

The Plough

-E-mail newsletter of the Irish Republican Socialist Party

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The new Republican Socialist Forum from Derry IRSP is
<http://rsmforum.proboards23.com/index.cgi>

Vol Neil McMonagle - New Memorial

There will be another memorial unveiling, part of the Teach na Failte campaign to commemorate fallen republican socialists, in Derry on Sunday November 9th. The impressive new memorial is dedicated to the memory of INLA Volunteer Neil McMonagle who was killed by the SAS on 2nd February 1983. Anyone attending is asked to assemble at Carnhill Resource Centre at 2pm. A march will then take place across Racecourse Road and towards Leafair Park where the new memorial will be unveiled. A function will then be held locally, details on the day. For further information please contact:

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The current situation.

The following are extracts from a speech delivered to an IRSP meeting in Belfast on Tuesday 28th October.

Comrades I'd like to spend some time to review the peace process, look at why the events of the last week happened, i.e. decommissioning the calling of elections and the breakdown of the sequencing events and the position that the ERPS should take towards all of this.

There are many complex reasons why the Provisional Republican Movement (PRM) went down the peace process road. War weariness, the steady loss of volunteers, particularly in Tyrone, the recognition of the futility of violence, a better understanding of the position of the unionist population, the higher body count of the loyalists coming into the nineties, personal ambition, disquiet at the increase in sectarianism are all possible reasons.

It does no one any credit if in our movement we question the sincerity or genuineness of the PRM. After all that movement waged a war against the British for approximately 25 years and forged the most effective guerrilla army certainly in Western Europe. It is clear that their leadership calculated that there was more to be gained by taking the political road rather than the military road.

Once having decided that there was a cold remorseless political logic that led to the major acts of decommissioning.

The engaging in the affairs of Ireland by the Clinton administration opened up the way for the Provos to take the political road. Furthermore the collapse of the old Soviet type communism now meant that Imperialism and capitalism were in the ascendancy and revolutionary movement had to face the new realities.

The victory over the Soviets gave capitalism a new lease of life and it now began a concerted attack on publicly owned resources. The introduction of public Private finance initiatives is not just a local thing it is worldwide. The drive for privatisation is fuelled by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and other international bodies.

This affects the politics of Ireland. The close relationship between the USA and the Free State Government clearly shows how closely interwoven are the policies of both countries. The Celtic Tiger economic miracle was announced on the same day as the first IRA ceasefire. The link between economics and politics is obvious.

The splendid isolation of Ireland from the real economic world took some time to penetrate into the Unionists. For years protected by the indifference of the Westminster Government the Unionists grew arrogant and dictatorial. They used sectarian fears to bolster their rule and openly advocated and practice discrimination against the Roman Catholic population.

When all this was blown apart by the rise of the civil rights movement and the extent of the resistance of the oppressed they were incapable of resisting change. Direct rule, not a British first option was instigated. The GFA was all about creating the conditions for the shared Government of NI between Unionists and Nationalists, which with increasingly stronger cross border links would satisfy nationalist aspirations while not encouraging unionist fears. It was also a way by which Britain could begin a process of disengagement.

For the PRM the advantages of this approach are obvious. The isolation from the media and the world stage that they suffered in the eighties was gone, they are now major players, they are within sight of overtaking the SDLP as the main nationalist party they have a growing influence in Southern politics and are attracting the support and votes of increasing numbers of young

people. Further more they have still held onto their army despite three major acts of decommissioning. Growing disillusionment with the corrupt politics within the 26 county state means they will attract growing support and even more votes. They may hold the balance of power in the South which means they could be Government both North and South within the next three years. That is what drives them; the pursuit of power because it is actually within their reach. Is that not something worthwhile from their perspective?

Trimble and Adams have both come out of this strengthened in one way. Trimble can say he got the IRA to decommission 3 times and that he withstood pressure from both Blair and Ahearn to cut a deal.

Adams can say he for filled his part of the bargain, can deliver, and that the unionists reneged on an agreed deal. Also part of the Sinn Fein strategy was to split unionism. It has now been never more divided

There is no doubt that the war is over, that the PRM have settled for a democratic settlement within the six county state with a view to continuing their struggle by constitutional means.

However while we may speculate and theorise the reality is that elections for a new Assembly are now on. The elections are about electing negotiating teams not a government. Immediately after the elections regardless of the result there has to be a review of the GFA. It is quite possible that in the event of all sections of Unionism refusing to share Government with Sinn Fein the British and Irish Governments could move towards making Joint Authority a viable option.

What should be our position in all this? First of all the immediate question is the one of elections. As I see it we have only limited options. ---

In al of these there are opportunities and difficulties. It is up to the membership to make their voice heard. But there is not enough political input to the movement by the membership. We tend to leave others to do the hard work. There is not enough effort to develop policies that have some relevance to the lives of working class people. I could go on and make a large number of criticisms of our faults, but that would be negative and we need to develop a culture in the Party of positive forward thinking as to what we can and should do. People in this room may have in the past put their lives on the line in the struggle for national liberation and socialism. Some of you may have been shot tortured or jailed. To make sense of those sacrifices we need to begin now and march forward towards seriously getting involved in electoral politics. That should be our short-term goal, training our membership to be prepared to put our politics before the people in all parts of Ireland. While the assembly elections may not be the time to do it because I see this as the final working out of the GFA then after that we should come out with all guns blazing to use a metaphor and put the authentic voice and polices of Republican Socialism before the Irish working class. What should our vision of that Republican socialism be? The end goal as I see it is the creation of as democratic a society as possible, politically economically and socially where each individual has the opportunity to develop their potentiality to its fullest extent.

