity for such things as local bus services, phone boxes, dispensaries, etc.
9. We strongly condemned the Managerial Act, and called for more direct participation by the people in local government matters.
10. We had to explain very clearly in our Election Manifesto that we would take our seats if elected. We had to do this because of the fact that the other parties were telling people that we would refuse to sit if elected. It was also quite obvious to us that no matter what the people thought of our Election Policy they could see no point in supporting us unless we were prepared to sit on the council.

We opened our campaign about four weeks before polling day by setting up a full time Election Headquarters, complete with telephone. During the campaign we gave out approximately 75 000 pieces of literature made up of National Election Manifesto, Local Election Manifesto, Candidate Literature, Voting Cards and hand outs at polling stations. We used 3000 posters. We also had an average of 15 people working every night, either canvassing or distributing literature and we were able to provide transport and man all polling stations on voting day. We were the only party in town that managed to canvass every house, and also to hold numerous public meetings. Our total expenses came to £360.00, and we made a profit of £50.00. The net result was the winning of two seats on Bray Urban District Council and one seat on Wicklow County Council. Having outlined the type of Election Campaign we fought, I feel it is essential that we examine the reasons why the people voted for us. I think the reasons would be as follows:

1. Bray had experienced a long period of particularly bad administrations, resulting in a generally run-down town, and the existing parties were either unwilling or unable to take appropriate action to remedy the situation.

2. Most members of the outgoing council had been at least 20 or 30 years involved in local government and there seemed to be absolutely no difference between one party and another.

3. We had established a good relationship with the people through our involvement in the Tenant,s Association, the Trades Council and the Credit Union movements.

4. We made no secret of the fact that we were a revolutionary socialist party and that we were prepared to give leadership both in the local council chamber and on the streets.

5. We made it obvious that we were radically different from all the other parties and that we had no time for any party that existed by putting the people under a compliment for things that are theirs by right.

6. We made it plain to the people that if we were elected we would make sure that Bray Urban District Council would be democratised and that they would be able to make their presence felt in the council chamber on any issue that affected their welfare.

7. We fought a better campaign than any other party and people were impressed by the dedication and unity of our members during the campaign.

8. All of the other parties were suffering through internal rivalry between their candidates and we benefited from this.

After the local elections of June 1967 we had to lay down new rules of behaviour to deal with the following situations:

I. What would be the relationship between our elected representatives and our own organisation?

II. What would be the relationship between our elected representatives and individuals or organisations?

III. What would be the relationship between our elected representatives and the representatives of other parties?

IV. What would be the relationship between our representatives and the Council officials.

I. In order to maintain proper contact between our elected representatives and our own members we set up the machinery for the holding of regular meetings. We hold a general meeting twice a month on the nights before the local council meets. At our own meeting we discuss all matters on the agenda for the council meeting and decisions are made by the meeting regarding the attitude to be taken by our councillors. We also discuss at these meetings any items that our own members feel should be raised at the council meetings. We decide whether these matters will be raised directly by our own councillors, by the Sinn Fein Cumann through direct correspondence, or through agitation in the mass organisations. Whenever possible we adopt the last course of action in order to build the confidence of the people in their own organisations. It also helps to establish our members within these organisations, and ensures that their leadership is accepted.

II. The contacts created between individuals or organisations as a result of our election presented us with a completely new situation. We found that suddenly large numbers of people and organisations were approaching our councillors for assistance, and we set up a Citizen,s Advice Bureau in order to meet them. The people we meet in this way can usually be broken into three categories:

a. Individual people who require assistance from someone with knowledge of local government procedure, so that they can overcome some problem that applies to them alone. They are usually people who are entitled to some particular service but don,t know how to proceed about obtaining it. In these cases our local representatives simply approach the appropriate Council Department and iron out the red tape. We usually find that those people have already approached councillors from other parties, and we are under the impression that we are doing them a favour. We always avail of the opportunity to impress upon them that what they are seeking is theirs by right and that they don,t owe us or anyone else anything for it. We find that this approach serves to create a spirit of independence on the part of the persons concerned. It also helps to establish our integrity and demolish the hypocrisy of the other parties.

