

1973

## Sinn Féin Árd Fheis - Oraid an Uachtaran 1973 - 74

Sinn Féin

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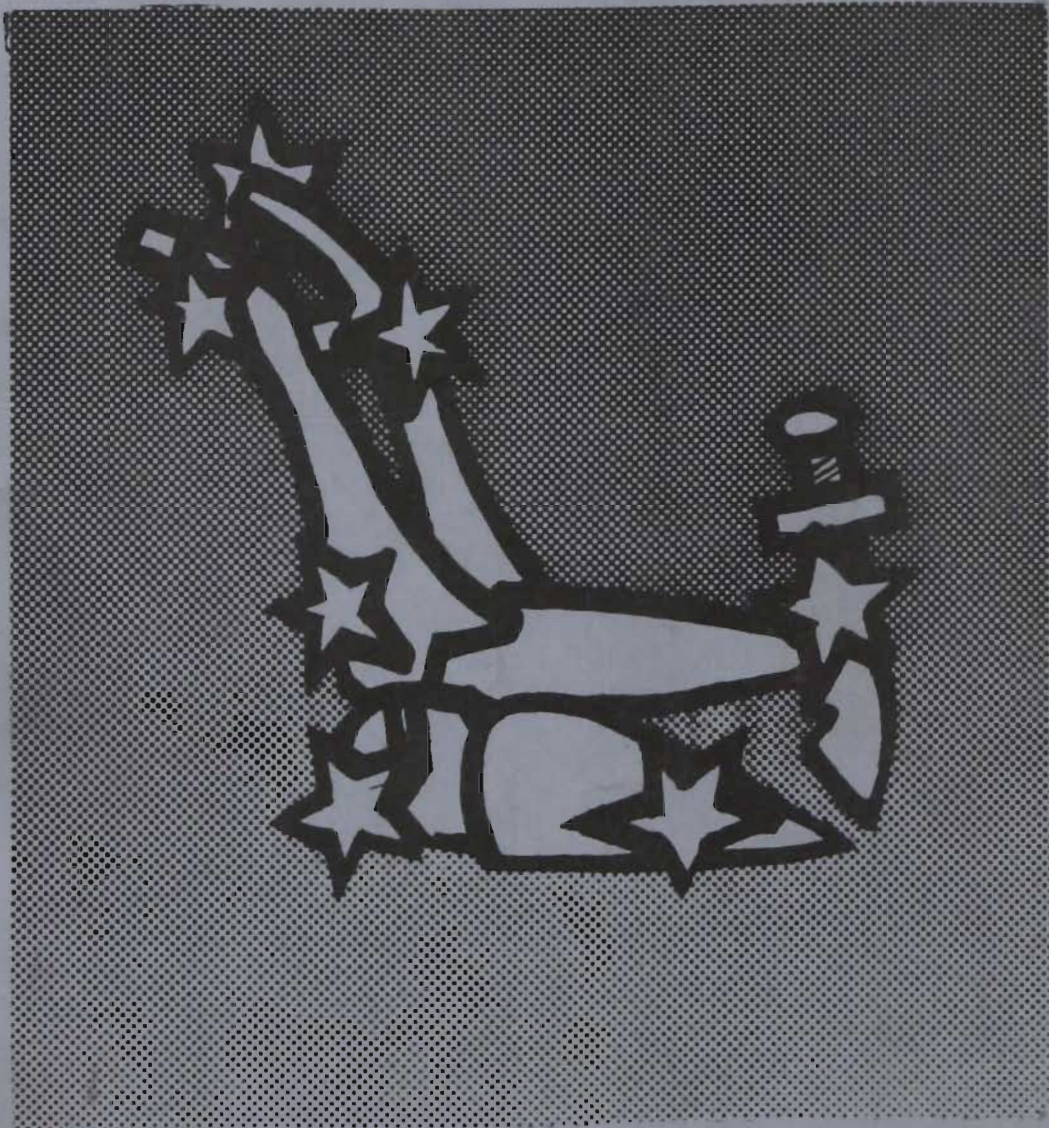
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SINN FÉIN  
ÁRD FHEIS



ORAIÐ AN UACHTARAN  
1973 - 74

A theachtaí, cuairteoirí, agus breathnadoirí ó eagraíochtaí eile cuirim failte romhaibh uile cuig na hArdfheise se de Shinn Féin.

