1991

General Secretary's Report to the Workers' Party Ard Fheis Annual Delegate Conference 1991

Workers' Party of Ireland

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THE WORKERS PARTY

GENERAL SECRETARY'S REPORT

The Workers' Party Ard Fheis
Annual Delegate Conference 1991
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INTRODUCTION

Comrades

In view of the fact that the Draft Programme has been a major area of activity for the Party since the 1990 Ard Fheis and given that discussion of the Draft Programme will occupy a major part of the 1991 Ard Fheis, this year’s report is somewhat curtailed. Workers’ Party Youth will present their own report.

As stated and agreed last year we need to critically examine how best to improve our specialist committees. It is expected that this issue will receive the necessary attention over the next year.

The problem of resources to service and build the Party occupied a great deal of the time of the Political and Management Committees. As noted by the Finance Committee we have managed to stabilise our financial situation and we would hope over the next year to be able to begin to use more of our resources for organisation development and growth. The coming Local Elections in the Republic and probable Westminster Elections in Northern Ireland will provide us with opportunities to expand our influence and increase our strength but they will also put strain on our limited resources.

We are confident of winning substantial ground in these elections and demonstrating the continued advance of previous years.

It was with regret that over the past year we had to cutback in certain areas, printing and the bookshop. We were forced to make some longstanding and loyal members/employees redundant. We would like to pay tribute to these members for their understanding of the situation and for their acceptance of the need to take such drastic action. We owe them a debt and it must remain a priority for the Party to discharge that debt. Nevertheless we must not view these measures as permanent, it must remain our aim and priority to be self sufficient in print and to aim to reopen a viable bookshop selling Socialist, Marxist literature. Already there are positive signs with the projected relaunch of the party paper on a fortnightly basis and the decision to resume Making Sense on a monthly basis from September. In order to make these plans a reality over the next months we will require the active involvement of all members in promoting and selling our party publications.

Sean Garland
General Secretary
The members of the Environment and Local Government Committee are: Eamonn Gilmore, Catherine Murphy, Paul O'Sullivan, Sylvie Batt, Gordan McKenzie, Tom Breen, Tom French, Imelda Hynds, John Dunne.

The main work of the committee this year has been related to the forthcoming Local Elections. In preparation for these elections the following work was carried out:

(a) A submission to the Barrington Committee on Local Government Reform. This submission was made in July 1990 and was issued to the Press.

Many of the proposals in the Workers' Party submission were subsequently incorporated in the Barrington Report, but were, in turn, ignored by the Government.

(b) The Committee issued a questionnaire to branches and Local Election candidates concerning priorities for the Local Election manifesto.

(c) In March, a consultative conference of Party candidates and members was held and arising from this conference the committee is now drawing up the manifesto for the Local Elections.

The government eventually published the Environment Protection Agency Bill. The committee held a one day meeting with environmental organisations to consider its details. A further meeting is planned to coincide with the Dail debate on the Bill.

The committee has made repeated statements on the housing crisis. When the government eventually published its "Plan for Social Housing", the committee produced a commentary on the government policy. We consider that the "Plan for Social Housing" will not make any serious impact on the worsening housing crisis.

A Private Members Bill on Ground Rents was published, following discussion with ACRA. The purpose of the Bill is to hold a Constitutional Referendum in conjunction with the Local Elections, so that the alleged "constitutional difficulties" with terminating ground rents can be eliminated. It is intended to have this Bill debated during Private Members' Time in the Dail.

A document on the abuse of planning in Dublin County Council was published. The document, "The Rezoning Majority", highlights how
Fianna Fail has used its majority on Dublin County Council to rezone large chunks of the county.

A policy document on pedestrian and cyclist safety is being prepared. It is hoped to have it issued before the Ard Fheis.

NATIONAL WOMENS COMMITTEE

The National Women's Committee met on several occasions during the year and sub-groups, including women not on the National Women's Committee, met frequently to discuss particular items or plan specific events. There was representation on the Committee from Dublin, Belfast, Cork and Waterford; contact was maintained with other areas. It should be emphasised that the Committee welcomes participation by any interested member. We welcome ideas, but also practical support for the implementation of those ideas. The lack of a full-time women's officer is still holding back the recruitment and development of women in the Party. To carry out the extensive programme demanded by the membership (especially women) therefore requires considerable voluntary commitment of time and energy by members.

Year of the Woman
Building on an idea put forward in the previous year the Committee decided to plan for a Workers' Party Year of the Woman starting on International Women's Day, 1991. A programme was outlined and the year launched with a press conference on 5 March followed by a celebratory social on 8 March, International Women's Day. Plans for the rest of the year include a short story competition, a commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the "Contraceptive Train", a dramatic commemoration of the 80th anniversary of the foundation of the Federation of Irish Women's Suffrage Societies, and a major conference on Women and 1992 in September.

It is important that not all events are organised centrally and the Dun Laoire constituency has set a good example by organising a highly successful series of public debates on issues of interest to women. Other areas are following this example and it should be possible for every area of the country where the party is organised to do something similar during the year, even if on a smaller scale.

The internal dimension of the Year of the Woman is as important as the public. With this in mind the National Women's Committee met several of the specialist committees to discuss their work in relation to women's
issues and women in the Party. An internal education programme has been discussed, but more time needs to be invested in this.

Commission on the Status of Women
A submission has been made to the new Commission on the Status of Women; the submission covers a broad range of issues. A press conference to launch the document "Equal to the Best" was held in Dublin on 11th April.

International
The National Women's Committee is represented on the International Affairs Committee and is planning to contact women's sections of socialist parties in Europe and elsewhere during the Year of the Woman. Contact has been maintained with the European Forum of Socialist Feminists.

Local Government Elections
The Committee is very pleased that the Party will have a considerably increased number of women candidates in the June 1991 Local Government elections and hopes for a resultant increase in the number of our women public representatives. We see this development as an indication of the Party's commitment to equality and its determination to play a leading role in increasing women's participation in electoral politics. A useful meeting was held with the Electoral Committee to discuss the special problems women experience in becoming candidates and as elected representatives.

General Activities
Members of the National Women's Committee attended meetings and conferences held by a number of bodies, e.g. the Soroptomists, the Women's Political Association. A number of women's organisations were invited to the International Women's Day social and a number attended.

