

1987

Ard Fheis Annual Delegate Conference - 1987 : Oráid an Uachtarán

Workers' Party of Ireland

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THE WORKERS PARTY

**Ard Fheis
Annual Delegate
Conference 1987**

*Oráid an Uachtarán
Presidential Address*



The Workers' Party
Árd Fheis/Annual Delegate Conference 1987
Presidential Address
by
Alderman Tomás Mac Giolla T.D.

- A Theachtaí, a chomradaí, a chuairoteorí agus a cháirde,

Beirim fáilte romhaimh uile cuig na hArd Fheise seo. Seo an cúigiú uair is fiche a labhair mé ag Ard Fheis mar Uachtarán na hEagraíochta. Is mó athraithe atá tagtha ar saol na ndaoine ó shin ach is mó fós na hathraithe atá tagtha ar an Eagraíocht seo 'gainne. Seo é an cúigiú Ard Fheis den Eagraíocht fén ainm "Páirtí na nOibrighthe", The Workers' Party, agus is fuirist a fheiscint go bhfuil muid níos treise ná riamh i mbliana. I ngach iomaíocht toghcháin, i ngach aighneas intleachtúil, i ngach coimhlint chun ár naicme a fhuascailt ón mbochtanas agus ón éagcothraime, tháingamar amach níos láidre agus níos chinnte i nár aigne faoin namhad atá ós ár gcomhar agus faoin job atá le déanamh againn. I rith na blianta bhíomar ag foghlaim i gcomhnuidhe agus tuigimid anois nach deintear réabhlóidí tré gunnaí a chur in a gcuid láimhe ach tré smaointí a chur ina n-intinn.

Comrades and friends,

Our Party, The Workers' Party, was born of a struggle in Irish history, sometimes painful, sometimes heroic, and often violent. During that struggle we were engaged in a process of learning and searching — searching to confront the true enemies of the people. Well we have found them here and now. Right in our midst and we are ready to do battle with them because we have forged the weapon to beat them — The Workers' Party.

I am now satisfied at last that the Workers' Party has been firmly established in Irish politics. Our uncompromising adherence to socialist principles and our defence of working people and their organisations has been an essential factor during the past few years in fighting off the onslaught of the right wing parties, the parties of the bosses and exploiters, the parties of the

cheaters, the frauds and the robbers at a time when the so-called Party of Labour had once again sold out the workers and eagerly gathered the crumbs that were contemptuously tossed to them. Our firm stand eventually forced the Labour Party to break off their love affair with the Tories in the Fine Gael party. We are not foolish enough to believe that the Parliamentary leadership of the Labour Party has suddenly been converted to socialism. We are only too well aware that if the Workers' Party were to relax its pressure they would soon return to their old love. We will try to keep them on the straight and narrow.

We are strong and firm and true, we are dedicated, determined, committed. We are fine-honed like steel, flexible but hard, and unyielding, because we have come through the crucible of struggle. We know our enemies and our enemies know us. Because they are the same enemies as Connolly faced and Mitchell and Lalor and Tone before him, and Mellows, Frank Ryan and the Gilmores, so many more since.

The never-ending struggle is between the men of property and the men of no property as succinctly described by Theobald Wolfe Tone almost two hundred years ago. He wasn't always of that opinion because his early inclination was to put his trust in men of property with a certain liberal vision — the Whigs. But he came to that firm conviction by his own observation through years of struggle for democracy and independence for his country. He believed ardently in the republican principles of the American and later the French Revolution as clearly expressed in Tom Paine's *The Rights of Man*. He knew the Parliament in Dublin in his day, representing a small minority of aristocrats and property owners was not democratic — did not represent the people. But as his ideas spread and posed a threat to these property owners he discovered that many of those he trusted placed their property rights above the rights of other people, and even above the rights of their country. For him property ownership sorted out the traitors from the patriots and within three years of his death very many of them proved their treachery in the Act of Union. Tone had brilliant political insight and a mind that was constantly open to new progressive ideas, and learned daily from the struggle in which he was engaged. In today's terms he would have been described as a Communist but he preceded Marx and Connolly and Lenin. We had to wait for them to develop further his ideas on men of property and their tendency to side with the oppressor against the oppressed — Marx called it Economic Determinism.

