1978

General Secretary's Report to the Workers' Party Ard Fheis Annual Delegate Conference 1978

Workers' Party of Ireland

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Árd Fheis
1978
GENERAL SECRETARY'S REPORT
SINN FEIN THE WORKERS' PARTY
ARD FHEIS
MARCH 1978
GENERAL SECRETARY'S REPORT

Introduction

No year since 1969 has been an easy one for members of our Party. In particular the members in Belfast have had to face a continuing problem of attacks on individuals and on property. Each year since then has seen us mourn the loss of some comrades. 1977 was no exception.

Easter in Belfast saw a Commemoration parade attacked and a member, John Short, murdered and a 10 year old boy, Kevin McMenamin, blown up. The sectarian assassins struck again when, in July, Trevor McNulty was murdered as he was entering the flats where he lived. Trevor had demonstrated that he was a Republican of his time. He was aware of the need to be engaged in the hard, slow, painstaking construction of our Party, the revolutionary party of the Irish working class. He understood the value and need for education and of work within organisations such as the C.R.A. His place in the revolutionary struggle will be difficult to fill.

No organisation or person can be under any illusion now about the nature and the aims of the Provisionals. From 1969 they have been consistent in their efforts to foment a Sectarian Civil War. Since they were spawned by the Blaney-Haughey faction of Fianna Fail, we it is who have been their most consistent enemy. We have time after time exposed their tactics and strategy and fought them, often at dire cost. Their latest atrocity, the bombing and murder at the Le Mon Hotel must surely awaken people to their true nature.

There can be no excuse for any group or person who consorts with them, who attempts to excuse them or to have any contact whatsoever with them. They must be purged from all areas of Irish life completely.

It is indeed regrettable that some people who belong to progressive organisations maintain a naive illusion that somehow Provisionals can be persuaded to halt their murderous actions by talking to them or that a principled so called 'Irish Alternative' can be built by working with the Right Wing forces of Provisionals on one hand and the Ultra Left on the other. It is akin to believing that anarchy can be stabilised.

Nevertheless, regrettable as it may be, it is true that such illusions exist. We are in no doubt that at present, seemingly sincere people in other organisations are being led by the nose by a small clique of Maoist-cum-Trotskyist dilettanti from whose activities we ourselves once suffered. Their pursuit of personal glory and ambition which they practiced in our Party, is now being carried on in another organisation. We believe that this clique are responsible for problems and difficulties that have arisen over the past year among progressive forces.

We however shall continue our work in building Unity recognising that Unity has often to be fought for. It is to the Unity of the Working Class that we are committed and we see
no other viable and successful alternative to the overthrow of Anglo-American Imperialism in Ireland or elsewhere in the world than that unity. We recognise of course, that the first step in that struggle is the continued building and strengthening of principled Left Unity.

The main areas of activity for the Party last year were the Local Elections in the 6 Counties and the General Election in the 26 Counties. These elections were the first that we as a Party had approached with preparation and confidence.

In the 6 Counties we fielded a total of 34 candidates covering the main areas of population. This figure is in sharp contrast to that of 1973 when we had 88 candidates, very many of a dubious nature. Last year our candidates reflected the changes within the Party, politically aware and conscious of the needs and problems of the people, non sectarian, in fact anti sectarian, socialistic principled and hard working.

The years of building a firm base paid off in that areas which had done their work and carried out the policies as adopted at Ard Fheiseanna and directed by Central Authority succeeded in expanding. Most noteworthy were the successes achieved in the major growth areas of Belfast and Craigavon.

The Director of Elections has been holding Constituency meetings in every Westminster Constituency preparing for the forthcoming Westminster Elections sometime this Autumn. The Ard Comhairle has already ratified candidates for the following Constituencies and under the direction of Dessie O'Hagan, who is National Election Agent, the Party in these Constituencies are building the machines and formulating the policies to put before the electorate.

The June General Election in the 26 Counties provided our Party with tremendous opportunities. Sixteen Constituencies were contested and in most of these the Party did grasp the opportunity and make real gains among the people. When one considers the rout of the National Coalition Party and the massive swing to Fianna Fail, our overall performance is all the more remarkable. We not only held our vote from previous elections but substantially increased it. In particular we note the progress made in this area by Waterford and Cork N. East. We are positive that next time we will have winners in these areas.