Ag tract do ar na Gaeil a bhí ag treigint na Gaeilge 70 bliain ó shoin d'aithin an Conghaileach go raibh na Gaeil ag treigint an uirlis a bhéarr a bhí acu le troid in aghaidh impiriúlachas Shasana. Dathain se freisin go raibh slanu na Gaeilge fighte fuaite le slanu na ndaoine nuair a duirt se le Gluaiseacht na Gaeilge san am "Ni feidir Gaeilge a theagasc do dhaoine ocracha gus seanfar saibhreas ar litríocht naisiunta ar na sclabhaithe bochta ata daortha ag an gCoras Soisialta ata againn le bheith a' streachailt ó dhubh go dubh ar mhaithe le paighe míofoir gortach -- da bhri sin deirim lenar gcomradaithe i ngluaiseacht na Gaeilge -- cuidigi linn saol saor sona iomlán a bhaint amach dar gcóis mhuintir agus ansin beidh an bealach reidh do threithre uaisle ar gcine fas agus teacht i meadaíocht".

Ach is beag duine a thug aird ar an gConghaileach - threig Gluaiseacht na Gaeilge an chois mhuintir agus dfheoigh siad i measulacht. Da barr Ghreamaigh siad don "ascendancy" ur a d'fas ar mhaithe le lucht gaimbin agus thacht siad san an beatha asta. Siad Fianna Fail agus Fine Gael searbhontaí an lucht gaimbin sin agus is dearg - namhaid do lucht labhartha na Gaeilge iad.

Na creid focal óna boic sin a rinne striopaigh an lucht gaimbin do bhtha fein fiu mas i nGaeilge fhein a labhrann siad faoi shlannu na Gaeilge - caithfidh siad a radh gur ar shon na Gaeilge ata siad no caillfidh siad tacaíocht mor chuid den choismhuintir nar chaill a gcreidiúint i dtabhacht na Gaeilge d-aindeoin fimiuteacht na polaiteoirí. Mar sin deirim libhse Gaeilgeoirí na tíre seo smaoinidh oraibh fein agus smaoinidh ar fhuascailt na ceiste seo - An feidir an Cultur Gaelach a shlannu agus bheith neamartach i gcoimhlínt na ndaoine in aghaidh na rachmasoin?

Deirimse libh nach feidir - ta slanu agus fuascailt na ndaoine fighte fuaite le slanu na teanga agus nuair a dheineann tu deighilt eatorra, mar abhi deanta ag Gluaiseacht na Gaeilge le fada, is tu namhaid an chois- huintir agus is tu namhad na Gaeilge ce'r bith acu go bhfios duit e no nach fios. Is le coismhuintir iomlán na tíre seo, Protastunach no Caitliceach, an cultur Gaelach agus ni leis an mean-aiome feoighte a rinne rud toir tirim gan beatha as an athbheochan.

Se dhualgas an Gaelgeoir a bheith i na reabhloidi soisialach. "Caithfidh tu" mar dduirt Mairtin Ó Cadhain "a bheith pairteach go feidhmuil feasta i gcoimhlínt mhuintir na hEireann le cuspeirí fhorogra na Casca a thabhairt i gcrích. Seo i athghabhail na hEireann, An Reahlóid, reahlóid intinne agus reahlóid anamna, reahlóid i geursai maoiné, seilbhe agus maireachtala, maireachtail mar Ghaeil leis na rudai is dual duinn mar Ghaeil".