A paper on "Women and the Workers' Party" was delivered to the National Education Seminar in Belfast in August 1990. In September the Dublin Region held a successful seminar entitled "Equality for Progress". The resulting recommendations have been looked at with great interest by the National Women's Committee and it is hoped to incorporate them into a future programme. A weekend school for women in Northern Ireland took place in Lisnaskea in October; the participants discussed women in politics and women in the party. Again the conclusions are very useful, especially in relation to women in the Party. The National Women's Committee contributed to some constituency and regional meetings and had an input to the new draft Party Programme. We welcome the opportunity offered by the new Programme to affirm the commitment of the Party to the implementation of the full equality of women and men inside and outside the organisation.
ELECTORAL COMMITTEE

Two National elections preoccupied the Committee during the year; the Presidential Election in November and preparations for the forthcoming Local Elections in June. The Party had been committed, from the previous Ard Fheis, to seeking an agreed Left candidate. When this proved not feasible it was agreed to organise an independent campaign on behalf of the candidacy of Mary Robinson. Our Party T.D.s signed her nomination papers and the Party organisation throughout the country vigorously campaigned for Mary Robinson. Five hundred thousand special Party leaflets were produced and put in doors as well as 150,000 canvassing leaflets.

The eventual result was gratifying and suggests that Irish politics is being dragged into the mainstream of European political alignments. In terms of the effort put into the campaign by our Party workers, it was especially gratifying to note that no less than five of the constituencies where we have elected T.D.s were numbered amongst the top ten results in the country.

The committee has now virtually completed the panel of candidates for the forthcoming Local Elections. Our strategy is designed to extend the influence of the Workers' Party in Local Government and to bring forward candidates capable of winning new Dail seats in the next General Election. This strategy and limited resources combine to prevent us, on this occasion, from contesting every electoral area. In addition, because of the Government's failure to deal comprehensively with Local Government reform, elections cannot proceed this year to UDCs and Town Commissioners and, as a result, several of our candidates for these elections must bide their time. Within weeks the final panel of candidates to contest every electoral area in the Greater Dublin area will be in place and, generally throughout the country the committee estimates significant overall gains.

Electoral Committee: P. Rabbitte (Chairperson), B. Lynch, D. Desmond, P. Kane, G. Doherty, B. Maguire.
STATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Due to pressure of other work, the Committee was convened only once since the 1990 Ard Fheis. This meeting reviewed work in progress on party policy.

In the course of the year, statements were prepared on:-

(i) Report of Primary Curriculum Review Body;
(ii) A six-point plan to restore free education;
(iii) Need for more remedial teachers;
(iv) Report of Primary Education Review Body;
(v) Raising democratic questions of control/ownership in education;
(vi) Expansion of the six-year cycle at second-level.

In addition, a lead story on the theme "Fair Play in Schools" was prepared for the national collection leaflet and a review of education policy drafted for the Ard Comhairle in August. An attempt to organise a conference on literacy on 22 August did not succeed, due to the unavailability of speakers. Articles based on the party's perspective were prepared for two education journals (on a comparison of education now with the ideals of the 1916 Proclamation, and on an Education Act), and the drafting of over fifty Dail questions ensured that the Party in the Dail had a regular involvement in education debates.

NATIONAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The Committee met on three occasions during the year, the National Women's Committee were represented on one occasion and it was agreed to distribute all material relating to the Year of the Woman through the NEC.

A Summer School was held in Belfast (1990) and although poorly attended was judged to be very satisfactory by the Party members at the school.

Two Regional Schools were held; one in Belfast and the other in Cork. Unfortunately the Munster school, although planned for a full weekend, had to be cut back to one day. Once again attendance was not satisfactory, only the city being reasonably represented.

A further school planned for Dublin had to be cancelled due to the pressure of other meetings.
DAIL REPORT

June of this year marks the tenth anniversary of the election of the first Workers' Party TD to Leinster House. When Joe Sherlock entered Leinster House for the first time in June 1981 he had to plough a very lonely furrow as the only Workers' Party TD among the 166 members of the Dail. Many commentators dismissed Joe Sherlock's election as a 'flash in the pan', attributable to the particular local conditions in Cork East. But both Joe Sherlock and the party have shown that this was far from the case, and over the past decade we have grown steadily to our present level of seven seats, and we now have a group of deputies who are the most active and effective in the House.

The 12 months since the last Ard Fheis has seen the party maintain its high level of activity in all areas of work in the Dail. More than 1,400 parliamentary questions were tabled by Workers' Party deputies in the past full year, dozens of matters were raised on the adjournment and we participated in all major debates. The party was to the fore in fighting controversial pieces of legislation, such as last year's Broadcasting Bill, which was clearly designed to emasculate RTE; the Industrial Relations Bill which has major implication for labour relations; and the Sugar Bill of earlier this year, the purpose of which was to facilitate the privatisation of the successful, profitable and enterprising state company, Irish Sugar.

The Party President, Proinsias De Rossa, was the Dail's most vocal and effective opponent of the government's shameful support for the Gulf War. He first raised the implications for Ireland in November, following the passing by the Security Council of Resolution 678. He demanded the recall of the Dail in January, when it was evident that war was imminent, and he continued to raise the call for peace at every possible opportunity throughout the conflict.

A very significant initiative taken by the party during the year was the introduction of our Private Members Bill to amend Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution. Although it was not passed the Bill was an extremely useful exercise. It brought the matter to the floor of the Dail for the first time in more than 50 years, forced the other parties off the fence on the issue, and established for the first time that there was a majority in the Dail in favour of the principle of amending Articles 2 and 3.

A number of other private members Bills, tabled by the Party, remain on the order paper, including the Control of Horses Bill, the Sale of Tickets Bill, the Local Government Amendment Bill (to end the power of the
Minister to abolish local authorities), and the Eleventh Amendment of the Constitution Bill (to facilitate the abolition of ground rents). Unfortunately so little time is allocated for private members business that the Workers' Party only get a slot about every six or seven months.