The establishing of Constituency Councils in the 26 Counties has been a major task for the Director of Elections. Many areas have already begun the task of selecting candidates, gathering finance and building the organisation by doing the necessary work locally that will convince people that we are the Party with the policies, the personnel and the will to solve their problems.

The Ard Comhairle will be strict in its ratifying of candidates. Only those candidates who meet the requirements laid down will be ratified.

We have entered Elections because we know that we must win a broad base of support for our Policies. Elections have put our organisation more closely in touch with the people North and South and in turn, have advanced the education of our members.

Once Republicanism was wrongly considered an elitist philosophy and it was thought unnecessary to contest elections or make any but a crude emotional appeal to the mass of
the people. That policy failed. We have learned from our mistakes and the errors of other
generations that we cannot succeed without the broad base of understanding and support.

We must continue to contest Elections, as tactical and organisational considerations
dictate, as one weapon in our struggle towards a Socialist Republic.

We have made gains. As I said the fine showing made by our comrades in certain areas,
North and South, in the elections last year not only increased our Party's vote but heighten-
ed the consciousness of the people and won for our Party a share — though by no means a
just share — of publicity. It is in this light we view forthcoming elections in the 6 and the
26 Counties.

The Ard Comhairle met on ten occasions since the last Ard Fheis. There were nine full meet-
ings i.e. Ard Comhairle elected at the Ard Fheis plus regional delegates. The record of attend-
ance of all members is given below.

Elected at Ard Fheis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Votes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tomas Mac Giolla</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eamonn Smullen</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malachy McMurran</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sean Garland</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brian Brennan</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Des O'Hagan</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tony Heffernan</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dondhcha MacRaghnaill</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francie Donnelly</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>John McManus</td>
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<tr>
<td>John Hunter</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mick Ryan</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seamus Lynch</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sean O'Connamtha</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tom Moore</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kevin Smyth</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe Sherlock</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cathal Goulding</td>
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Regional Delegates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>County/Region</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mary Daly</td>
<td>Cork/Kerry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerry Doherty</td>
<td>Dublin/Wicklow/Kildare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paddy Breen</td>
<td>Armagh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerry McAlinden</td>
<td>6 St. Down/St. Armagh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seamus Harrison</td>
<td>Antrim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ciaran Bradley</td>
<td>Co. Derry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pat McCaffrey</td>
<td>Tyrone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sean O'Donnell</td>
<td>Donegal/Strabane/Derry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sean Walsh</td>
<td>Kilkenny/Waterford/Wexford</td>
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<tr>
<td>T.Cosgrave/</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>L. Kennedy</td>
<td>Limerick/Tipp./Clare</td>
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<tr>
<td>K. Cunningham/</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>T. Coffey</td>
<td>Connaught</td>
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Attendance by Ard Comhairle members elected at the Ard Fheis was reasonably good
throughout the year but again the record of some regional delegates is poor. This year it is
necessary to remind delegates to have their meetings to elect Regional Delegates promptly
after the Ard Fheis and to only choose those members who will attend and have the
commitment to do so.

The Coisde Seasta, made up of the officer board and available members of the Ard Comh-
airle met on 37 occasions during the year.

The following officers were appointed by an tUachtaran and ratified by the first full
meeting of the Ard Comhairle:

Vice Presidents: Malachy McMurran & Joe Sherlock
Ard Runai/Org. Sec. Tony Heffernan.
Treasurer: Dondhcha MacRaghnaill.
Director of Organisation Sean Garland
" "Education Des O'Hagan. Later appointed Director of Elections.
" "Economic Affairs Eamonn Smullen.
" "Publicity & Int. Affairs. Sean O'Connor.
" "Health & Social Welfare John McManus.
Mairin de Burca continued as spokesperson on Justice.
Tony Heffernan, who had been General Secretary for 6 years indicated to the Ard Comhairle his wish to relinquish the position last year. The Ard Comhairle attempted to dissuade him but to no avail. They reluctantly accepted his resignation from the position. The Ard Comhairle wishes to place on record its recognition of the role and the important task that Tony Heffernan performed over the years for the Party. Tony has continued to help out in the office and has played a key role in organising this Ard Fheis.