Through all the bitter struggles of the 19th century there were those who held to the republican and democratic principles of Tone and tried to apply them to their situation, but the rising tide of Catholic Nationalism under Daniel O'Connell swamped them time and again. Lalor, again preceding the development of Marxist thought, laid down the theoretical basis for a socialist approach to agriculture and land structure from which we

developed our policy as set down in *Land for the People*. Davitt, who fully endorsed Lalor's ideas, argued initially in the Land League for land nationalisation and leasing back to farmers but since there was no Irish nation to take control of the land from the landlords, his argument was considerably weakened and he reluctantly agreed to the campaign for 'Peasant Proprietorship'. He knew and regretted the effect this would have and we see the legacy it has left us today, with the state and the people having no control over their main source of food and wealth. Tone's men of property still remain true to form.

It was Connolly who first brought scientific socialism to bear on Irish politics. He gave a political voice for the first time to the Irish working class, and in his *Labour in Irish History* he accorded to them their true historical role as the incorruptible inheritors of the fight for freedom. He applied Marxist thought to his people and to his time and brought us into the mainstream of European socialism. His participation in, and indeed leadership of, the 1916 Rebellion was not an aberration nor an emotional losing of the head as many of his so-called followers try to explain it away for themselves. Lenin understood and approved. It was a clearly thought out position over a number of years and was definitely announced by him to his friends and comrades immediately on the outbreak of war in August 1914. He would ensure that the working class and their organisations and their army took the leadership in the Irish struggle for freedom and independence because he knew if they were not themselves in the leadership they would be betrayed as they had been before and as they so surely were after his death by the "labour must wait" dictat of De Valera. The working class for which James Connolly worked, fought and died, the men of no property with whom and for whom Wolfe Tone died, were not to be allowed to participate in the freedom for which they had fought for centuries. "We cannot conceive of a free Ireland with a subject working class." Workers' Republic, Dec. 18, 1915.

I think it is important that we regularly take a look at our roots, at the history and tradition from which we have sprung. Ours is no alien philosophy. It is rooted in our history, embedded in our culture; it cries out from every rock and hill and cairn, from every town and village and cross-roads in Ireland. We are so steeped in that working class culture that we have spread it world wide to every part of the globe to which we were scattered — from the Chartist Movement in England to the Molly Maguires in America and the stockades of Australia we rallied the working class and built their organisations. And we are proud to say that we were represented at the storming of the Bastille in 1789 which unleashed the fury of the great French Revolution and changed the whole course of world history — and we were also among the handful of wretches who were released from that same Bastille.

The Workers' Party is proud to be part of that great tradition, that cultural ethos which gives us our instinctive understanding of socialist principles. We understand Marx because Marx and Engels understood us. They studied and learned from the Irish struggle. It helped to mould the thinking of their brilliant minds. Perhaps it was here that Marx could see at first hand religion as "the opium of the people, the cry of the oppressed, the heart of a heartless world". It was not a criticism or a condemnation, it was simply an analysis.

Out of this tradition, out of this instinct, through study of scientific socialism and of the experience of other countries, the Workers' Party has grown as a socialist party dedicated to give leadership and power to the Irish working class. But who are the Irish working class? How do we identify them? How do they identify themselves? Many people proudly identify themselves as working class, many others feel it is a term of disgrace, of degradation. The working class are the majority who work by hand or brain for a wage or salary or on hire, who exploit nobody else. They can earn high or low wages and be rich or poor, and be employed or unemployed, but they must identify with their class against the capitalist class, the exploiting class. In the final analysis if there is no class consciousness there is no cohesive working class.

For the Workers' Party the question of class consciousness is central to our progress towards socialism. By class consciousness we understand the degree of awareness as to how society is constructed economically, and consequently socially and politically. We have worked hard over a long period to clearly identify and clarify the class nature of our society here in Ireland, and we have also tried to clarify and identify who the working class are. The best examples of this clarity were the tax marches of 1979/80. But capitalism itself has helped in recent years by giving all workers, high or low, equal treatment on the unemployment scrapheap. Years of service or skill or grade or salary counted for nothing — all were just workers and could be sacrificed to protect the profits and incomes of the exploiting class. A worker is a worker is just a worker — until he's sacked when suddenly he's just a face before a hatch. Class consciousness is slowly sinking in.