(G. Ruddy IRSP Ard –Comhairle member)

USA POLITICAL PRISONER

On Friday, September 5, 2003, Dr. Abdelhaleem Ashqar surrendered himself to U.S. Marshals. Ashqar was charged with civil contempt for refusing to testify before a grand jury in Chicago this summer and may spend up to 18 months prison as the government attempts to coerce him to testify in what he has described as an Israeli politically motivated investigation. This will be the 2nd time that Ashqar has been jailed for refusing to testify. In 1998 Ashqar was summoned to testify, but refused to do so out of fear that despite being given immunity, his statements would be used against him by Israel. He was jailed for contempt and began an immediate hunger strike that lasted for six months, winning him release, but also leaving him with permanent physical ailments. Ashqar came to this country from Palestine on a government sponsored scholarship in 1989. Since then he has been the target of government harassment and surveillance, but has neither been accused of, nor charged with any wrongdoing in the United States. Prior to coming to America, Dr. Ashqar was a well-known student activist in the Palestine territories. His political views, which are critical of Israeli occupation and mistreatment of Palestinians, lead to his arrest and torture by the Israeli military. Dr. Ashqar has stated that he would die before he testifies because his religious and political beliefs will not let him participate in a politically charged investigation that may harm him and other Palestinians who have dared to speak out against Israel's occupation.

From the Free Dr. Ashqar Committee
<http://www.free-ashqar.org/>

Homeless.

The North Belfast branch of the IRSP has called the eviction of a north Belfast single parent from a Salvation Army hostel in the Cliftonville indicative of the callousness that comes from the mis-management of the housing crisis for Catholics in the area.

The single parent of two under school age children has reached the end of his tether in regards to being placed in totally inadequate and unsuitable accommodation by the Housing executive. This had led directly to the dispute between Mr. Rattle and the Salvation Army, which in turn has led to his eviction.

The IRSP recognise that the Salvation Army plays a vital role in providing temporary housing for vulnerable families, Mr. Rattle is not vulnerable he is quite capable of looking after himself and his family he is simply homeless through no fault of his own. He requires a home in which to raise his family he does not require the level of in house support that Salvation Army provide. He has found this intrusive into his privacy and feels that a judgement on his ability as a parent is being brought into question. The Housing Executive have quite clearly abdicated their

responsibility in placing Mr. Rattle in a Salvation Army Hostel and have created this foreseeable and preventable, eviction.

The housing crisis in North Belfast is being totally mismanaged by the housing executive who have attempted to shift their responsibility on to Charities, and local housing associations rather than face up to their stated role. The public money that is being spent, in this particular case over £500 per week to keep a family in hostel is exorbitant and wide open to profiteering by unscrupulous landlords and hostel owners.

The IRSP are stating that whilst there is a housing crisis in nationalist north Belfast because of the sectarian allocation of houses, the points system operated by the NIHE in North Belfast is a joke and has no real bearing on either housing need or provision.

In conclusion the IRSP are saying whilst there maybe reasons why housing in this part of the city is allocated on the basis of religion there is absolutely no justifiable reason for the amount of vacant property lying empty in nationalist areas some of this housing is brand new and is lying vacant because of bureaucracy. Why is this housing not being used, the IRSP will be seeking a meeting with the NIHE to campaign for proper resources are made available to bring these houses into public usage.

Is this the future for Irish schools???

Teachers organise against privatisation in the Punjab (Pakistan) The teachers of the Punjab (Pakistan) are on the move against the privatisation of the schools and the educational institutions. The present Musharraf regime has introduced measures to privatise the school system. According to this the schools will be privatised and handed over to NGOs which will run the schools with the powers of dismissal, removal and terminations and also with cuts in the salaries of the teachers.

On October 10, 2003 all the teachers' unions of the Punjab, including the Senior Staff Association, Headmasters' Association and the Punjab Teachers Association, held their meeting at the Nasir Bagh Islamia High School, after forming an alliance called the "Mutahida Mahaz-e-Asatza" (United Teachers' Front). Teachers in large numbers participated in the meeting from all over the Punjab. A large number of female teachers were also present at the meeting. The teachers were carrying banners and placards. They were chanting slogans against the NGOs and the planned privatisation.

At 11am sharp the central leadership reached the venue. At the start of the meeting, the press secretary of the United Teachers' Front, comrade Shokat Kathiya, read out his revolutionary poem. The president of the Punjab Teachers' Association, Jameel Ahmad, said the NGOs could only take over the schools "over our dead bodies". He went on to say that, "We will sacrifice our lives but we will not allow the NGOs to take over the Schools." The secretary General of the Senior Staff Association of the Punjab, Taukeer Butt, warned the government that if it allows the NGOs to take control of the schools it will find itself in deep trouble.