b.If an individual approaches us with a problem that happens to be common to a number of other people we usually refuse to act on his behalf unless he first of all agrees to bring the other people together so that they can all fight together. I can best illustrate what I mean by giving an outline of one particular case. In August 1967 we were approached by a particular individual who had no water supply in this house and who had been trying for 25 years to get Wicklow County Council to give him a connection from a nearby water main. During the course of discussion with him it emerged that there was a total of 13 houses in his locality without water and that they had spent 25 years approaching other councillors without avail. The other parties had simply said *“leave it to us and we will look after it”*, but had done nothing about it. This man agreed to organise a meeting of his neighbours which we attended. We pointed out to them that if they were prepared to organise themselves they had a good chance of pressurising the Council into giving them a water supply. They agreed with our suggestion, and formed an association. The association went on 2 or 3 deputations to council meetings and after threatening to withhold rates etc. they succeeded in getting the council to agree to install a water supply. Work will start on the scheme in about two weeks time. These people could not understand why none of the other parties had suggested the same tactics as we had. Again we availed of the opportunity to explain the difference in policy between our organisation and the other parties. The result is that we now have the whole-hearted support of these people, and they in turn have developed a new sense of independence. If other examples of similar cases are required I can give them during question time.

c.The third category in this group is an approach by some existing organisation requiring assistance. Existing organisations are different from individual cases in so far as they rarely approach one party only. They usually contact all parties at the same time if the problem is connected with local government. If they have a long standing problem that could not be solved the conventional manner we usually

suggest some form of agitational activity, and we offer whatever technical knowledge which they may require. We have found when dealing with organisations that all conventional means must have failed them before we can suggest other methods. We have established very good relationships with the following organisations as a result of these approaches:

- Bray Trades Council**
- Bray Tenant,s Association**
- Bray Housing Action Association**
- County Wicklow N.F.A.**
- County Wicklow Macra na Feirma**
- West Wicklow Development Association**
- Greystones-Kilcoole Housing Action Association plus numerous other smaller groups.**

We find that most organisations exist in order to improve the living standards of their members, and that a solution to their problems can be found by reference to the appropriate section of the Sinn Fein Social and Economic Policy. Every opportunity should be availed of in order to let these organisations know that the solutions advanced by our local representatives are in fact part of Sinn Fein policy and not just the opinions of individual councillors. If a solution can be found within the existing framework of society so much the better. If solutions can only be found through a completely new type of social and economic structure, then this should be made clear to the organisations concerned and every possible effort should be made to create a head on collision between these organisations and the forces opposed to them. In this way, we will help to create a desire on their part for fundamental changes in the structure of society. This in my opinion should be one of the primary functions of Sinn Fein councillors. If we succeed in this objective the organisations concerned will be prepared to give us political support when we advance the same solutions from our political platforms.

III. The next matter that we had to decide upon was the relationship between our representatives and the representatives of other parties. We decided at the beginning that we would adopt a completely independent stand on all issues, and that if our views happened to coincide with the views of other parties we would co-operate. In turn if our views were different we would oppose them. In practice we have found that in most cases we have been opposed by the other parties, particularly on issues that require fundamental changes in the structure of society before they can be solved. The result of this is that we have succeeded in exposing the other parties as groups who are only interested in maintaining the status quo. We have been particularly successful in exposing the Labour Party in Wicklow as such a group. This arose because of their attitude in connection with a recent housing scandal, which I can elaborate upon during question time if necessary. The Trades Council in Bray have co-operated with us in this particular case, and we have publicly condemned the Labour councillors for their anti-working class attitude. It should be of interest to note that most of the delegates on the Trades Council are either members of supporters of the Labour Party. The attitude of Sinn Fein councillors should be to avail of every possible opportunity to demonstrate that

we are fundamentally different from all of the other parties, and we should not yield to the temptation to let up on the attack either from some short term advantage or because some of them just happen to be nice people.

IV. The relationship between our representatives and local authority officials needs to be examined at this point. Our experience of Wicklow has shown that most of the officials are reasonably honest and dedicated workers and that some of them are quite progressive in their attitudes. However, they are restricted in their activities by the rules laid down by the central authority for the running of local government. This means in effect that in cases where we advocate policies that cannot be implemented through the framework of existing legislation we run the risk of head on collision with the officials. The effect of this can and should be minimised by pointing out at all times that we are opposed to the system as such and not to the officials that are forced to work within the confines of the system. In this way we will succeed in gaining the support of the progressive minded officials, and at the same time we will help to create grave dissatisfaction on their part with the whole local government system. They will gradually become disillusioned and frustrated, and it will therefore be easier for us to in their support for our ideas in the future.