There is clearly a need to allocate more Dail time for private members business. To do this, the Dail needs end the ridiculously long recesses - especially the summer recess when the Dail breaks for almost four months. Indeed the case for very radical reform of Dail procedures becomes more compelling every year. Deputies who try to carry out their duties conscientiously are frustrated at every turn by a set of archaic Standing Orders that allow little opportunity for sponteneity or much genuine debate, which were based on the procedures operating at Westminster at the time they were drawn up (the 1920s) and which have been updated very little.

**PUBLICITY**

Publicity, it is often remarked, is the oxygen of politics. Certainly without it, any party will find it difficult to make political progress. Getting our message across to the public has to involve the use of all avenues open to us, including the most effective possible use of the various forms of the media.

Publicity - whether at national or local level - is always an uphill battle. We are dealing with a media which generally has a set of priorities which are quite different from ours, and we are competing with parties which have far greater resources than those available to The Workers' Party.

Last year we were allocated an extra position in the press/research area in the Dail and this has facilitated a substantial increase in output. During the past 12 months some 700 items of press material have been issued by the national press office, representing an increase of nearly 50% over the previous 12 month period. Press conferences were held throughout the year on a number of issues including Private Members Bills on Articles 2 and 3 and the blackmarket sale of tickets, our pre-budget submission, the draft Party Programme, the Year of Women, and a study of planning in the County Dublin area, and on the party's submission "Equal to the Best" to the Council for the Status of Women.

The development of local commercial radio around the country has opened another window of opportunity for the Party. Some areas are taking full advantage of this development, but others have failed to respond to the challenge.
A significant development during the year was the introduction of the televising of Dail debates. While the viewing figures for the Dail Report are relatively small by television standards, they are still very substantial - usually in the 100,000 to 200,000 range. Any development which makes the public more aware of activities in the Dail has to be welcomed, but this positive development has to be balanced against a continuing decline in coverage of Dail business in the printed media - especially the 'routine' Dail business. Our deputies will often put in hours of painstaking work on the detailed Committee Stage of a Bill, to find that it does not even merit a mention in the newspapers.

We had particular problems with RTÉ during the course of the Presidential election campaign, when we found that the separate campaign the Party was running in support of Mary Robinson was being virtually ignored, and that we were being excluded from most programmes dealing with the election. The situation improved somewhat following representations to RTÉ. During the course of the campaign the Party came under virulent attack from both Fianna Fail and Fine Gael, in what was a repeat of elements of the 1989 general election campaign. For the second time within two years Fianna Fail, in particular, found to their cost that McCarthyite tactics do not pay off.

The big challenge facing us in the immediate future is, of course, the local elections. The 1985 election proved a significant stepping stone in the development of the party, and this year's limited elections will be no less important. In recent weeks we have being paying particular attention to local government issues in our publicity efforts and we will be making an all-out effort between now and election day to highlight our range of progressive policies in this area.

Northern Ireland

As usual a continuous stream of statements press releases and letters were put out addressing the ongoing issues of terrorist activity, the economy and the social difficulties resulting from these matters. In addition a high W.P. profile on the issue of the need for political progress was maintained through statements, press conferences and media interviews. This aspect of party activity was further developed in the promotion of the campaign for a Democratic Convention in defence of public life and against terrorism.

The Annual Northern Ireland conference in February was a major media opportunity for the Party in Northern Ireland and extensive press, television and radio coverage of a positive nature was achieved. Generally coverage of party views and activities has been maintained at a satisfactory
level overall, though omission of Party comment from the press on occasional specific issues continues to raise problems and demands constant pressure on, and contact with, news desks, journalists and editors.

ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

In June 1990, the new Chairperson of the Economic Affairs Committee wrote to all Party members inviting them to participate in the work of a restructured committee. The response was very positive, with more than 30 members expressing an immediate interest in working either on the main committee, or on one or more of the sub-committees or working groups. An even larger number subsequently volunteered to work specifically on trade union affairs; and a few more volunteered themselves, or agreed to contribute to the committee's work, later in the year.

Composition and Structure

In addition to the Chairperson (Rosheen Callender), the committee consists of Prionsais Breathnach, Tom French, Des Geraghty, Sean Kelly, Catherine Murphy, Ger O'Quigley and Paul Sweeney. It was decided at the beginning of the year to have ten sub-groups, covering separate, though inter-related areas of work which the committee wished to tackle. About 40-50 other people were actively involved in the work of these groups. The T.D.s were invited to attend as observers any meetings which were of interest to them; and several did so, with Proinsias De Rossa and Pat Rabbitte playing a particularly active role in view of their parliamentary 'portfolios'.

Between September 1990 and April 1991, the committee had 10 formal meetings, a few more informal discussion, and had two conferences for Party members and invited guests. The ten areas of work which the committee sought to tackle, and the work done in each, were as follows:-

1. Socialist Economics

This group was to follow through on the discussion which was already underway in the Party, about the role of the market, the role of the state in economic development, the appropriate 'mix' of public and private enterprise, what 'social ownership' means nowadays, and so on. Because this work was so fundamental, and the brief so extensive, all committee members (plus a number of other, interested members) involved themselves in this area; and ideally, this should have been the starting point, from which the other work would flow.
Two extremely useful working papers on 'Socialist Economics' were produced and discussed extensively by the committee. In the normal course of events, the ideas therein would have been refined, distilled and presented in more accessible form to the party as a whole, and when a process of widespread discussion was complete, it would have been possible to produce a short summary of 'basic economic principles'. However, before this could happen, the committee was asked for the 'end product' - the distilled version of what was not yet completed - for inclusion in the new, draft, Party Programme. Those committee members who were on the Commission entrusted with drafting the new Programme therefore had a difficult task and considerable discussion and redrafting went into the material eventually submitted!

2. Industrial Policy
In order to facilitate and focus further debate on industrial policy, the committee organised a conference in October 1990 to discuss the paper 'Making It Work' (which had been published by the Party in May 1990). The conference was very well attended and the level of participation was particularly good. But the many new ideas, suggestions and constructive criticisms that were made did cause the committee some difficulty when it tried, subsequently, to both condense and extend the document as requested! Also, since the point has been made that our industrial policy should be set more explicitly in the context of our overall, economic policy, the fact that the latter was not yet comprehensively developed or agreed created a slight dilemma here as well. But the committee hopes to have a second re-draft ready this summer (it was not happy with its first attempt, earlier this year).

