

The Plough

-E-mail newsletter of the Irish Republican Socialist Party

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Some Sectarian Attacks

9th October Protestant homes were attacked in on the Ardoyne Road and Ohio Street. Meanwhile in Antrim town loyalists attacked the home of a Sinn Fein activist.

10th October 2002 Windows were smashed in catholic homes in Somerdale Park and Kingsmere Avenue in North Belfast when loyalists threw paint bombs

11TH October 2003 A schoolboy was confronted by a man brandishing an iron bar in the grounds of St Gabriel's School in North Belfast

14TH October 2003 A catholic family was driven from her home by a mob of nationalists who thought she was a protestant and was dealing in drugs on the Whitewell Road in North Belfast

15th October 2003. A lone mother and her two young children living in Co Armagh had their house at Upper Enniskeen in Craigavon attacked at around 11.30pm.

It is believed that a number of windows in the house were smashed in the attack. The incident is just the latest in a campaign of violence against Muslim families living in the area.

16TH October 2003. Another Muslim family were attacked in the Craigavon area

17TH October. Loyalist left a pipe bomb in the nationalist St James area. No one was hurt.

Left Unity meeting 9/10/03 Belfast Unemployed Centre

Recently there were two left unity meetings, which the IRSP attended. The first on the second of October was a public meeting, which the IRSP only found out was on, by accident. We received no formal or informal invitations. This despite the fact that last year we had been part of a group called the Social Forum which had reached some tentative agreements on possible policy areas and which involved wide strata of left opinion including representatives of some protestant working class views. Unfortunately those meetings fizzled out. Then the SWP, which had been involved in the Social Forum, arranged a series of closed meetings with other groups out of which emerged the suggested programme which were published in The Plough No. 8. At no time we understand was the suggested programme put to a vote, nor was it agreed at the first public meeting. But at the second meeting involving a small number of delegates when the programme was questioned by the IRSP we were told it was not for changing. At the meeting it emerged that Communist Party of Ireland – gave a qualified no to Left Unity candidates but individual members of the party could get involved in a Left Unity campaign if they wished. The Derry Trades and Environmental group a front group for the SWP, fully supported the project and said that it should be as broad as possible both geographically and the left political spectrum. The Workers' Party gave a general welcome but they were concerned that there is not enough time to do this prior to a November election. They also brought up the idea of a socialist forum to discuss matters of mutual interest. WP had already selected candidates for the forthcoming election and expressed a view that the European Elections may offer a better opportunity for Left Unity. The Socialist Workers' Party were fully behind the initiative while the Official Republican Movement (ORM) were in broad support, but unsure as to how it would work and the timescale involved. No decisions were taken, No votes were taken, and meeting broke up in an uncertain fashion with no date set for next meeting.

The position of the IRSP is very clear. While left unity is desirable it cannot be rushed through just to satisfy the electoral ambitions of some people. How can there be unity when there were pro and anti Good Friday Agreement Parties. For example how could the IRSP/ Left Alternative (Anti-Agreement) call for a vote for the WP (Left Alternative (Pro Agreement) without losing all credibility? The people are not stupid. They would see the Left Alternative for what it is: an ill thought out attempt to cobble together an unprincipled alliance to maximise a "left "vote. **The reality is that on the ground the left has not done the steady persistent class work that would establish its credibility with the working class.** When members of the Workers Party cannot even acknowledge the presence of members of the ORM at a left unity meeting then the basis for their co-operation is not the interests of the mass of the working class but the particular interests in one sect of the left. Furthermore any alliance that tries to cover its position on the national question and fool the masses is doomed to failure. Seamus Costello drew on both the experience and teachings of James Connolly in his approach to the problem of

"loyalism" among the Belfast Protestant working class. When questioned in March 1975, about co-operation with representatives of the Protestant workers on immediate issues "which would appear to unite the people," he defined his position clearly and succinctly. "Connolly had to face exactly the same predicament. In Belfast prior to 1916, you had people who classified themselves as socialists and who were also interested in ending British rule in Ireland. Their approach to the Protestant working class was on the basis of limited and immediate issues. One of the principal issues, which affected both sections of the working class, was the question of whether or not they could get gas and water into their houses. "Some very militant campaigns were engaged in on these two demands - gas and water for the houses in the working class districts. Republicans and socialists were involved in this campaign on the basis that this was the way to unite the working class. At the same time, these republicans and socialists refused point blank to mention or even discuss the national question with the Protestant working class, on the grounds that if they did, the Protestant working class wouldn't listen to them and that they would lose their co operation on the issue of gas and water for the houses. "Connolly was totally in opposition to this approach. **He categorized them as gas and water socialists.** Today in Belfast we have what we call ring-road socialists. They are exactly the same type of people. They are, in fact, the leadership of the Official republican movement in Belfast. "We maintain that any co-operation with the Protestant working class must be on the basis of a principled political position. **It must be on the basis of explaining fully to the Protestant working class what all our policies are, not just our policy on the ring road.** We must try and politicize them, simultaneously with conducting a political campaign to get rid of Britain. It will be primarily an educational function, or an educational campaign directed towards Protestants in the hope at least that some significant section of the Protestant working class will understand."