Se athghabhail na hEireann ata sinne ag gabhail ina cheann - Reahlóid Iomlán - ni athru maistri.

"Biodh an Ghaeilg  ag stiuriu na reabhloide, ar an gcaoi seo biodh an Ghaeilge ar na smaointe is forasai in Eir nn" adeir an Cadhanach. "Si an Ghaeilge athghabhail na hEireann agus si athghabhail na hEireann slanu na Gaeilge. Si teanga na muintire a shlanos an mhuintir". Mar sin ba choir g mbeadh dluth ceangail idir Gluaiseacht na P'oblachta agus Gluaiseacht na Gaeilge.

Tiocfaidh an Soisialachas i reim in Eirinn luath no mall ach ta an chon-  
tuirt ann gur ro-mh  a thioctas se o thaobh an chultur Gaelach de ma  
leanann daoine den tuairm go bhfuil se ceart go leor Athbheochan na  
Gaeilge a fhagail ar leataobh go mbeidh an Reabhloid thart. Gan an  
Ghaeilge ni reabhloid a bheas againn ach coscairt agus muna ndeanann  
muid gnioch fiuntach anois leis an Ghaeltacht a shlanu marofai i le lucht  
gaimbin na tire seo. "Siad muintir na Gaeltachta an aicine is direoile  
agus is buailte den mhuintir seo againne in Eirinn. Is mar a cheile an  
t-aicme sin 'Pobal na Gaeilge' a shlanu agus an Ghaeilge a shlanu" aduirt  
an Cadhanach.

Mar sin goide ata le deanamh? Caithfear iomlan neart agus bri na Gluais-  
eachta a chuir i dtacaoidh agoidi mhuintir na Gaeltachta. Aithnionn muidne  
go gcaithfidh muintir na Gaeltachta Udaras Aitiul a fhail -Udaras laidir  
eifeachtuil - seort Soviet Gaeltachta. Caithfidh smacht a bheith ag an  
Udaras daonfhlaithreach seo ar Fhorbairt agus Pleanail sa Ghaeltacht agus  
smacht ar Radio na Gaeltachta freisin. Caithfidh seilbh a bheith aige  
ar na prionn fhoinsi saibhris le go mbeadh se i ndon iad a fhorbairt ar  
mhaithe leis an gcois-mhuintir.

Tugimidne freisin nach bhfuil an caipiteal ins an Ghaeltacht fhein leis an  
Ghaeltacht a chuir ar a chosa mar go raibh an lucht gaimbin da ghoid natha  
is da chornu do bhtha fhein leis na cianta. Mar sin si an rud is lu a  
ba choir do Rialtas na tire seo a dheanamh na pe airgead ata de dhith  
a chuir ar fail don Udaras. Caithfidh Gluaiseacht na Poblachta troid  
gualain ar ghualain le muintir na Gaeltachta le Udaras mar seo a fhail  
agus no ghlacfaidh siad leis an seort "Udaras" gan mhaith gan eifeacht  
gur mian le Rialtas Fhine Gael agus striopaigh an Lucht Oibre - a chuir  
trasna ar na daoine

Is leir duinne chomh fimeach is ata an Rialtas faoi cheist na Gaeltachta  
- an cuir i gceill faoi Scoil Dhun Chaoin - scoil amhain a ath-oscailt  
agus na scorthai scoltacha a ndruid ag forsai eacnamaiocht ata ag  
ruaigeadh na ndaoine as an tir. Ni mo na go bhfuil duine ar bith sa  
Ghaeltacht a chreideann gur slanu na Gaeltachta a bhi de dhith ar Dick  
Burke. Ni headh, ach slanu Conor Cruise O'Brien a bhi parteach san  
agoid in aghaidh Fianna Fail a dhun an scoil.