Peter Kane of Dublin was appointed Administrative Secretary of the Party last October.

PUBLICATIONS:

We have continued to expand our printing and publishing facilities. During 1977 we built a new and larger print shop. With new Phototypesetting equipment on order we now have one of the most up-to-date print shops in the country.

There is no publication that we cannot print and April sees us begin for the first time ever the printing of the United Irishman.

The Local and General Election of last year was a major test of our printing capacity. I'm happy to say that we were successful in providing all areas with their election material in good time. Alas I cannot say the same in regard to payment of bills for printing. A number of areas still owe a substantial bill. I would once again urge all those areas that owe money to head office for papers or printing to begin now paying off their bills.

The circulation of the United Irishman has now stabilised, remaining at the same figure for almost 2 years now. The Irish People, our weekly publication, continues to go ahead particularly in the Dublin area where the sales can only be described as spectacular. As well as being a most important voice carrying our policies The Irish People has proved to be a very good fund raiser for some areas in Dublin. Many other areas could take up the lessons learned in Dublin to the advantage of the Party nationally.

Our newspapers play a crucial part in our overall strategy. It is not enough that they should be sold but that the message they convey should be heard and understood. The papers themselves must carry the message simply enough and forcefully enough to reach the widest possible audience. Our policy should not be the subject of repetitious jargon but of solid example, clearly put, with as much local relevance as possible and as much popular appeal as can be achieved without dilution of the Party's fundamental approach.

The message must be carried on by our members, its local relevance emphasised and its application contrasted with the failure of the capitalist system. Only in this way can we, Sinn Fein The Workers' Party, broaden our areas of support.

Many new pamphlets and a number of reprints were issued over the year, in particular, The Great Irish Oil and Gas Robbery and the Irish Industrial Revolution.

We would commend the members of the Party in Galway who have, over the past months produced 2 major reports on the important issues of Housing and conditions of work in the Tourist Industry. Copies of these reports are available to all areas and as stated in Notes and Comments many areas could follow the Galway example with benefit.

This week sees the opening of the new and enlarged bookshop at 30 Gardiner Place. A wide range of books of national and international interest will be stocked.
PUBLICITY

Publicity during the year included the coverage given during the Local Elections in the Six Counties and the General Election in the 26 Counties, to candidates of Sinn Fein The Workers' Party. At the last general election the censorship urge of the Coalition Government was shown in the proportionately less time allowed by RTE to our candidates over that given during the previous election.

However, I am able to report that publicity consciousness throughout our Party has improved as interviews with Party members both on television and radio during the past year demonstrates. Apart from the hundreds of statements on matters of major interest at home and abroad issued through the national office, Belfast, Cork and Galway regions all demonstrated an ability to communicate at national level during the year. Belfast, in particular, has special problems associated with the ongoing sectarian campaign in the North but adequate attention was paid to the social and economic interests of people throughout the North.

This general area requires even more attention in the coming year. We cannot depend on a media system which is the creature of private enterprise or political interference to carry our message to the people. What we can rely on is the dedication by individual journalists to objectivity and freedom of speech in ensuring that our point of view is at least noted in copy submitted for publication.

This proud tradition of journalism was upheld during the oppressive censorship regime imposed by the late unlamented Coalition. Even in RTE journalists were found to stand up against the censorship atmosphere prevailing there at Executive level.

The advent of Fianna Fail to Government means no let up in censorship, only a change in its target range and methodology. Hence the commitment over the years to the publications sponsored by the Party as a communications life-line to the public. And in this respect I would pay a tribute to the journalistic standards achieved and maintained both by the Irish People and the United Irishman during the past year.

EDUCATION:

Since the last Ard Fheis the school at Mornington has been in constant use. However it must be stated that only a minority of areas have availed of the facilities.

A major development in relation to the Party and the Education Department is our purchase of the land and premises at Mornington. It is clear that in any planned growth of the Party the school must be at the centre of development. This must mean that an increasing portion of the Party's budget must be devoted to putting the school on a full-time basis. A twelve week programme has been prepared and a number of potential cadres selected but lack of finance has impeded this critical progression. The Director of Education therefore urges that the incoming Ard Comhairle take positive steps to ensure that the school functions on a full-time basis.
All Branches should have an Education Officer and the Branch should insist that Lectures and Seminars are organised on a regular basis. Our Party was never better equipped with written material covering all aspects of the struggle. There can be no excuse for any member or area claiming to be unaware as to the Party's position on any issue that might arise.