We must continue therefore to defend workers and their trade unions against even more massive attacks which are coming. Even as we meet here this week-end, two of the most infamous enemies of the trade union movement in the 1980s are being wined and dined across the country in Killarney as guests of the Irish Management Institute. These two men have displayed attitudes toward workers that amount to little more than industrial terrorism. Yet this weekend it is Ian MacGregor, ex-chairman of the British National Coal Board, and the British newspaper proprietor Eddie Shah who laid the groundwork for Rupert Murdoch, who are the esteemed speakers at the IMI's annual conference in Killarney.

This indicates dramatically what way Irish management is thinking at the moment. We can ignore the soft words about the need to develop consensus among the different interest groups if we are to get the economy moving again, and ignore the rhetoric on the importance of the co-operation of the social partners, labour and management. If you want to know what the employers really think, look at the Killarney conference: Shah and MacGregor, men whose notion of consensus and co-operation amounts to the coercion of the lock-out, and with it the confrontation which leads to bloodletting on the picket lines, violence which does damage to the workers and the democratic institution of workers, the trade union movement.

We must defend the right to work and we must vigorously oppose the false propaganda of the new right which we hear weekly on our national radio station. This tells us that the future of work is no work but that we shouldn't worry — we will be looked after by being paid a social wage to keep body and soul together while we use our leisure in a creative way.

It sounds like a bribe to me. It sounds like hush money. It sounds like a shady attempt to engender passivity and acceptance among the unemployed. The idea behind this propaganda is to teach the unemployed not to feel guilty about not having a job. We agree entirely — they should not feel guilty — but they should feel angry and betrayed. They should also learn that it is not technology which is consigning people to the dole queue and penury but it is the inherent injustice of the market system and the ownership of the means of production by a small group motivated only by profit and greed. It is insidious to call for a lowering of expectations and to attempt to inculcate hopelessness in society when the system itself is bankrupt and needs fundamental change.

We must no longer be satisfied with defence — we must attack and we must attack on all fronts. We cannot be satisfied with fighting for reforms. As Lenin said "The struggle for reforms must be subordinate to the revolutionary struggle for freedom and for socialism".

We must now begin to raise the struggle to a new level. Freedom is what we must strive for. Freedom for the oppressed class which has never known freedom. How can you be free if you work for slave wages and are hired and fired like a slave? How can you be free if you have no job and are told you never will have a job? How can you be free if you haven't been educated to achieve your full potential? How can you be free if you are illiterate as thousands are, or semi-illiterate as tens of thousands are? Where is the freedom of expression and of communication, let alone artistic or intellectual freedom? Have we lost our understanding of the meaning of that precious word freedom just as we have lost our understanding of the meaning of the word republican. 'Brits out' does not bring freedom and 'Yanks in' brings even less.

First we must strive for the basic freedoms, freedom from fear and freedom from want. Freedom for the elderly from fear of muggings or beatings or violation of their homes. Freedom for women from fear of rape and assault as violent crimes grow in intensity. Freedom for all citizens from terrorist attacks — from kidnappings, from bomb attacks on shoppers, from the bullet as you answer your doorbell. This is the basic and minimal protection which citizens must expect from the state.

But there are also extra fears which are part of the daily living of working class people. If you have a job you are in constant fear of losing it and you must work harder for lower pay to keep it. If you've lost your job you have the fear of losing your home through inability to pay the rent or the mortgage. There is the fear of losing your health or even your life or that of a loved one through inability to pay for the care needed or the long months, even years, on waiting lists for heart surgery or other serious operations. These are only some of the constant fears and tensions under which working class people must live because of the greed of the capitalist class to whom profit is all and people mean nothing.

Isn't it unbelievable that at the end of the 20th century after 65 years of independence we must today be still striving for that most basic freedom, freedom from want — want of food, want of clothing, want of shelter, want of health care, want of education. What an indictment of our so-called freedom that there is less freedom from want down here than there is in the 'unfree' part of our country, which itself is by no means free from want.