Agus ta Conor Cruise O'Brien - ar a theann dithcheall ag iarraidh neamn-  
chultur damanta an impiriulachas a thabhairt isteach sa tir seo tri  
mhean teilifis - ni shamhlo dh se coras Telefis san Ghaelach a chuir ar  
fail do lucht labhartha na Gaeilge - a gceart faoi an Bhun-reacht.

Ach ca bhfuil me ag caint faoi an Bhun-reacht no cearta - ni chearta ata ag muintir na Gaeltachta ach naimhde agus siad na naimhde ceanna ata againne freisin.

Caithimid an namhad a throid i ngach cearn ina gcuireann se daor-smacht o orainn <sup>caithimid</sup> go hairithe sa Ghaeltacht - mar ma chailleann muid an cath sa Ghaeltacht Cogadh na hAthghabhata.

Just over 10 years ago we laid the foundation of a new strategy to overthrow British Imperial control of our country. We developed a policy of political action and economic resistance designed to raise the consciousness of workers and working farmers, with the purpose of developing a national liberation struggle, North and South, which would involve the mass of the Irish people.

Although we had a much weaker and less politically developed organisation than we had today, we succeeded within 5 years in unleashing new and powerful forces among the people, which shook both the Dublin and Belfast Governments to their foundations. The people in the South were organised to fight on the social and economic effects of Imperialism and in the North they were organised to fight on the democratic issues which had stifled all normal political development for half a century.

We knew that this was but a beginning. We knew we were acting on issues in which the people could gain significant victories. And we knew that such victories would strengthen the peoples resolve to move on to a higher plane of struggle which would only end when all workers had united to claim their country and all its resources for their own.

We are a political organisation whose methods of struggle are militant political action at street, local government and parliamentary level. We do not advocate a strategy of obtaining our ends by physical force or military means. But we have never said and do not say now that the people have no right to use physical force at any time. To say so would be to say that the people must always leave themselves at the mercy of the state and imperialist forces. We believe that people have a legitimate right to defend themselves when force is used against them and our members in the Six Counties were continually guiding, advising and organising the people to defend their homes and communities when under attack. They did not however, advocate a military campaign and indeed continuously opposed such a strategy. We were very glad to see that the Labour Party in 1972 rejected the Conor Cruise O'Brien policy and recognised the right of people to defend themselves against internment, torture and repression.

We are furthermore keenly aware of the of the experience of other struggles for national liberation throughout the world and of the many occasions on which the will of the mass of the people was subverted and smashed by the military might of Imperialist forces. The sad experiences of the great leader of the Chilean workers, Salvador Allende, is but the latest in a long line of such events. Thus we are aware of the fact that a people struggling against imperialist domination, as we are, must be prepared to withstand

the violent onslaught against them when it comes. The people of the North have already proved that they are prepared to fight for their rights in a peaceful and democratic but militant way and they have also proved that they are prepared to defend themselves physically when attacked. But they are obviously not prepared to engage on a purely military campaign as a method of achieving their aims when they know and have proved that political methods of mass action can achieve many of them and can leave the enemy almost powerless to oppose them.

Those who split away from the Republican Movement when they walked out of the Sinn Fein Ard Fheis in 1970 have embarked on a campaign of violence have misread the peoples objectives and the peoples actions. If they would even now pause to analyse the manner in which the peoples struggle has been confused and broken and note the slow re-assembling of the imperialist jigsaw, they might yet be persuaded to halt their campaign and thus allow the people once more to impose their authority on the situation. With correct leadership and unity of action the British Army murder and torture squads could be forced from the scene and a workers force established to oppose sectarian actions. Such a force if established, under the authority and leadership of the trade union movement, could soon put an end to the terrible series of assassinations which has become the most frightening feature of life in Belfast today and also to the bombing campaigns of the Provisionals and the UVF.