We are for unity-class unity class struggle and the struggle against Imperialism. That's the basis the IRSP will enter into electoral alliances and only when we have established a clear consistent record of mass work. As Bertie might say-Much done -much to be done.

Maskey and Mackin did not broker INLA cease-fire.

A biography of Alex Maskey called "*Alex Maskey: Man and Major*" by Barry McCaffrey has just been published. Part of the book carries the extraordinary assertion that

"Liam Maskey and the trade unionist Brendan Mackin acted as conduits between the INLA and the British Government during discussions that ended with the Republican Group announcing a ceasefire. and

"Throughout 1997 and the first eight months of 1998 the two men carried a succession of messages between the INLA and the British"

This is simply not true. During both 1997 and 1998 the stance of the INLA towards the British was summed up in the phrase "Don't trust the British" As a result the leadership of the INLA had taken a decision that it would not talk to the British Ministers. During the whole of the year 1997 the INLA was not on ceasefire and indeed in December 1997 the Ard Feis of the IRSP had decisively rejected a motion recommending the INLA to call a ceasefire. While there was ongoing contact with the priests in Clonard Monastery

no moves were made towards the British at all. However after the result of the Referenda on the Good Friday Agreement a series of meetings of the leadership of the INLA was held. Resulting from these meetings a number of decisions were made including ending any co-operation with other groups and seeking talks with representatives of the Irish Government and with representatives of the Northern Ireland Office to explain the position of the INLA. In June /July 1998 only one meetings was held with Maskey and Mackin with a view to set up a meeting with the NIO. They were asked to facilitate that meeting because of their proud trade union record. This followed the RSM contacting Brendan Mackin with a view to exploring what would be the procedure re prisoners following any INLA cease-fire. At those meetings the representatives of the INLA informed those they met of the INLA's views on the consequences of the decision of the people in Ireland to endorse the Good Friday Agreement.

For the record it should be recorded that while both Liam Maskey and Brendan Mackin are good people of integrity they did not broker the INLA ceasefire. They did not carry a succession of messages between the INLA and the British Government. They did not act as conduits between the INLA and the British.

Economic Strategy.

In its **latest economic review**, the business advisers Price WaterHouse Coopers says the serious weakness of the Northern Irish economy is being hidden by a “vener of economic prosperity”. At the same time, the First Trust Bank economic outlook and business review says that the North is facing a situation where “there are no more free lunches”. One of the main reasons why the local economy (North and South for that matter) is in a fragile condition is that it is highly dependent on the investments of multinational corporations. Those companies are not here for the “craic”, but for their profits, and if they can make more money, they will have no qualms to move from Belfast to Bangalore. The same could be said of local companies who closed down some of their operations in the North. These closures have resulted in some huge job losses; the consequences of delocalisation for the local economy have been disastrous. Various economic experts, government agencies and business leaders tell us that this is “inevitable” and that there are no alternatives.

What can be done? In Belgium, France, Germany and Italy, there are new laws (or projects for such laws) to curtail cuts, closures, de-localisations and redundancies by companies, both national and multinational, both at a European and national level. MPs and MEPs' have pointed that it was unacceptable that redundancies could coincide with massive profits for those companies, showing the sharp opposition between social well-being and profitability of companies. For example, in Belgium, Ford has recently made 3000 people redundant while at the same time making 1.36 billion dollars in profits for the first six months of 2003.

What is the actual content of this proposed legislation?

First, there can be no cuts, redundancies, delocalisation or closures unless approved by the joint management/employees corporate committee of that particular company, and a plan to save jobs and wages has been collectively agreed. In the absence of such a

collective agreement, and until this agreement has been implemented, everybody in the company is entitled to keep their employment and wages.