3. Tax and Social Welfare
It was intended that this group would comprehensively update our existing policies on taxation, both local and national; and integrate them with the financial aspects of our social welfare policy. However, because of pressure of time and other work, a pre-Budget submission was produced in January 1991 which, while containing some of the intended updating, was less comprehensive in scope that the chairperson had wished. Hopefully, this part of the committee's work will get more attention next year.

4. Labour Market Trends
The intention was that this group would work and prepare material for the Party, on demographic and labour force trends - on employment, the changing patterns of work and the 'working class', the 'feminisation' of the workforce, the ageing of the workforce, the question of 'skills shortages' side by side with unemployment and emigration. As a contribution to the debate which has been proceeding within the Party on the question of 'class' and 'class politics', it was decided to start the work of this group with
the organisation of a conference, on April 13th 1991, titled "Have Classes Disappeared?" - or, "The Political Relevance of the Irish Class Structure". The conference organiser, Ellen Hazelkorn, has offered to collate and edit the papers presented to this conference, hopefully for publication later this year.

5. **Transport Policy**
Work was already underway in 1990 in relation to a public transport policy for Dublin, and this has now been completed. The report was presented and discussed at a public meeting organised in March 1991 by the Dublin Regional Council and the response was very positive indeed. The intention is to follow this up with further work on transport policy nationally and hopefully this will involve other members, from outside Dublin as well.

6. **Tourism**
The tourism industry was singled out for particular attention and a small group has been working to draft policy in this area. An initial report is to be available soon.

7. **Agriculture**
Despite the committee's belief that a comprehensive, realistic, new policy document on agriculture is urgently required and should be a major priority, it was unable to devote sufficient resources to this in recent months. This was because the convenor of the agriculture group was engaged in so much other Party work, particularly on the Commission (drafting the new Programme) and in groups 1 and 2 above. Hopefully this will change in the coming year and drafting of a document will start in earnest.

8. **Northern Ireland**
Several members in Northern Ireland has been regular attenders/observers at Economic Affairs committee meetings and one (Brendan Heaney) now acts as convenor for working groups on the economy of Northern Ireland, tax and social security policy, and trade union affairs. Work is proceeding in each of these areas.

9. **Labour Legislation**
The purpose of this group is to provide expert advice to the Party and back-up to the T.D.s, on new and pending labour legislation. During the year it performed this function and also produced an excellent pamphlet on the new Industrial Relations Act, exposing the latter's weaknesses and pitfalls from a trade union viewpoint. (Copies of 'Berties Bill' by Pat Rabbitte and Eamon Gilmore are still available at £1).
10. Trade Union Affairs
The main items of discussion among trade unionists in the Party this year were the new Industrial Relations Act, the Programme for Economic and Social Progress, the best form of party organisation in this area and the need for regular public meetings to be run by the Workers' Party as a forum for debate on trade union issues. Following adoption of the PESP, the committee wanted to run a 'What Next?' or 'Whither Trade Union in the 21st Century?' type conference, but time and resources were insufficient to do so before the Ard Fheis. Autumn 1991 is now the target date for this; work has commenced on some of the papers; and if possible, some of this material will be published in advance of the conference.

Problems and Plans
This committee has an extremely broad brief, especially in view of the widely perceived need for new thinking on all matters economic. It probably started the year with over-ambitious plans, which could not realistically be fulfilled quickly, given the lack of any full-time personnel and the many other commitments of committee members and other contributors. However, if the Party can bear with the Economic Affairs committee's slow pace of work (which nevertheless in last six months, produced one pamphlet, one policy document, several working papers, two major conference, a pre-budget submission, a section of the draft Party Programme and many, many person-hours of meetings) the committee is confident that its approach and structures are sound and will produce more fruit in the year ahead - particularly if more members become actively involved. Anyone wishing to do so need only contact the chairperson.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT:

The past year has seen significant progress towards economic, monetary and political union in the EC. The Workers' Party had welcomed these developments in principle but, as we spelt out as far back as the campaign on the Single European Act referendum in 1987, we insist on democratic accountability at all levels, a genuine social dimension and opposition to a 'Fortress Europe'.

On the economic front, there are increasing indications that structural funds and other EC financial assistance to peripheral regions will be inadequate to help develop the Irish economy to enable it to compete on an equal basis. References in March by the Head of the German Bundesbank to 'two speed' development of the EC, whereby
development of regions such as Ireland would officially develop at a slower pace, illustrate this danger clearly.

Moves towards political union have inevitably involved discussion on security and defence. There are already numerous proposals from member states for a single EC defense and security policy. Pressure for such a development is best encapsulated in EC Commission President, Jacques Delors' recent call for the EC to 'shoulder the political and military responsibilities of the old nations'. The Irish government has failed as yet to make a submission to the Intergovernmental Conference on this vital area. In the Dail in March, the Taoiseach refused to say when such a submission will be made.

Changes to the Treaty of Rome will require a referendum in Ireland and can be expected by 1993. It is essential, however, that we generate a debate on the issues so that there is no confusion of the issues to be decided. We have argued that Ireland must play a full part in discussions on EPU, including defence and security, with a view to creating a non-aggressive security policy. We have proposed that collective security in Europe should be within CSCE and under UN and opposition to the preservation or development of military blocs.

The European Parliament is severely limited in decision making due to the so-called 'democratic deficit' which results from the unelected Commission and Council of Ministers retaining virtually all decision making powers. It is inconceivable that progress can be made towards European Union without providing substantially enhanced powers to the EP - the democratically elected voice of Europe's citizens. Extension of democracy, however, must also involve a devolution of power and decision making to the local community and increased powers and funding for local government.

The Workers' Party is affiliated to the Left Unity group in the European Parliament, whose membership was recently expanded with the addition of three German members from the PDS. Contacts are being maintained and expanded with other Groups and their component parties, particularly with the Unitarian Left, Socialist and Green groups. Among the many issues which we have pursued are implementation of the Social Charter, closure of Sellafield, development of the North-South rail link, control of toxic dumping and waste, proper utilisation of the Structural funds, and improved regional policies, reform of CAP and introduction of a European Industrial Policy.