If the authority of the workers can be established in the North then the workers of the South and of Britain would give them the fullest support and solidarity. It is only by such methods that the unity of Catholic and Protestant working-class can be promoted and the imperialist plan to reimpose joint Catholic /Protestant Tory rule be subverted. It is only political action of this type which can mobilise international support behind the demand for withdrawal of British Troops and administration from Ireland.

Heath and Whitelaw have adopted the Lloyd George tactics of negotiation by threats and terror. Lloyd George threatened immediate and terrible war to force the Irish plenipotentiaries to sign the Treaty in 1921. Whitelaw unleashed a reign of terror, sectarian murder, and repression during the course of negotiations in 1973 with the threat that this would continue unless he got an Assembly and Executive.

Instead of refusing to negotiate until harassment and repression ceased, the SDLP, Unionists and Alliance have done precisely what Whitelaw told them and produced an Executive right on schedule. So the Stormont Humpty Dumpty has slowly been pieced together again with the aid of all the Queens horses and all the Queens men.

The second part of the British plan for Ireland is now ready to swing into action. Tripartite talks will take place shortly between Dublin, Belfast and London. This was the original Wilson plan when he instructed Lemass and O'Neill to get together. His purpose was to integrate North and South closer together and then to integrate both with Britain in a federal structure.

The economic integration began in 1965 and is due to be complete in 1975. The Cosgrave government is now preparing to negotiate on issues of political and constitutional integration through the proposed Council of Ireland. Like all other Government structures in Ireland the Council of Ireland is a British invention. Its primary function would be to carry out British policy in Ireland and to maintain the best conditions for the most efficient exploitation of our resources and our people. Even in advance of any negotiations the Cosgrave/O'Brien government has conceded the main British demands in regard to Common Law enforcement policy and common security and law and order arrangements to be carried out through the Council of Ireland. This will give the U.K. Government an effective voice in the constitutional, legal and military affairs of the 26 County area. Considering that the economic and financial policies of the 26 County area are already totally dominated and dictated by Britain and that policy on trade, industry, agriculture, transport and taxation is decided in Brussels, there will soon be less power residing in the Dublin Government than previously resided in Stormont. Even the EEC policies will be administered by the Council of Ireland through whom the regional and social funds for the whole of Ireland will pass.

Thus the Dublin government will, within a few years, be gradually reduced to the status of a regional government on a par with the Faulkner/Fitt government in Belfast. When similar governments have been established in Scotland and Wales as recommended by the Crowther Commission the Westminster government will be ready for the final stages of establishing a federal structure of government for Britain and Ireland.

This is the plan we in Sinn Fein spelled out over eight years ago, and have repeatedly emphasised since. It has not changed through all the years of turmoil, terror and death. It is a repeat of what happened at the end of the war of Independence in 1921. When negotiations started with Britain she produced, not a new solution, but the old partition solution which had been rejected a decade earlier. She hadn't changed it one iota and successfully put it across on a war-weary people. So now Heath produces from the bottom drawer the old Wilson Federal plan with little if any amendments, apart from the problem of piecing Stormont together again after it had been smashed by the massive force of the peoples campaign for democracy and Civil Rights.

Seen in this context one wonders how insulated from realities the Provisionals must be when we see them even last week still asserting that they are on the brink of victory. What do they see as victory? A united Ireland governed by a council of Ireland under British license? Or is it just withdrawal of British troops? That would be a significant step forward and indeed is one of our main demands at this time, but it certainly wouldn't mean victory. It would merely mean that Britain was now satisfied that the new governmental structures and the new improved native forces of repression were quite capable of ensuring that workers North and South were held in check and that there would be no change in the status-quo here.

It would also be simply a recognition of the fact that with modern methods of transportation a British Army task force could reach a trouble spot in Derry or Cork just as quickly from London as it could from Belfast. Furthermore Dr. Garret Fitzgearld has very likely assured Mr. Heath that he will have no objection to N.A.T.O. or E.E.C. military bases in any part of Ireland. These would be the new forces of occupation. In such a situation the mere withdrawal of British troops without any further concession to sovereignty and independence would be a very hollow victory indeed, and could only satisfy the watery Fianna Fail brand of Republican who have been the backbone of the support for the Provisionals.