It is in order to achieve these basic freedoms for our people that we know we must achieve socialist control of our natural resources and the means of production. Why should our resources and raw materials remain in the control of a few people elected by nobody and responsible to nobody but themselves. It is they who are holding our country up to ransom. These are the private enterprise people about whom we hear so much yet they show no enterprise. They simply rape and pillage and destroy as they are presently doing in Coolattin Woods which took over 200 years to develop and are destroyed for private greed in a few months. Capitalism destroys people, the environment and our resources. Socialism constructs, expands, protects, cares for people. It brings freedom.

The private entrepreneurs have a free hand to show their enterprise. The state through the taxpayer gives them every assistance with grants and tax-free allowances. The rich seas around us are wide open to them to show their enterprise but they cannot even process or market the fishermen's catch which is often dumped back in the sea. Our rich agricultural land and all its products are at their disposal but half of it is lying fallow or grossly underused. They cannot even process our wool which is exported in the raw state, nor can they make leather or leather goods from our animal hides which are also exported raw. They have complete control of our mineral

wealth but are unable to build a smelter here and manufacture goods made from our ore which is all exported.

Despite this total failure of our miserable capitalist class to show any enterprise, they now want to get their greedy hands on our state companies which have shown great enterprise. Privatisation is now the great catch cry. They have even set up their own political party to carry it through. The PDs — the Privateer Destroyers with a descendant of Grace O'Malley at their head. Having destroyed industry after industry in their greedy hunt for money through every immoral means, from asset stripping of viable companies to plain robbery of employees' PAYE and PRSI from the government they now wish to get their greedy and destructive pirate hands on the state companies built up by the people for the benefit of all the people. These companies are the mainstay of the economy and of the state and are the only stabilising influence in a country on the verge of collapse. They also play a vital social role in both rural and urban areas as our people in the midlands and the west are very well aware. They give job security, reasonable pay and conditions of work to 80,000 workers. But this is now considered to be criminal and job security is apparently the biggest crime of all. Every worker and every trade union puts job security second only to pay in their list of priorities. Now private enterprise are accusing state companies of interfering with their rights. They believe they have a right to force workers to work for the lowest possible pay, in the worst possible conditions and to throw them out of work with the shortest possible notice. In this way they can maximise their profits at the expense of the worker — which is the true meaning of private enterprise. That is why they object so strongly to state companies setting decent standards for their workers. They want to get their private hands on public property to bring workers to heel by large scale redundancies and then reduce their standards of pay and conditions.

The main reason however why the privateers want to take over the most viable and profitable of the state companies is simply to make a quick buck — to make the maximum amount of money for themselves in the shortest possible time. They are not worried how they make the money. No thoughts of the "common good" ever enter their narrow little minds. If it means simply selling off a company like Irish Life then they will do so to the highest bidder — most likely an American. If it means simply robbing the till and running the company into the ground, they will do that; or they may sell off assets year by year on specious grounds of "more efficiency", "competitiveness" or "need for liquidity" and just pocket the takings.

I assure you I am not just making this up nor am I being unfair to private entrepreneurs. We have seen it all done repeatedly over the past two decades. Dr A J O'Reilly, as he is now known, showed us years ago how simply it can all be done if you are ruthless enough. As he put his Fitzwilton

company together with the aid of his friends he showed us how quickly millions could be made by taking over viable companies, shutting them down and selling off the assets. Quite simple, no risk and only the hundreds of workers who were thrown out of their jobs and their livelihoods suffered. Dr O'Reilly also showed us how simple it was to sell off for practically nothing a most valuable, vibrant new productive state company, Erin Foods, to an ageing American company, Heinz. Of course he needed the assistance of the political leader of the day which was readily forthcoming. This had the advantage of a permanent pay-off for life to O'Reilly and a new lease of life to the Heinz company which of course was well worth the loss of jobs and livelihood to a few hundred workers in Erin Foods, and the loss of permanent crop contracts to thousands of farmers plus the loss of wealth and production to the Irish economy. The most appalling thing about these type of operations is our own stupid gullibility. Once you accumulate great wealth you are immediately heaped with great honours. Dr A J O'Reilly is constantly lauded as a great "patriot" if you don't mind, when the appropriate term for a person who had sold out his country's assets to a foreigner used to be "traitor". The Heralds of Free Enterprise bring nothing but tragedy in their wake.