The Regional Affairs Committee, of which Proinsias De Rossa is a Vice President, this year presented two major reports, on the Republic and on Northern Ireland. A Report on Racism and Xenophobia, by a European Parliament Commission, of which Proinsias De Rossa was a member, was
also presented. A major seminar was organised by Proinsias De Rossa in Dublin last November on the 1991 EC 'Cultural Capital' in Dublin and another seminar is planned on the 'International Year for Women' next September.

The dual mandate held by Proinsias De Rossa was reviewed on two occasions during the past year by the EPC. It was also discussed by the Ard Comhairle. To date it has not been found appropriate or possible for Proinsias De Rossa to relinquish the dual mandate.

The European Parliament is an increasingly important forum for the party and any decisions on the dual mandate must be consistent with retaining and enhancing our position there. The financial benefit to the party to date has been in excess of £60,000. The situation regarding the dual mandate has been and will be kept under continuous review by the Political Committee.

CULTURAL COMMITTEE

Much to the committee’s work was concerned with Dublin’s year as European City of Culture. In October, a briefing session for party member was organised with members of the Glasgow Workers’ City group who outlined their response to the year in Glasgow in 1990.

Members of the committee were involved in a major seminar in November, organised under the aegis of Proinsias De Rossa in his role as MEP. The seminar was addressed by speakers active in different areas of cultural work such as television, theatre, poetry and public libraries. The seminar attracted widespread interest and was attended by over 150 people mainly from cultural groups in the Dublin region.

The seminar highlighted the need for greater accessibility to, and provision of, cultural facilities in the community. The proceedings of the seminar together with an assessment of the City of Culture is being published and a follow-up event is being considered.

The committee organised a meeting of party members interested in developing structures for Irish speakers within the party. This meeting concluded that a regular bilingual social event would initially be more productive than the establishment of a formal committee. Such an event should not be confined to Dublin as there is strong interest in the idea among members in both Belfast and Dublin.
A symposium to mark the 75th anniversary of the 1916 Rising organised by the committee took place at the end of April.

A final draft of the policy document 'Towards a Cultural Democracy' is in preparation.

**ORGANISATION**

Delegates will know from their own areas that we are once more in a growth period.

But, we must take full advantage of this fact and ensure the coming months are utilised to rapidly expand. Comrades who drifted away for various reasons should be reproached and brought back into active membership.

It seems we can never call too often for community based branches. Some centres have heeded this advice and have worked at developing a role for supporters with the Party.

Our experience is that such branches will only be sustained where there is activity and involvement. It should be the 'natural thing' for any PAYE workers to get involved with the Workers' Party.

Internally, branches which succeeded met regularly, filled Officer positions, sent delegates to meetings when required to do so, took up the National Collection, used advice centres to pin point campaign issues and agitated for better conditions in their community. All of these ingredients are necessary to build the Party and the absence of anyone means the job isn't being done.

For the branch to participate fully in its area it must both seek and obtain the views of supporters. This should be structured and a successful means has been to bring them to regular meetings to include them in our discussions. It must be noted though, that every effort should be made to recruit supporters into full membership.

Again, where involvement of supporters has been successful it has been a branch endeavour - the task wasn't left to the public representative.

A training programme was envisaged earlier in the year but deferred pending an appraisal of each areas needs which naturally differ in order of priority. It should be said that changes, as envisaged in our Party, require
the training of activists in order to maximise the effects of such change. Failure to do this in the past has resulted in failure to put various ideas on development into action.

There is a need for greater communication and co-operation between branch/constituency organisers in developing campaigning issues. This can be achieved through less rigid forms of organisation than heretofore. Contact to carry our projects such as campaigns on ground rents do not need committee structure to be both democratic and effective.

Finally, the coming months will bring us into contact with vast number of people through our electorate so let us make the most of it in building the Party.

JUSTICE & CIVIL LIBERTIES

1. Major Dail Debates
Our spokesperson on Justice and Civil Liberties, Pat McCartan, made major contributions in the Dail on a number of key issues. These included the Child Abduction and Custody Bill, the Criminal Law (Rape) Bill and the Criminal Justice Bill, all of which had been on the Committee’s agenda at some state. Penal reform and prison conditions were also major public issues during the year and numerous press statements were released on these topics.

2. Report of Fair Trade Commission on Legal Profession
The committee has prepared a response to the Report of the Fair Trade Commission on Restrictive Practices in the Legal Profession. This covers matters such as competition in legal services, entry to the legal profession, advertising and fees, fusion of barristers/solicitors, and independent complaints mechanism (including a legal ombudsman), Legal Aid, and a Small Claims Court.

3. Northern Ireland
The Northern Ireland members of the Committee continued their work in areas such as the Fair Employment legislation and the Bill of Rights. A major session of the Northern Ireland Regional Conference was on the topic of civil rights.
NORTHERN IRELAND

Throughout the year contact was maintained with the Northern Ireland Office regarding the progress of the Brooke talks initiative and the Party has welcomed the positive developments which have resulted from this process. The imminence of a Westminster General Election has occupied the Committee throughout 1991 and candidate selection as well as discussions on strategy are well advanced.

The preparations for the organising of the Third Annual Northern Ireland Regional Conference occupied the Committee for a considerable time. The theme this year was "Building A Democratic Future" and the Conference took place in the Europa Hotel, Belfast on 16th February. Papers related to the overall theme were delivered - on a Bill of Rights, Sectarianism in the Community, N.I. Political Structures, Full Employment and the European Dimension. These papers were followed by discussion and debate from the floor which was vigorous and extensive. The attendance was increased from previous years with a wide range of guests and visitors from outside the party and an exhibition area where various groups displayed literature and talked to Conference delegates regarding their activities.

Following a particularly savage sequence of terrorist murders in October the Workers' Party renewed our campaign for a Democratic Convention in defence of public life and against terror. As well as a publicity campaign regarding this, approaches were made to a large number of groups, political parties, and individuals and this has been followed up subsequently in an attempt to maintain public pressure for political progress. Two hundred thousand leaflets on this issue were distributed throughout Northern Ireland in an extensive campaign by all Party members in Northern Ireland.