A new series of lectures dealing with history, socialism and the structure and nature of the Party is in the course of preparation and should be available to all areas by the Autumn.

IRISH DEMOCRATIC YOUTH MOVEMENT:

The Irish Democratic Youth Movement is now in its second year and is growing and consolidating.

Among its achievements since its formation are:

* Publishing a Manifesto setting a clear way forward for Irish youth.
* Support and involvement in the anti-sectarian campaign of Sinn Fein The Workers' Party in the Six Counties; the I.C.T.U. 'Better Life for All' campaign; and the students' campaign of the Union of Students in Ireland and the National Union of Students (U.K.) for 'Jobs, Peace and Progress'.
* Two national conferences with delegates from all over Ireland.

A recent National Executive Conference launched a 'Jobs for Youth' Campaign looking for a new deal for Irish youth on jobs and unemployment pay. Each year, 40,000 young people leave school for whom there is no work, no prospect of work and no unemployment pay either. They are means tested out of benefit. The emphasis of this Campaign is to press for jobs provision by State development of our huge national resources wealth, and the expansion of the State industrial sector.

A major Conference on 'The use of our Natural and National Resources for the Provision of Full Employment' is being organised in Dublin by the IDYM next month.

Internationally the Irish Democratic Youth Movement, working with the International Affairs Bureau of the Party has developed close ties with progressive youth in many countries around the world, and will be sending a delegation to Cuba next July for the 11th World Festival of Youth & Students in Havana. A representative of the National Executive has recently attended a Congress of the World Federation of Democratic Youth in the German Democratic Republic.

The first issue of the IDYM International Newsletter 'Young Ireland' has been sent to over 1,000 progressive youth, liberation movements and Irish emigrant groups abroad.

With the youth population of Ireland increasing fast, there is a growing need for the IDYM. Party members in areas where there is no IDYM branch should contact the IDYM with a view to starting a branch.
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS:

The past year has been one of growth for the International Affairs Bureau. Our newspaper, EOLAS, is going out to individuals and organisations in 84 countries and we are in touch with progressive liberation movements throughout the world.

Evidence of this exists not only in the tremendous amount of exchange literature we receive from other organisations abroad but our increasing personal contacts with foreign movements as well.

Our task is not made any easier by the activities of the Provisionals. Tremendous confusion exists outside Ireland due to the Provisionals' activities and their own attempts to build links internationally, when they present whatever political image they feel is most advantageous from their own point.

The sectarian attitude of other Left groups is another obstacle to building international solidarity for our movement. Some people on the Left seem to feel their organisation's position abroad is threatened by our activities and they have tried to isolate us internationally.

A memorandum issued last year abroad has done some damage. It contained distortions and downright lies about our political activities, organisation and strategy. It is difficult to assess its effect but it would be a mistake to pretend that it has not had some adverse influence.

Nevertheless our own low keyed response to the Memorandum has countered it to a large extent and has been well received. We have found that where we can explain our policies to people we have no difficulty winning recognition and support.

Amongst organisations with whom contact has been established since the last Ard Fheis are:

The MPLA, to whom an Electrocardiograph machine has been sent through the Party.
SWAPO, the liberation organisation for Namibia, for whom a tour was organised in Ireland and £200 raised in medical aid.
The Socialist Republic of Vietnam, for whom we are currently raising medical aid.
The PLO who met representatives of ours in New York and Italy.
The FLN, governing party in Algeria, who met our representatives in Algiers.
The Puerto Rican Socialist Party. A party similar to ours in its history and background.
The Patriotic Front in Zimbabwe which has, through its composite organisations, ZANU, and ZAPU, long standing links with us.
The Chilean Popular Unity parties which have contact with us through the Ireland Chile Committee, and directly. We recently organised a very successful tour for a spokesman of the Chilean C.P.
Following a visit to Athens by our representative in December 1976 the Party has been accepted as an Associate Member of the Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organisation. A "United Nations" of progressive under-developed countries.
Here let us pay a tribute to the General Secretary of AAPSO who was murdered in Cyprus last month by ultra Left terrorists. Having suffered from the actions of such terrorists ourselves, we have no hesitation in saying that they do not serve the cause of the Palestinian revolution but that of the enemy, Anglo American Imperialism.