There have been many times, in the past year as in other years, when the enormity of the task we have set ourselves in this party has seemed overwhelming. When hundreds of thousands of our people are surviving on bare subsistence, it has been daunting to witness the swelling of the ranks of the right both in this state, in Northern Ireland and in Britain. It has been frightening to hear the growing voice of abuse against the poor, the attacks on unmarried mothers, the young and the long-term unemployed.

You have only to turn on a radio chat programme, or read the letters to the newspapers, to realise how the very people who are most victimised by this evil system are, in a slow and sinister way, now being identified as the source, the cause of our trouble. What once wouldn't be whispered for charity's sake is now snarled openly by people who are bewildered and desperate for solutions to their own problems: blame the poor, blame those on welfare, it is they who are soaking up the resources, cut them off, make them do useless work for the dole, let them take the boat.

Yes, there is a new and ugly mood of callous indifference to the appalling misery of poverty, and let us make no mistake about it, this is neither accidental nor coincidental. It is, in fact, central to right-wing politics. They are engaged in a deliberate campaign to divide the working class. Those at work are encouraged to believe that the unemployed and those on welfare benefits are the cause of their high taxation, when in the south every penny taken in PAYE is paid over to home and foreign bankers as interest on our national debt, and in Northern Ireland more is spent on security and prisons

and courts through the terrorism of the provos and loyalist paramilitaries and lack of democratic institutions than is spent on welfare and health care.

Capitalism is about the alienation of human beings, one from another. Capitalism is about the creation of divisions in society, where the weak turn on the weakest, while both are manipulated and controlled by the few at the top, the owners of wealth and holders of power. Many who should know their interests are with us have been stampeded by their own fear into cowering with our political opponents, against us. But we are in no doubt now, and never were, that no matter how difficult the task to be done, we will in the end succeed!

What we must never forget is that we are part not only of an historical process, but part of an international movement. The Workers' Party in Ireland stands for those values that are embraced by genuine socialist movements throughout the world; we are united in our common struggle and that is our greatest reserve of strength.

We were united with the great Salvador Allende whom we all so much admired because he brought democracy and freedom to his own people. He was ruthlessly smashed and murdered by the American government and his own right-wing armed forces because his example might soon have led all of South America out of its black night of oppression. Nicaragua today is the victim of massive American onslaughts, not just because they have by their own efforts brought democracy and freedom to their own people, but because their example might be followed and they will be a beacon light of freedom to all their oppressed neighbours in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica and further afield. They are no threat whatever to the US government or people but they are indeed a great threat to all the right-wing forces of oppression throughout the world. It is the same forces of oppression who are bringing famine, pestilence and war to all of the African countries who are trying to bring peace, democracy and freedom to their people, and it is the same forces of oppression who almost daily massacre the Palestinian people.

All of this shows in stark and violent terms how far the oppressors of the common people will go to hold and tighten their grip. But it shows something else as well. It shows the courage, the stubborn and defiant will and heart that the oppressed people of the world bring to their struggle for justice and continue to bring, whatever persecution, torture, inhuman treatment and defeat they meet.

"The higher you build your barriers,
The taller we become;
The more you refuse to hear our voice
The louder we will sing;

There's something inside so strong,
We know we were going to make it."

The words of Labi Siffre's song about South Africa; a universal message from those of us who fight for democracy and full human rights, who fight that the world's goods might be equally shared among all, from us to those who do all in their power to stop us. We won't be stopped, not by them, not by any force they can muster. What can't be won today will be won tomorrow, for there are more of us, always; more to come forward every year, every day. We have not only a precious legacy from the past, but the guardianship of the future in our hands. That future has, as we are now daily reminded, never been under anything even remotely like the calamitous threat it faces at this, the end of the 20th century.