Although there were no Northern Ireland-wide elections since the last Ard Fheis, the Party contested a Westminster Bye-election in Upper Bann as well as two local Council bye-elections in Enniskillen and Dungannon. Although no seats were won the Party fought vigorous campaigns in all cases and made an impact in the areas concerned. Our appreciation should be recorded to Tom French, Cathy Kettyles and Anthony Quinn and to all the members from the local branches and throughout the Party who worked hard in difficult circumstances.
The International Committee was ratified by the EPC in July 1990. It consists of John Lowry (Chairperson), John Gallagher, Cllr Davy Kettyles, Gerry Grainger, Tomas MacGiolla T.D. and Sean O'Cionnaith. The National Women's Committee and Workers' Party Youth also attend committee meetings as do the Party President and General Secretary. The committee has met on six occasion since it has been established.

The world political scene has been dominated by the Gulf War and its continuing effects. The year had begun on an optimistic note. The ending of the cold war in Europe and the accompanying disarmament measures and troop withdrawals both in Europe and other parts of the world gave hope that a new international order could be achieved. It is now clear that the apparent ending of ideological conflict has given way to the unfettered dominance of world affairs by United States imperialism. The clearest evidence of this was the virtual hi-jacking of the United Nations, becoming an instrument of United States selfish interests with no regard to the wishes of the world community.

The Party was unequivocal in its condemnation of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. The opportunities for a peaceful resolution of the matter were never given time. Instead the United States embarked upon what was to be a massive military build up in the region to protect the oil interests of that country. In the process as we had predicted far from achieving anything positive in the Middle East events have only added to further instability and uncertainty which threaten world peace. The future of Iraq is unsure, there are no signs of any meaningful movement towards a resolution of the Palestinian question and a new crisis has developed that of the Kurdish population fleeing from Iraq. The haste with which resources of all kinds were moved to the Middle East by the United States last year is to be contrasted with the reticence which they have shown in relation to giving assistance to hundreds of thousands of Kurds in desperate need.

At home the Party played a major role in the anti-war activities both in the Dail and on the streets. Committees were active in Dublin, Shannon, Belfast, Cork and many other parts of the country. In the Dail party Deputies did an excellent job in keeping the government on its toes throughout the period of the war, particularly in relation to how it affected this country. The compromising of our policy of neutrality and the decision to allow United States forces the use of Shannon Airport are two major examples. Throughout the country Party branches were active in local protests and meetings.
The International Affairs Committee also published a pamphlet written by Dr. John De Courcy Ireland, dealing with the development of United States foreign policy and the role of the arms sales in the world. It is an informative tract and copies are still available.

A major part of the committee meetings has been taken up with a discussion on the question of our international relations. This culminated in the committee holding a conference on this matter in Dublin in March this year. Despite the fact that all branch secretaries were informed of this meeting in good time the attendance was only thirty members. However, the meeting was very worthwhile and provided the opportunity for Party members to express views on a whole range of matters. A paper presented to the meeting which gives a comprehensive analysis of the development and future of our international relations has been distributed to all branches for wider consideration by the members.

At its last meeting before this Ard Fheis the committee considered a paper on the European Parliament with particular references to the positions of the different political groupings of the left and how these relate to the position of the Party. It is proposed to hold a meeting on this matter for party branches after the Ard Fheis with a view to presenting recommendations to the incoming EPC and CEC.

In the course of the year the International Affairs Committee have met individuals and groups on visits to Ireland, North and South. We have also attended a number of conferences and events abroad. These have included:

The Party has been represented at the following conferences:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Conf.</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sep '90</td>
<td>P.D.S. Berlin</td>
<td>John Lowry</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct '90</td>
<td>British Labour Party</td>
<td>John Lowry and Des O'Hagan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct '90</td>
<td>C.E.S.C.</td>
<td>Eamon Gilmore T.D. and John Lowry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov '90</td>
<td>Conference on Peaceful Reunification of Korea, Paris</td>
<td>Gerry Grainger</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov '90</td>
<td>Workers Party of Korea</td>
<td>Cllr. Seamus Lynch</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec '90</td>
<td>Left Green Alliance</td>
<td>Cllr Davy Kettyle and Jim O'Donnell</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec '90</td>
<td>P.C.F.</td>
<td>Des O'Hagan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan '91</td>
<td>P.C.I.</td>
<td>Paddy Gillan and Cllr. Seamus Lynch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb '91</td>
<td>L.C.P.P.I. London</td>
<td>Proinsias De Rossa</td>
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FINANCE

General
The past year has been a difficult one for the party financially. We had to make serious cuts in our printing and some areas of party organisation. Coupled with these difficulties we had to pay off a number of loans and leases which had been incurred over previous years. Nevertheless the Finance Committee has been able, due to the increased income to the party from the Dail and European Parliament to get to the point where our head is above water. The Finance Committee is now reasonably confident of being able to say that future resources of the party will be utilised for party development and increased growth in many parts of the country at present unorganised.

Elections
The absence of National elections for either Dail or Local Authorities provided the party with a welcome breathing space. Most areas availed of this opportunity to clear the outstanding Dail/Euro print bills. There are of course some areas in arrears but the situation is a vast improvement on the bleak situation of this time last year. On the other hand, some areas are or will (after the '91 Development Draw) be in credit to Head Office. This credit will be most useful for posters and other centralised printing for the Local Elections. The party Finance Committee was able to make a substantial contribution to the party Presidential Campaign, which in turn enabled the party nationally to make a significant impact in the Presidential Elections.

Development Draw
The 1990 Development Draw - with 600 participants and £31,000 in prizes - was again a major success. However, that success was not easily achieved and as we pointed out last year we were extremely concerned over the diverse level of commitment to the draw by different
constituencies. This year's draw was scheduled to start on Easter Sunday, 31st March. We have reduced the number of participants to 500 with prizemoney of £25,500 for the 1991 Development Draw. A number of constituencies were given the opportunity by the Finance Committee to raise considerable funding through draws on the Ireland/England football match in March. The Party presently faces local authority elections in the Republic. The countdown also seems to have started for the British General Election, which we will have to contest in Northern Ireland. The CEC has also recently decided to relaunch party newspapers as an 8 page tabloid on a fortnightly basis. Further, the party's theoretical magazine is scheduled to return to a monthly basis in September '91. To achieve success in all these ventures will require an awful lot of money. Yet, to fail in any of these ventures would be disastrous for the party. Therefore, a massive commitment to raising money and paying bills on time will have to be a feature of our activities country wide from this day forward.