Our Party is affiliated to the Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement and we support in every way possible their work.

Our support organisations abroad are playing an important and valuable role. Clann na hEireann has developed strong links with the major trade union and labour bodies in Britain.

In North America the Republican Clubs have greatly increased their potential in the last year. Contacts have been developed in the American Left and, more especially with Third World movements.

Fund raising for Cabhair has been excellent. Indeed, without the support of the Clubs in North America, Cabhair could not have managed during the last year.

Provisional support in the US is rapidly waning, in particular, their fund raising. The Irish National Caucus, which is CIA backed, has had dwindling influence despite support from Congressmen Lester Wolfe (implicated in the South Korean bribery scandal) and Mario Biaggi, a Mafia contact.

In Australia we have a small but effective group based in Sydney who sell the United Irishman and raise some funds.

Undoubtedly the most important international event for us has been the Warsaw Peace Conference last May where major international contacts were made and Peter Hands' case won widespread international recognition for Civil Rights in the North and the Republican Clubs as a movement in the forefront of that struggle.

Returning to Ireland to sum up it must be said that outside of a few areas there has not been any great interest shown in supporting our international solidarity work. Tours can and will be built if members can build meetings and other activities in their local areas. A PLO speaker is expected in April and this provides an opportunity for members to build meetings locally.

Local members and the movement nationally must provide stronger support in terms of both activity and fund raising if we are to make maximum use of the good-will which exists for us abroad.
ECONOMIC AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT:

The last year in the Economic Affairs department was one of development and saw the acceptance, by important sections of the working class, of policies we have been advocating.

No large new body of research material has been published in the past year but research has been completed on an important new document on taxation. It will soon be published. Almost all the research material has been assembled for a substantial work on the construction industry and this should be ready for publication, at most, within the next few months.

The research department provided information, which was available to candidates in various areas, on the economy at the time of the general election. The Irish Industrial Revolution, published at the time of the last Ard Fheis, was well reviewed in the national press; was generally welcomed in the trade union movement, and approaches were made to us to discuss this document by people who, as a general rule, do not take an active interest in the publications of a political party. This book was welcomed by people not normally reached by our party publications. The first edition has been completely sold out. There were many enquiries for it and it is again in print.

At the time of the last elections in the South the Labour Party managed to get generous publicity for the Halligan Economic Plan. Fianna Fail did not produce an economic plan, as such, but by publicising a professor of economics as the person responsible for their economic policy and by saying that they would remove the tax on cars they managed to create the impression that they had a serious plan for the economy.

It was impossible to get publicity during the election for the only serious plan for the economy which existed — The Irish Industrial Revolution. The two main issues in the election were jobs and prices; our voice was almost excluded from this area.

Research into possible uses for Irish raw materials has continued. Information we published on the many uses of Basalt Rock as raw material for a variety of products received serious notice in the Northern trade union movement and in the NIDA at the time. We have now a lot more information on this subject and it can be one important point in a campaign for job creation in Northern Ireland.

Some of the issues which were first raised by the Economic side of our movement are now becoming questions of general public interest and debate. I will give a few examples. The importance of building an oil refinery on the national territory is now generally recognised. Two years ago we were the only political party to point out the importance of building sufficient refining capacity to meet our energy needs on the national territory.

People are becoming more and more aware of the need for a national energy policy under state control; we were the first to advocate this. We are at present working on the question of the availability and the cost of native sources of energy. We are also working on the question of the comparative costs of energy produced from various fuels. It is important to do a considerable amount of home-work and to know exactly what we are talking about when we issue statements on highly technical matters of this nature.
On the question of the use of our natural resources to create additional wealth in Ireland and to create tens of thousands of industrial jobs for our people; we did a good part of the work that has been done on this question and what we have been advocating is now, more or less, the official policy of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions.

The making of the film “Going Going Gone” has enabled us to present the party policy on resources in many places where we do not readily receive a hearing. The film has been shown at meetings organised by trades councils, in schools and in the universities. Cumann are urged to make more use of this effective means of popularising the party policy on the use of our natural resources — minerals, oil and natural gas.