Secondly, the employer will have to provide completely, correctly, and in time the totality of the facts and data on the basis of which the decision is taken to proceed with cuts, redundancies or closures, including information relating to other units and subdivisions of the group to which the company may belong. Plans for redundancies and closures will have to be announced in advance.

Thirdly, any employer transgressing this legislation or information and consultation procedures will have to repay any public funding or grants received over the five years preceding the infraction. This money will be paid to a Fund for Economic Democracy, and will serve to finance alternative solutions to cuts and closures. This Fund could also receive additional funding from a special tax on profits, rents and dividends (a tax of a nature similar to the proposed Tobin Tax on financial speculation).

Finally, sanctions against employers who wouldn't respect this legislation would range from fines to prison sentences. This could also be extended to the major shareholders of that company.

These suggestions could be part of an all-Ireland Republican Socialist Alternative Economic Strategy. It is a matter of time before some major company will go announce some "restructuring" plan that will result in closures and job losses. To guarantee continuity of employment and income, it is necessary that we fight for a legislation that will curtail the ability of companies to make our lives insecure. It is imperative to make the corporate world accountable to the people.

KADEK.

A matter of concern is the plight of the 15 million Kurdish people, scattered over Turkey, Syria, Iran and Iraq. Of particular concern is the conflict taking place between the Turkish state and the Maoist Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). Since 1984, it has claimed over 30 000 lives, mostly Kurdish civilians killed by the Turkish army. Thousands of villages have been destroyed, and more than two million people have been displaced.

It is very worrying to learn that the Turkish parliament has approved sending over 10,000 troops to Iraq to support the US army and to get rid of some 5000 PKK guerrillas in the mountains of the far North of Iraq. Thousands of Kurdish civilians are likely to be killed, injured, tortured and imprisoned as a result of this. Washington will turn a blind eye, as this can be justified as being part of the global "war against terror". The PKK is on the US state department's list of terrorist organisations along with the RIRA and FARC.

However, the PKK is hardly a threat to US and NATO interests. It has renamed itself the Freedom and Democracy Congress (Kadek). It has abandoned its Maoism and demand for an independent Kurdish state. It demands instead "parity of esteem" for Kurdish people within the countries with a substantial Kurdish population. One of its leaders,

Osman Ocalan has stated “We want to cooperate, not fight with the British and US forces” (The Guardian 8 October). Recently Kadek has been forced to take up arms because of Turkey’s failure to establish all party talks now and inclusive negotiations based on equality. Its most prominent leader, Abdullah Ocalan is the Kurdish Gerry Adams.

Breast Cancer - A good deed

- Please tell ten friends to tell ten today! The Breast Cancer site is having trouble getting enough people to click on it daily to meet their quota of donating at least one free mammogram a day to an underprivileged woman.
- It takes less than a minute to go to their site a click on “donating a mammogram” for free (pink window in the middle). This doesn’t Cost you a thing. Their corporate sponsors/advertisers use the number of daily visits to donate mammogram in exchange for advertising. Here’s the web site! Pass it along to people you know:
- <http://www.thebreastcancersite.com>
- AGAIN, PLEASE TELL 10 FRIENDS TO TELL 10 TODAY

Subject: VERY URGENT - ANTI RACIST NETWORK -FRED CROWE

The Anti-Racist Network in Belfast have produced a letter calling on the UUP to expel Craigavon Councillor Fred Crowe for his deeply racist remarks in the BBC special report broadcast on Monday night.

We the undersigned wish to register our horror at the recent racist comments of Craigavon Councillor Fred Crowe.

In an area where eight families have been forced to move after suffering racist attacks, Mr Crowe’s remarks are a disgrace. They will only serve to increase the suffering of the ethnic minority population in Craigavon and across the whole of Northern Ireland. His comments are not just an insult to the ethnic minority population but also an insult to the vast majority of people in Northern Ireland who find racism abhorrent.

To be clearly seen on Monday evening’s BBC report trying to convince young people that they should view Muslims as people who bomb the USA and kill their daughters for marrying Christians is a clear and chilling example of incitement to racial hatred.

We call on the leaders of all the main churches and political parties to immediately issue statements condemning Mr Crowe’s remarks.

We also call on the Ulster Unionist Party to use their party conference this weekend to completely distance themselves from Mr Crowe’s remarks and to expel him from the party. This would send a clear and positive message out to everyone in Northern Ireland that racism will not be tolerated.

WHAT'S ON

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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