The Wicklow by election was held in March 1968 and at the time we still had only one organised Cumann in the whole county. The election was fought in basically the same way as the local elections except that it cost us approximately £1200 as opposed to £360. As a direct result of the election we were able to form nine new Cumann in the county. This was about the only advantage gained from the contest. We now have a total of ten Cumainn, all of which are reasonably active as outlined during the course of the lecture. In terms of votes we received approximately 2000 first preference votes which I consider to be a poor return for the investment in time, labour and money involved.

During the course of the by election we found that the greatest single objection to voting Sinn Fein was the existence of the abstentionist policy. I stated at the start of this lecture that I proposed to relate our experiences on local councils to the likely effects of our involvement in parliamentary action at National level. Involvement in parliament can be usefully compared in a number of ways with our involvement in Local councils. As I have already demonstrated during the course of my lecture there is two things that we can achieve through our involvement in local government affairs:

- 1. We can achieve some short-term results within the existing framework**
- 2. We can use it as a forum from which to advance our revolutionary ideas thereby creating a lack of confidence in the whole system. Of course we can only do these things by operating both inside and outside the Council Chambers in a disciplined manner as I have already referred to.**

I suggested the same tactics could be usefully employed by even a small group of well-disciplined TD's at National level working both inside and outside Parliament.

I believe that the Republican Movement is capable of producing the proper type of person for this job. And I also believe that we could establish the necessary machinery to control our TD's. The people of Ireland are clever enough to recognise the fact that effective power lies in the hands of Parliament at the moment, and in my opinion they are not going to give their support to any party that refuses to recognise this fact and act accordingly.

Before the Republican Movement can achieve power, we must succeed in breaking the confidence of the people in the existing Parliamentary institutions, and I would suggest that this should be one of the main functions of our TD's. They should also be full time Revolutionary Organisers in their own areas, thereby demonstrating to the people who elected them the fundamental difference between ourselves and the other parties.

In conclusion I would like to give an example of the possibilities that could have been availed of by such as group of T.D.s in the recent past. The discussion on the ESB Special Provisions Bill in 1966 provided a glorious opportunity to demonstrate the effectiveness of revolutionary tactics within parliament combined with action on the streets. If the opportunity could not have been availed of at that time it could certainly have been used during the subsequent ESB strike. During this strike approximately 50 ESB workers were imprisoned and almost 100 000 workers, most of whom were in sympathy with the ESB men were walking the streets of Dublin for the best part of a week. I suggest that the opportunities thus presented as a result of these circumstances could have been used with effect by well-disciplined revolutionary movement acting in consort with its Tads in order to smash the Special Provisions Bill.

The present discussions on the Criminal Justice Bill presents similar opportunities for any party in opposition to avail of them, and with that provocative suggestion which I feel sure raises more questions than it answers, I will now conclude my lecture.

An Appreciation by Fionnbarra O'Dochartaigh (former member of the IRSP) written in 1977

"Our foes are strong and wise and wary: but, strong and wise and wary as they are, they cannot undo the miracles of God who ripens in the hearts of young men the seeds sown by the young men of former generation. And the seeds sown by the young men of '65 and '67 are coming to their miraculous ripening to-day. Rulers and defenders of Realms had need to be wary if they would guard against such processes. Life springs from death; and from the graves of patriot men and women spring living nations. The defenders of this Realm have worked well in secret and in the open. They think that they have pacified Ireland.

They think that they have purchased half of us and intimidated the other half. They think that they have foreseen everything, think that they have provided against everything: but the fools, the fools, the fools! - they have left us with our Fenian dead, and while Ireland holds these graves, Ireland unfree shall never be at peace"

P.H. Pearse at the grave of O'Donovan Rossa, August 1915

On October 8th, 1977 another Fenian was laid to rest, his tricolour and Starry Plough draped coffin being carried by comrades and friends to St. Peter's Cemetery, Little Bray, County Wicklow, where full military honours were observed in the age-old republican tradition. Like that of O'Donovan Rossa he was cut down in the prime of his life and had many more years of service to offer, before an imperialist agent gunned him down on a Dublin street shortly before noon some three days earlier.

When one reads through history and comes across the names of former revolutionaries, the distance of time makes it easy to speak or write about their times or contribution. However, when the person of whom you speak is not only a contemporary but a revolutionary comrade and friend of some sixteen years standing, the task of writing or speaking about their contribution, is an emotionally daunting experience. For this reason, it is now only after seven weeks since the assassination of Seamus Costello, and after days of thought and research, this article by way of a personal farewell may find itself in print, as it is the end product of several attempts to pen a worthy tribute.