The Economic Affairs Dept. has made available to the movement information on the misuse of our great natural resource in land and pointed out that the price of food can be reduced to consumers by the industrial production and processing of food by large units and by the state companies, Bord na Mona and the Irish Sugar Company. We pointed out that it is a scandal that lamb from far away New Zealand might have been sold on the Irish market at a cheaper price than Irish produced lamb.

We have carried out research on the Irish fishing industry and called for state development of the industry. We have always refused to confine the question of fishing to the question of fishing limits. We have pointed out that the Irish fishing industry is at present owned by a group of anti-trade union individuals who endeavour to encourage a “lumper” mentality among the deckhands and that they have no more respect for a policy of conservation than skippers from countries other than Ireland.

We have called for bigger boats to fish waters further away, conservation of fish stocks and the vigorous development of fish farming. Other parties and other groups have confined their statements on fishing to the question of fishing limits.

We have pointed out that it costs the State over £10 millions until recently — it will now cost much more — £10 millions each year to protect approximately £9 millions worth of fish.

CONCLUSION:

We are at the end of an era, in the Republican Movement, in Irish politics, in the history of the country. This is a moment of challenge and change, for our organisation and for the Irish people.

We have never shirked a challenge, never feared change. We have a tradition of continuity, a republican tradition, militant, powerful and rooted deep in the history of our people. We are proud of that tradition. WE are proud of our political ancestry, in the life and work of Tone, of Lalor and the Fenians, of Connolly and Pearse and of those in our own time who have held their vision and developed their struggle.

We do not call ourselves socialist republicans because we dream of the past but because we recognise that, now and in the future, the only way that the vast majority of our people can take hold of what is theirs is by the establishment of a Socialist Republic.
That is not a dream. It is our conviction. It is a political conviction about the alternative to unemployment and poverty, to the robbery and waste of our resources, to cultural starvation and the crushing of our nationality, to the smashing of our identity and the betrayal of our people.

Tone and Lalor and Connolly are not martyrs or saints. We are not in the business of building shrines or icons. We look to them because they looked to their people in their time and found the answer to their demands. They failed to have it accepted by the majority of their people in their time, but they made progress. Their ideas and ideals survived. Something of what they desired was accepted. The rest was bred in the bones of the conscious in every generation that followed.

Their republicanism is relevant to us, here, now. Their revolutionary socialism is relevant to us, here, now. We, in this Party must never forget that, nor must we forget our international roots. Tone was not afraid to embrace the doctrine of the French Revolution. Connolly adopted and adapted the philosophy of Marx and Engels. These are our origins too. We are part not of a small, isolated movement but of a world brotherhood that stretches through developed and developing countries to the underdeveloped and underprivileged of the so-called Third World.

Our struggle against colonialism and imperialism was watched, admired and emulated by the Indians, the Egyptians and our brothers in revolutionary Africa. We share their vision. Their struggle is ours.

These points may seem rhetorical, general, removed from our day-to-day work in the Party of 1978. It is not so. Unless we recognise our political ancestry, unless we identify our ultimate goal, unless we put our Party in its true historical context, our work now, the continuing struggle, will be meaningless. We can neither isolate ourselves from our past nor lose sight of our revolutionary aims.

We are under no illusion about the difficulties of our task. We have faced these difficulties during the past years in their most threatening form. We have been under the murderous pressure of the Right, represented by the Provisional assassination squads and bully boys; we have faced and overcome the murderous assaults of the Lunatic Left, represented by the gangsters of the IRSP. We have been, in turn, coaxed, threatened and bullied by those who would have us desert the line we had chosen in the struggle against imperialism, repression and sectarianism. We have held the line. And our refusal to deviate, our refusal to be deflected from a course that was clearly in the interests of the Irish people of all beliefs and of none, that refusal has borne fruit in the strength, the discipline, the conviction of our members.

The Provisional machine is running down. The IRSP wasp is dying. They took the name of republicanism and dragged it in gutters that flowed with the blood of Irish men, women and children. The Labour Party took the name of socialism and dragged it in the gutter with Cosgrave’s Fine Gael. Neither the so-called Republicans nor the so-called Socialists had the vision of Tone or Connolly; neither had the discipline in struggle that is essential to revolutionary achievement; neither had the strength or courage to reject deviation and refuse vainglory. And both have had their answers from the Irish people.
They have added to our difficulties, since we bear the names republican and socialist, but they have not been able to destroy our gains. And we have had gains. We have emerged from this period of repression and confusion with a united, strong and disciplined organisation. We have rid ourselves of those who would have us sink to the depths of depravity in sectarianism and civil war. We have been proved correct in our rejection of their militarism and we have been strengthened by that rejection.