During the past decade while I have been President of Sinn Fein, we have spelled out quite clearly that to us victory meant the reconquest of Ireland by her people. Our determination to pursue the struggle until the forces of imperialism and capitalism were defeated led directly to the split in January 1970 when those who had a narrower interpretation of republicanism walked out of our Ard Fheis and were subsequently expelled from Sinn Fein. We rejected the concept of national unity as being simply a territorial question or one of co-operation between two Tory establishments and declared that to us as republicans National Unity means unity of Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter, unity of workers, farmers and men of no property in the struggle for the reconquest of Ireland by her people. We are certainly not on the brink of achieving such unity.

National independence to republicans also means much more than the absence of foreign troops. It means that the ownership of Ireland and the control of Irish destinies be in the hands of the Irish people. Far from being close to the achievement of such national independence our sovereignty has been considerably diminished both North and South by our entry to the EEC and by acceptance of the new British structures for the "better government of Ireland"

The bombings, murder, terror and torture of the past two years has forced a de-escalation of political activity which has resulted in a strengthening of the forces of reaction North and South in all organisations. This has affected even our own organisation and a dangerous tendency has developed in some areas to equate the national question with the border and British troops and to assume that if they were gone the national question was solved. We must therefore continuously re-emphasise what is the 'National Question' and what is the 'National Struggle'. It is all about the ownership of the wealth of this country. Those who own the wealth make the laws and rule our lives, as Fintan Lalor, the rural socialist, saw so clearly. "Therefore", said Connolly, "we declare to the Orange workers of Belfast that we stand for the right of the people of Ireland to rule as well as to own Ireland, and cannot conceive of a separation of the two ideas".

The primary characteristic of the national struggle in Ireland is and always has been the struggle by imperialism to control and dominate the Irish people in order to exploit their resources and rob them of their wealth; and on the other hand the struggle by the Irish people to throw off this control and domination and reconquer their wealth and resources.



Therefore the man who is effectively fighting the multi-national mining companies, who occupy the mining rights over an area of Ireland greater in acreage than the 6 Counties is engaged in the national struggle on the National question as much as the man who is fighting British occupation of the 6 Counties. And the man who has raised the standard of cultural revolution to smash the power of imperialist culture over the minds of our people is the one who is in the last line of defence on the National question. If he is overpowered the national struggle will fade and the nation will become a memory. The revolutionary republican must therefore understand and oppose all aspects of imperial domination of our country.

Having emphasised the real nature of the struggle against imperial control of our country it is essential at a time of political solutions and political compromise to spell out once more what should be the national demand on the British government by those who believe in Tones, in Connolly's and in Pearse's concept of Irish nationhood; I repeat what I said at the Sinn Fein Ard Fheis on 31st October 1971. The demand must be that ;

- (1) Britain renounce all claim to sovereignty over Ireland or any part thereof and
- (2) That she announce her intention to withdraw her troops and administration and begin the necessary procedures to phase out on a planned timetable.

I further stated at that Ard Fheis that the short term demands on Westminster should be;

- (1) Ending of internment, torture and terror
- (2) Withdrawal of troops from the streets particularly from all working-class areas and;
- (3) Abolition of repressive legislation and restoration of democracy and basic civil rights.

These demands were again formulated in a resolution passed at the 1972 Ard Fheis, They have since been raised both nationally and internationally and have been increasingly accepted as a realistic road to peace by the British left including the British Labour and Trade Union movement.