October 5th 1968 witnessed the first ever civil rights march in Derry, and the brutal batoning of peaceful demonstrators at Duke Street. It was an event often referred to by Seamus Costello, both on the platform and in his writings. The last time he spoke publicly in Derry was on February 6th following a demonstration from the Creggan shops to the Bloody Sunday Monument in Rossville Street which was organised by the Irish Front to highlight the plight of political prisoners at home and in British jails. Sharing the platform with Anthony O'Malley Daly, Sinn Fein, Frank McManus, former Westminster MP and other prominent anti-imperialists, Seamus again referred to the events of Duke Street; "This is one of the most historic and important gatherings because for the first time many groups have got together since 1969."

He went on to call for the withdrawal of British troops and the British presence. He said that the Irish revolutionary groups must unite so that they could decide what establishment could replace the British. The meeting that day he described thus....."Today is as historic as October 5th 1968 or Bloody Sunday. For the first time in a number of years people are coming together. The Irish Front is being watched as an example of what can be done, because it has got over many difficulties that have divided people for so long and it has showed a large degree of political maturity on behalf of those it represents." Costello was to end his life at the hands of an imperialist agent, at the age of thirty-eight.

His close connections with Derry City and County Derry date back to the 1956-62 Resistance Campaign when at the age of 17 he commanded an active service unit in South Derry, joining Sinn Fein two years earlier and the republican army shortly afterwards. His ASU's most publicised actions were the destruction of bridges and the successful burning of Magherafelt Courthouse. It was during the campaign that I first met him, and although only five years older, he was already a veteran of armed struggle. Members of the ASU found him to be strict, radiating with confidence and his mild manner and sense of humour were positive aids in providing leadership. During a period of lying low in safe billets, a grenade exploded and set off the full magazine of a Thompson sub-machine gun, luckily killing no one, but knocking Seamus unconscious, and left him with back injuries. He also lost half a finger, and as a result left the action to return to a hospital in Dublin for treatment. On his release he was immediately arrested and lodged in Mountjoy as a guest of the state for six months. Once again on his release he was re-arrested and interned in the Curragh Concentration Camp where he joined the escape committee which sprang Ruairi O'Bradaigh and Daithi O'Connell among others. In later years he was to refer to his Curragh experience as "my university days".

Following the end of the resistance campaign in February 1962, he was involved in the critical analysis of the previous six years, and believed, like many others, that the reason for failure was the lack of deep involvement with the ordinary people of Ireland in their day to day struggles. In the same year he took up employment with Walden Motors in Dublin as a car salesman, and remained there for some years before he became totally committed to political life. He was a member of Wicklow County Council, Bray Urban District Council, County Wicklow Committee of Agriculture and a transport union official, and an office bearer in Bray Trades Council, which gave some idea of his involvement in class politics following the mid 1960s. On these bodies he was to remain active up until the time of his death, holding office for as long as three and four terms which when we consider his national involvement in addition to this high degree of local involvement, gives us some idea of the energy and degree of commitment possessed by the man.

Within the republican movement he held many important positions, as Vice President of Sinn Fein, as well as holding top ranks within the Army Council of Oglagh na h-Eireann. At the Ard Fheis of 1970 Seamus remained with the Officials but the four years following were to be stormy ones for himself and others who supported his stand on the national question. These struggles were to result in the formation of the Irish Republican Socialist Party in 1974 and a bitter feud. In 1972 many of Costello's closest comrades broke from the Officials following their 'truce' with the forces of occupation, and believed that there was no chance of changing the leadership of the Officials. Some time before his death he was to agree with them, saying that he too should have broken with them at that time, instead of remaining to fight a rearguard action.

Seamus often quoted Connolly, but more importantly followed the policies of Ireland's greatest republican socialist. On more than one occasion he remarked, "Connolly told us partition would be a hey-day of reaction", and went on further to quote, "I can not envisage a subject nation with a free working class, nor, can I envisage a subject working

class in a free nation." He argued repeatedly that the national and social questions were not two separate issues, but that both were inter-related, and that what must be aimed for was a republic in which the means of production, distribution and exchange were in the control of the working class people of Ireland. To these ideals he was to work with terrific energy until that fateful day, October 5th 1977, when the Irish revolutionary forces were to lose one of its greatest sons. My last meeting with Seamus was on St. Patrick's Day this year in the Bogside which had been marked as prisoners day and after a very successful demonstration we gathered, not to discuss political theory, but to enjoy the company of other comrades and sing revolutionary songs. On that occasion he gave the assembled company a rendering of Charlie Kerins, who was hanged by the Free State during the 1940s which was his favourite ballad. Little did we know then that soon his own name would join that of Kerins on the Republican Roll of Honour. Farewell Comrade, Farewell.