Our organisation around the country stands more firmly than before, despite the provocation, despite the frustration that has often accompanied it and despite what may have seemed to many to be our plodding progress. At times we may have been plodding, but we at least were plodding in the right direction and each step we took was bringing us nearer to our goal.

Today, because of these painstaking efforts, we have our Councillors in the Local Authorities of the Twenty Six Counties and the Six Counties. We have our candidates who proved in Parliamentary elections that we are a growing and serious political force. We have the support of a young, active and aware membership now experienced in organising and running campaigns.

We have members who have won the trust of their comrades in the trade union movement, in the civil rights movement, in citizens' organisations representing tenants, local communities and small farmers and who, because they have won that trust, contribute to the public view of our political maturity and wisdom. That is the purpose for which these members were encouraged to join those organisations. This is part of our political strategy.

The growing consciousness of social deprivation, political repression and the rights of citizens is something that we have inspired and promoted in full and confident expectation of reward. It is to our advantage that the debates on unemployment and natural resources are being linked by the trade unions. Our comrades in the unions have worked for this. It is to our advantage that more and more trade unionists are coming to recognise that capitalism and the capitalist system simply cannot meet the demands of an expanding population, especially among the young. Here lies our opportunity. For we are not a small and ineffectual group of elitists content, as some Left groups seem to be content, to exert hidden influence in the dark corners of our society without any significant appeal to the mass of the Irish people.

We have, and the other Left groups have not, an organisation capable of accommodating Irish men and women in all parts of Ireland with a broad appeal to their republican and socialist instincts and a realistic answer to their need to take control of their own destinies. We want to ensure that the impetus generated by our members in their activities outside the Party is converted to real gains for the Party in popular support.

We cannot afford now to tire of either external involvement or electoral ambition. It is our role to ensure that, for all the weight of opposition, through all the small and seemingly endless tasks, in all the many-sided activities that are undertaken by our members, the impetus is not lost and the way forward is not obscured.
We have a revolutionary role that is unchanged, whether the Twenty-Six County State is run by Fianna Fail or any other combination of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties, whether the physical conflict in the Six Counties comes to an end or not, whether the chances of changing the first or gaining political normality after the second seem remote. We must not let our members and supporters drift into the hopeless belief that because there are no obvious opportunities now, none exist or will be opened to us in the near future. Fianna Fail will not succeed where the Coalition failed, and their failure may lead to disillusion sooner than anyone had expected. A Westminster election is a matter of months away. We must be ready to take advantage of both.

We must be prepared for the next local elections in the Twenty Six Counties and we must start now to prepare for the general election that will come with another generation of disillusioned voters and another generation voting for the first time. Now is not the moment for us to relax our guard, to reduce or revoke our claim on the support of the Irish people.

We must continue the building of our Party. We must recruit new members. We must win fresh support among people who recognise the futility of trying to patch up the capitalist system for another while. We have a target — substantially to increase our membership and support in three years. And we in this organisation have our role — as the revolutionary spearhead of the working class, disciplined, politically aware and always conscious of our ultimate goal, to encourage, educate and advise those who are moving in our direction.

We must continue our involvement in useful activities outside the Party, always ensuring that the political reward of involvement is ours. We must do everything that lies within our power to make people conscious of the failure of capitalism and the strength that is theirs if only they unite to destroy it.

But where we must now prove ourselves a potent progressive force is in the political leadership we can give to the masses in whose interests it is we are engaged. This we can achieve by carefully fulfilling the apparently mundane tasks we set ourselves, in organisation, local agitation and education.

We in this organisation have the discipline, the central direction and control, the dedication and the experience that are needed for this work. We have an organisation from which we are prepared to remove anyone who does not work. We have a powerful organisation, but it is only as powerful as the sum of its members' political abilities and efforts. We have our traditions and our policies. We know where we stand. All we need is the determination to succeed.