CONCLUSION

The coming year will see the party develop and increase its support and influence among the people if we consolidate the gains we have made to date. If we continue to demonstrate to the working people that we and no other party represent their interests and that we will not, for short term gains or opportunism sell out on our principles and objectives, then in the course of the next years we will see fundamental changes in the political character of the country.

The Workers' Party since its development from the 1960s has been the major catalyst for social, economic and political change both North and South. In the ten years since Joe Sherlock was first elected to Dail Eireann the pace of change has accelerated and we have been in the forefront in extending the boundaries of change by our consistent commitment to democratic, socialist ideals which cherish the citizen as the real foundation of society.

In many constituencies, North and South, the Workers' Party stands out as an active campaigning party. We have successfully avoided becoming a party which props up the establishment or which promotes the politically pernicious concept of clientelism. A major factor in this has been (and is) our aims and objectives which have inspired members and supporters to make many sacrifices, of time, of jobs and on occasions even life itself.
The continuing murder campaign of the various sectarian gangs in Northern Ireland is a daily reminder of the need for a strong active Workers' Party to combat and defeat this evil. For over 20 years now we have continually attempted to expose the true nature and intention of the Provisional murder gang. From the outset they have had only the negative and reactionary aims to deepen the division of the working class and drive the Protestant people from Northern Ireland. That they have succeeded to some extent in provoking an equally sterile and brutal response from Loyalist murder gangs makes the task of Democrats all the more difficult. The very sharp, sad and acute observation of the folk singer and writer Tommy Sands in his song "There Were Roses" brings the reality and intent of their actions home to people when he says

"An eye for an eye.
That's all that fills their minds
And another eye and another eye
Until everyone is blind."

We, the Workers' Party, must redouble our efforts in this struggle against Terrorism and Sectarianism. We must, alongside of the Brooke Talks which we sincerely hope will bring positive results, organise a Democratic Convention in Northern Ireland embracing all shades of opinion and isolate the murder gangs. We must demonstrate that these gangs have no place and will not be tolerated by the people. We can only do that by being active and campaigning among the people for democracy and our long term goal of Socialism.

And as a party committed and concerned to transform our society, to end the inequality, poverty, unemployment, to end the undemocratic exploitive economic system which dominates our lives, we must continue to advance by speeding up development of class consciousness and by independent political action.

We must never cease to be on the offensive against capitalism, we must continually emphasise its grotesque failures for decades in its own heartlands of the United States, West Europe and Japan. Capitalism has naturally wasted no time and effort in taking advantage of the vast problems and difficulties which have been at the centre of the collapse of the 'Socialist' countries of East Europe and which have surfaced in even more disastrous forms within the past two years.

Alongside of the revival of capitalism in these countries there has also emerged reactionary nationalism and superstitious pseudo-religious evils which we in Ireland know at first hand and have suffered from for far too long.
Our goal is socialism and we understand socialism to be about the collective organisation of society which ensures all citizens an equal right to participate, an equal opportunity to contribute and the material means to do so. That is a necessary minimum condition for a society in which the citizen is the master and not the slave of so called iron economic laws or archaic social formulations.

Socialism must be the genuine extension, politically, economically, socially and culturally, of a truly democratic society. It is the core of the progressive evolution of society, which enables the human being to grow, to live, to develop in close co-operation with others in overcoming the barbarism that is the warp and weave of any capitalist society.

Following last year's Ard Fheis where the Party re-emphasised its commitment to and objective of Socialism some members of the Party resigned. Naturally their resignations were regretted. For some it seemed a question of following the perverse dictates of one individual who saw nothing wrong with deserting the cause of Socialism and seeking a new home in the camp of the class enemy, as most traitors do.

Those who have had time to reflect on the cynical, opportunistic and manipulative nature of such individuals and their shallowness may now wish to reconsider their decisions. They should do so and we will meet honestly with them.

The sudden and tragic death late last summer of an old comrade Eamon Smullen was also deeply regretted by members. A tribute to Eamon Smullen was paid in the columns of the party paper by Cathal Goulding who stated in the course of his article:-

"Eamon was a consistent fighter for peace and democracy and the working class. He recognised very early on the true nature and intention of the Provisionals in their campaign of terrorism. He was never found wanting whenever the party came under attack, whether it was from right-wing nationalists, ultra left terrorists, or elements of the establishment who through their agents in the media attempted on occasions to smear and destroy the party.

Although Eamon Smullen was no longer a member of the Workers' Party at the time of his death, he retained the admiration and respect of the party, and his death will be deeply felt throughout the party."

Comrades, during the course of this Ard Fheis we will be engaging in open, frank, critical, democratic debate about the nature of our Party, its goals, the immediate society in which we are working and the broader European and indeed world context which must necessarily impinge upon
our thinking to a great degree. We are not immune from the ideological tempests of our time and even though we are a small party in an equally small country we must endeavour to contribute to the best of our ability to the debate which rages around the absolutely vital issues of peace, democracy, capitalism, socialism and freedom.

As regards that debate we have often been told, somewhat gratuitously, to live in the real world.

When did socialist ever live other than in the real world? But what is meant by the advice we get is that we should no longer view the world through the perspectives of socialist traditions and material understanding.

In other words we should surrender to those promoting the end of ideology thesis or to be more exact the triumph of capitalism thesis.

We can, indeed, recognise that the shattering events of Eastern Europe have brought many throughout the world to the brink of cynicism, gross pessimism and despair. It has led individuals, groups and parties to abandon the scientific socialist understanding and flee into opportunistic politics couched in the language of real politics i.e. capitalism has demonstrated its superiority and socialism is dead.

It is here that our analysis, our debate, our criticism must be at its most rigorous cleansed of sloganising and posturing.

But at the same time we must not jettison our knowledge of capitalism's and imperialism's present and past history nor can we permit ourselves to be swamped by the mountainous propaganda which would reduce the worldwide conflict between capitalism and the dispossessed billions to a debate about Eastern and Western Europe.

Like millions of socialists throughout the world we envisage a new political and economic order based on democratic principles, collective security and collective wellbeing. But it would be naive to imagine that this is a short term or even a medium term prospect as we look at the present distribution of power, in all senses, on a global scale.

Indeed it is hard not to feel after the tragedy of the Gulf that international institutions which should have been developing towards those ends have received a setback from which it will take many years to recover.