It would seem, however, that they have not been put during recent negotiations either by the Dublin Government or by the SDLP in the North. Major concessions, both in regard to the Assembly and the Council of Ireland, have been made to Mr. Whitelaw without getting anything substantial in return. It seems that while some prisoners may be freed as a gesture of goodwill the principle of detention and repression is to continue. Similarly no commitment or guarantees were obtained in regard to withdrawal of troops or even their withdrawal to barracks. The issues of democracy and civil rights seem hardly to have been touched upon, apart from policing. Apparently all the weeks of talks were spent haggling over power. There was no doubt at the end that the real power lay with Mr. Whitelaw and he dictated the pace and nature of the decisions.

There are signs that those who supported the SDLP 6 months ago are far from happy with their performance since then.

They had promised that if a substantial number of SDLP candidates were elected they would be strong enough to negotiate the ending of internment, to get British Army harassment, mass arrests and tortures halted, to force action to be taken against the assassination squads and to get results in the field of civil rights and on social and economic issues. There has in fact been no movement whatever on any of these issues and the manoeuvrings of SDLP members on local councils clearly indicated to the people that nothing had changed that they were back to the old sectarian politics of the Unionist/Nationalist days. On the same day on which Whitelaw was forcing Faulkner and Fitt to form an executive the people of the Magherafelt area of South Derry, in a local government by election, were indicating their disillusionment with the SDLP and their support for the republican candidate who went before them on a clear republican, socialist, non sectarian platform. Against all the odds and all the forecasts Francie Donnelly won the seat for Sinn Fein. A significant feature of the election was the very substantial number of second preference votes which he got from the loyalists. They also voted for integrity above double dealing and for development of genuine non-sectarian working-class politics as against a return to the sterile sectarian bickerings of the past which ensured that the middle class retained the power and owned the wealth.

There is great hope for the future when such a voting pattern can emerge in the midst of sectarian bombings and killings. It is also a tribute to Francie Donnelly and the Republican Clubs in the area for their steadfast adherence to republican policies, and their determination to stand by the internees.

We have, in the past year, contested elections North and South of the border, we are the only party to do so and the only party with elected councillors in both areas. We alone have presented clear, coherent policies for all the people of this island, and we have received substantial support for them from Belfast to Cork and in both urban and rural areas. In 1974 Sinn Fein will be contesting the local government elections in the 26 Counties and already the work has begun in many areas. At a time when local democracy down here is being threatened with the same rationalisation process which has destroyed it in the North, it is vital that Sinn Fein is strongly represented in order to protect the interests of the common people against the bureaucrats.

The workers of this country North and South have been betrayed by their political leaders. In the North the NILP has totally lost the confidence of the workers and what is called the Social Democratic and Labour Party is a clearly middle-class party with no roots in the trade union movement apart from a small area in Belfast. In the South the Labour Party has joined in Coalition with the class enemies of the workers, the Fine Gael party whose roots in Fascism are bringing forth very dangerous fruits at the moment in the shape of more prisons, increased repression, and greater police and army presence in our daily lives. Sinn Fein must now, in co-operation with other organisations of the left, try to fill the vacuum created by the defection of the Labour Parties from working-class politics. We must renew and intensify the struggles in which we have been engaged in the past on behalf of workers and small farmers. We must increase and develop our roots in the trade union movement and provide political leadership to workers to enable them to resist the coming attacks from the multinational companies, from the new imperialism of the EEC and from the fascist tendencies of the Fine Gael coalition.

We must, above all, endeavour once again to unite the forces of the left. Structures must now be created within which different organisations or individuals can co-operate on a principled basis on issues which affect the working people of any part of Ireland. Such structures must strictly exclude those who are more interested in mouthing slogans or scoring debating points than in doing solid work. Unity of the forces of the left is the best, in fact the only real answer to the coalitions in Dublin and Belfast. The splitters and divisive elements serve only the cause of imperialism. Let us show unity and strength in the face of the enemy and we will find that working people throughout the country will respond by showing their willingness to engage in struggle against the forces of imperialism and capitalism. So let our slogan be- Unite to Fight.

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