The president of the United Teachers' Front, Raja Zafeer Ahmad Sateer, said that by privatising the schools and by giving them to the NGOs, the government is going to make a big mistake. "The policies of the IMF and World Bank are being thrust upon us, and this is going to cause great harm to the workers and working class at large. No body can dismiss us from the jobs. And if any body takes any action in this regard history will repeat itself and all the teachers of the Punjab will come out onto the streets. We will block the roads and will go for a complete strike and the ruling class will not find any secure place for themselves." He gave the present government a deadline of October 22 and said that if our demands are not fulfilled, on October 23 we will block the whole of Lahore city and organise big demonstration.

Many other teachers addressed the meeting including Rasheed Ahmad Bhatti, Farkhra Butt, Syed Jeevan Shah, Khizar Hayat, and Comrade Ahmad Nawaz Wattoo, Advocate. On this occasion many workers and trade unions also assured the United Teachers' Front that they would fight against privatisation of the schools by standing shoulder to shoulder with the teachers.

From

http://www.marxist.com/Asia/teachers_in_pakistan.html

New Acquisitions for Working Class Movement Library.

The library has received a unique historical document, a letter sent by William Allen, one of the Manchester Martyrs, to his mother. It is part of small collection of fascinating Irish material brought into the library, which seems to have belonged to Patrick Kelly, a leading Manchester Irish Nationalist

The hanging of the Manchester Martyrs was the most important political episode in the history of the Irish in Manchester in the C19th. On 18th September 1867 a horse-drawn police van was attacked by a band of determined armed men as it neared the railway bridge on Hyde Road. The two prisoners inside were leading Fenians, Thomas Kelly and Timothy Deasy, captured by the authorities just a week before. The daring rescue bid was launched as the men were being returned to Bellevue Gaol. Once free the prisoners disappeared and eventually escaped back to the United States.

Tragically a policeman by the name of Charles Brett was accidentally shot dead in the course of the raid. Enraged by this and the audacity of the raid the authorities ransacked Manchester's Irish areas.

After a show trial three men were sentenced to death by hanging for the murder of Brett. The letter we now have in the library was written on 27th October from the New Bailey Gaol. Just a few weeks later on 23rd November, a grim, foggy Salford morning, Allen and his two fellow Irishmen were publicly hanged at the front of the prison. Few doubted their innocence and they

became known as the Manchester Martyrs, remembered in the popular song "God Save Ireland."
Working Class Movement Library, 51 The Crescent, Salford, U.K. M5 4WX 0161 736 3601
www.wcml.org.uk <http://www.wcml.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

Question time and manifesto launch

NICVA is holding a party political Question Time for the voluntary and community sector on 14 November 2003 at 11.00am at the NICVA Offices. Representatives of all the main parties have been invited to set out their manifestos and answer questions about what they plan to do about the issues concerning voluntary and community organisations. The new Policy Manifesto for the sector will also be launched at the event. To register, please contact Cathy Breslin on tel: 028 9087 7777 or cathy.breslin@nicva.org.

NI Anti-Poverty Network Invite you to attend our

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Followed by seminar/speakers and workshops on

WATER INEQUALITY – THE HUMAN COST,

On Friday 28th November 2003

At NICVA, 61Duncairn Gardens, Belfast, BT15 2GB From 9.30 – 1.00pm

AGM followed by guest speakers on privatisation and the introduction of the Water tax and how this will affect every section of our community. On low income, in receipt of benefits, if you are a householder you will have no relief from Water tax.

SPEAKERS

Frances Dowds – NI Anti-Poverty Network (NIAPN) Manus Maguire – Communities Against the Water Tax (CAWT) Jim Welsh – NI Public Service Alliance (NIPSA) Alisa Keane – Irish Congress of Trade Unions NI (ICTU NI)

To Register – Fax back to 028 9087 5011 or e-mail to info@niapn.org by 21st November 2003

Short of a bob or two? Seeking a new job opportunity in at the deep end?

The Department for Regional Development recently advertised the post of Chief Executive of the Water Service.

The post was offered at £150,000 a year plus performance related bonus and they added; more may be available for an exceptional candidate,.

The advertisement adds that;

It has been determined that Water Service must become a self-financing organisation outside central government,. It further adds that this; will require the introduction of domestic water charges,. During the public consultation, the focus was on how water tax should be charged, not if it should be charged, so what was the consultation for? Why consult with the community if you have already decided the outcome?

The government is looking to employ an Executive on £3,000.00 per week.

If he water charges are introduced it will take more than 400 families living in poverty to make up this person's wage.

The gap in earnings between the rich and the poor is ever widening. Can you afford to pay an additional £400.00-£600.00 per year for water charges– maybe you can, however many people

can't and as ever it is the already socially excluded sections of our society that this tax will effect most. One thing is for sure the Chief Executive of the Water Service should have no problem paying his/her water tax bill; after all it isn't even 0.5% of their annual salary.

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

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<http://www.marxists.org/archive/connolly/> (James Connolly Archive)