"My father told his court martial that the British had no right to be in Ireland. Seamus Costello felt the same way. He was the greatest follower of my father's teachings in this generation and I hope that his example shall be followed and that his vision for Ireland will be realised in this generation."

Nora Connolly O'Brien, at the graveside
of Seamus Costello, October 8th 1977

WHAT'S ON

The Dubbeljoint play on the life of **Peadar O'Donnell** will be shown in Belfast at Amharclann na Carraige on the Whiterock Road from Thursday until Saturday (9th-11th October).

KILLARNEY DEMO

11 October - **Demonstration at the Fianna Fáil Ard Fheis in Killarney Demands**

- a.. US Military out of Shannon
- b.. No Irish troops for the occupation of Iraq
- c.. Drop all charges of civil disobedience

This is our chance to bring it home to FF party members that we hold Bertie Ahern, Brian Cowan and the government accountable for the Irish participation in the US war effort in Iraq. We reject the escalation proposed by Ahern that Irish troops are sent to reinforce the brutal US/UK occupation of Iraq. We demand **instead that the** Irish government

drops all charges against those activists who committed acts of civil disobedience and/or non-violently disarmed a US warplane at Shannon.
Time and date 2 pm, Saturday, 11 October 2003

Location National Events Centre
Gleneagles Hotel
Muckcross Road
Killarney
Co. Kerry

Directions When reaching Killarney follow signs for Kenmare N71. The Gleneagles Hotel is approx. 1.6 km (1 mile) from the town centre on the left hand side.

<http://www.inec.ie/location.cfm#>

Anti Racist Network, from Davy Carlin

The second meeting of the Anti Racist Network is to be moved to Oct 15th and is to be held at the Chinese Welfare Association at 7pm. The change has been suggested by a number of persons due to George Monbiot speaking in Belfast and persons had asked would it be possible not to clash with this. A proposal will be put forward for a visual representative action to be held in the near future. Such as various parties, organisations, trade unions etc with their banners outside city hall showing a collective stand against Racism where the media can be invited along.

Amnesty International Annual Lecture 2003

Xanana Gusmão,
President of East Timor

Peace, justice and reconciliation

Queen's University Belfast, G06
Thursday 16th October, 7pm

All welcome
Admission free but by ticket only

Supported by QUB Human Rights Centre

To book tickets, tel 028 9064 3000 / email: nireland@amnesty.org.uk

James Byrne Commemoration Committee >

**1st November 2003-09-11 Monument Unveiling & 90th Anniversary
Commemoration**

Assemble 2pm Main Entrance Deansgrange Cemetery, Deansgrange, Co. Dublin, Ireland. The newly-commissioned monument over the grave of Trade Union >Martyr, James Byrne, District Organiser, ITG&WU, who died on 1st November 1913 following a hunger & thirst strike during the Great >Lock-Out 1913 will be unveiled by Des Geraghty, President, SIPTU. All trade unionists, political activists and members of the Public >welcome!

[No Party Political Banners, please!]

The James Byrne Commemoration Committee has organised the erection of a fitting memorial over the grave in Deansgrange Cemetery [Co. >Dublin, Ireland] of James Byrne, a trade union martyr who died on >1st November 1913 as a result of the effects of a hunger and thirst >strike during imprisonment for his role in the Great Lock-Out of that year. James was District Organiser of the Irish Transport & >General Workers Union and held leadership roles in both Bray and >Kingstown [Dún Laoghaire] Trades Councils.

In the course of James Byrne's funeral oration James Connolly said:

"James Byrne truly died a martyr as any man who ever died for Ireland"

The Committee believes that the monument is a fitting tribute to >James Byrne and hopes that his grave may become a place of >pilgrimage and source of inspiration for trade unionists and >socialists in the future. We are particularly pleased that the descendents of James Byrne are fully supportive of the work of the >Committee.

Jason Mc Lean. PRO- James Byrne Commemoration Committee.

European Social Forum Paris, St Denis 12-15 November

Please feel free to comment on the contents of the Plough. We welcome political comments and criticisms.

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