It is this that prompts me to say in conclusion, comrade, that at the top of our agenda must not only be the question of building the Party but also our involvement in the construction of some new democratic socialist international forum which can be the springboard in the struggle to turn
back the time of capitalist and imperialist reaction and worldwide destruction.

A Personal Note
By now, many members will be aware of the fact that I do not intend to go forward as General Secretary of the Party after this Ard Fheis. It was in 1977 that I was first appointed to this position and I am a firm believer in the principle of rotation of responsibilities. For many years now I have expressed a wish to relinquish this position and each year I was persuaded to stay on for another year. In 1990 I made it clear that this would be the last year and that it will be the responsibility of the incoming Ard Comhairle to appoint a new General Secretary.

In the 14 years that I have held this position I have been privileged to know and work with many fine and outstanding comrades. Some have passed on having given everything, even life itself, to building the Workers' Party. That we have succeeded in establishing a firm base for class politics in this country is due in no small measure to them and the members and supporters who from the earlier and sometimes dark days had the vision, the courage and the integrity to build a Workers Party of Ireland.

We have made many advances, won many victories since those early days, we now have substantial support among the working class and we have won and made many friends internationally from Korea to Cuba, from Angola to Moscow for our principled positions on the many grave questions facing humanity today.

It is important for members and supporters to remember and appreciate that the party has a history, we did not suddenly arrive on the scene. The party is the creation of many men and women who believe it is the necessary and essential vehicle to achieve their aims of peace, justice and equality, to achieve Socialism in Ireland. There have been no precedents, no examples for us to follow. True we have learned from the struggles of other people and parties, learned from the writings and experiences of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Connolly but in the main we have developed out of our own historical experience, some of it a very bitter experience. We had some basic, fundamental ideas which we knew were correct. On occasions we may have lapsed or taken a wrong turning, made a wrong decision, fortunately there were always people, different people at different times, who brought us back to the real issues and struggles of the day.

Attempts have been made over the years to divert the Party or to have it become the vehicle of a clique or faction. What our history and development proves is that the Party is not and can never be the property of any group, faction, committee or individual, no matter where located in
the Party. The Party is, its members who must exercise full and democratic control.

What we have achieved to date is substantial given the position from which we started but it only serves to remind us of how much more we have to do. Only a united, disciplined, class conscious party could have come this far and it is essential that we do not, whatever problems or difficulties we face in the short term deviate from our fundamental aims and objectives.

As Eric Hobsbawm put it so well:

"Rethinking Socialist analysis and the Socialist project may certainly lead to major far reaching and for some of us painful modification of long held views but it does not undermine the classical Socialist case against capitalism, the classic understanding of the Socialist project or the Marxist conviction that capitalism is destined to be a passing phase in mankind's long historical development".
Members of Ard Comhairle/CEC and members of EPC, EMC and Chairpersons of Specialist Committees

The Ard Comhairle/CEC met on nine occasions.

Proinsias De Rossa, T.D. was elected Party President at the Ard Fheis and the following officers were elected the Ard Comhairle (CEC) at the second meeting.

**Vice Presidents**
Seamus Rodgers, Triona Dooney, Seamus Lynch, Joe Sherlock.

**Party Officers**
- General Secretary: Sean Garland
- P.R.O.: Tony Heffernan
- Treasurer: Seamus Harrison
- Assistant Treasurer: Padraig Mannion
- Director or Finance: Gerry Doherty
- National Organiser: Peter Kane

**Committee Chairpersons and Secretaries**

**Ard Comhairle (CEC):**
- Chair: Proinsias De Rossa T.D., M.E.P.
- Secretary: Sean Garland

**Executive Political Committee:**
- Chair: Proinsias De Rossa
- Secretary: Sean Garland

**Executive Management Committee:**
- Chair: Seamus Harrison
- Secretary: Peter Kane

**Specialist Committees Chairpersons**

- Cultural & Communications: Paddy Gillan
- Economic Affairs: Rosheen Callender
- Education: Des O'Hagan
- State Education: Noel Ward
- Electoral: Pat Rabbitte
- Environment: Eamon Gilmore
- Youth: Morgan Nolan
- Women: Deirdre O'Connell
- Finance: Marie Brady
- Health and Social Services: John McManus
- International Affairs: John Lowry
- Justice and Civil Liberties: Triona Dooney
- Northern Ireland: Seamus Lynch
The Ard Comhairle (CEC) is as follows. 
Number - the number of attendances.

Proinsias De Rossa, .9
outgoing thirteen
Rosheen Callender 9
Triona Dooney 9
Paddy Gallagher 5
Des Geraghty 9
Cathal Goulding 0
Seamus Harrison 5
Tony Heffernan 8
John Lowry 6
Seamus Lynch 6
Catherine Murphy 8
Mary McMahon 9
Henry Patterson 6
Kevin Smyth 5

Co-Options
Marie Brady 8
Paddy Gillan 7
Padraig Mannion 8
Deirdre O'Connell 8
Orla O'Connor 5 (Youth)
Morgan Nolan 1 (replacement Youth)

Ex Officio
* Eric Byrne 3
* Pat McCartan 2

Please note T.D.s not elected to CEC are ex-officio members of the Ard Comhairle/CEC (Sect D, 5 Party Constitution).

Regional Delegates
Northern Ireland Area I
Northern Ireland Area I
Northern Ireland Area II
Northern Ireland Area II
North Connaught Ulster (absence)
South Connaught Ulster
Munster West
Munster Cork

Brendan Burns 7
Ciaran Bradley 8
Kevin Morgan 3
Tommy Owens 6
Michael Donnelly 1 (on leave of absence)
Oliver Rogers (resigned for CEC)
Jim Finnegan 3 (replacement)
Dave Lee 6
John Bowan 8
Executive Management Committee (EMC)
Executive Political Committee (EPC)
The EMC and EPC are elected at the initial meeting of the CEC, the Party President and General Secretary are automatically members of both committees.

Executive Political Committee in alphabetical order:

Executive Management Committee in alphabetical order:
Marie Brady, Gerry Doherty, Des Geraghty, Seamus Harrison, Tony Heffernan, Peter Kane, Seamus Lynch, Tomas MacGiolla,