The ruthless determination of President Reagan and Mrs Thatcher to maintain a high level of nuclear threat, regardless of the horrendous risks, is in line with their ruthless policy in the developing countries whose peoples are fighting against terrible odds for their democratic rights. The millions of peoples on earth want peace with all their hearts, want a world for their children and grandchildren, have no stake in war and nothing to be gained from the lunatic proliferation of weapons which can destroy the planet hundreds of times over. Yet we are expected to watch and wait in numbing fear, totally dependent on the outcome of deliberations over which we have no say. But we do have a say.

The Workers' Party is totally committed to nuclear disarmament and world peace. During this past year we have taken several initiatives to further this campaign, one of which was a seminar attended by numerous representatives from developing countries and organisations within the peace movement. On the very week-end of the summit meeting in Reykjavik, a delegate from the Soviet Union put forward his country's proposals to establish a nuclear-free world by the year 2000 at our seminar in Dublin.

It has to be noted that on that occasion the Embassy of the United States refused to send a representative to that seminar.

In the past year America and the rest of the world has watched, incredulous, as the man at the head of this vast nation has been exposed as a fraud, who deceived and betrayed the democratic process of his own government in order to support an oppressive war and gain some spurious popular support. This came as no surprise to us. When the previous Irish government brought him into our midst, to be lauded and applauded and slavishly honoured as some kind of hero figure, the Workers' Party alone of political parties had the courage to stand up and leave the Dáil in protest, to express our solidarity with the thousands of ordinary Irish citizens marching in protest through the streets.

Perhaps the critics of the time who felt we were being unnecessarily rude would like to review their opinion in the light of Irangate.

The American government is now waiting and watching for the moment when Ireland will finally agree to join the political and foreign policies of NATO thus sealing up the American alliance across the EEC countries. As a nation we face our first test on that question in a month's time in the referendum on the Single European Act. The Act has been presented as a routine measure, a simple managerial matter of endorsing the sort of unity that already prevails in the EEC — nothing to worry about, no risk at all to our future decisions on war, or peace, or defence, or alliances with anyone. If so, why is it in contravention of the constitution's requirements for an independent foreign policy as the Supreme Court ruled.

Most astonishing of all, we are informed by the Taoiseach that we really have no choice in this referendum if we are to stay in the EEC. We are told this because — Mr Haughey says — there is no question of returning to Brussels and re-negotiating the Single European Act. The Single European Act is not holy writ, and it can most certainly be re-negotiated. If there is a defeat in the referendum and our party will be campaigning strongly for that defeat, the Single European Act will have to be re-negotiated and Deputy Haughey knows this as well as we do.

Only a few weeks ago, Bishop Eamonn Casey, in his capacity as chairman of Trocaire, made the point at a seminar in Dublin on "Development and Disarmament" that in the thirty years of its existence, the EEC has gone to painstaking lengths to accommodate the very different and sometimes apparently opposing economic and cultural traditions of its member states. There is no reason then that it cannot accommodate our traditional independent foreign policy.

Speaking of bishops, it will be recalled that members of the Catholic hierarchy have not been too shy or reticent to make their views known on the morality of other issues for referendums in the recent past. Can we hope to hear their voices, united or separately, on the issue of war or peace.

The underlying issue is peace, nothing less. Ireland's contribution to peace is not merely to maintain the tradition of neutrality, but to work with other neutral and non-aligned countries to create a positive and vibrant third force, a force with genuine relevance on the brink of the 21st century, a force that will speak for all generations to come in its insistence that we must survive together, whatever our differences.

Ireland should be involved, and actively involved, in the international arena, through the United Nations, through links with the Third World, in the promotion of peace and co-operation. This is the role we could work toward, this is the kind of service we might give, if we do not hand over without a whimper our right to independent choice in future world politics.

Why should we be the hind-tit of a NATO alliance for war when we could be up front internationally giving leadership in the fight for peace. Apart from our pride in the hundreds of our young voluntary workers doing such sterling work in the Third World, the only international role we can be proud of is our United Nations peace-keeping role which has gained world wide respect. Why is Corporal McLoughlin not a national hero? He died waging peace, the most honourable cause in which to die. Is it only heroic to die waging war?

The referendum raises again the whole issue of our Constitution. The 1937 Constitution was always a seriously flawed document, one which reflected both sectarianism and the disproportionate influence of the vested property interests. As a hallmark of a society, it could be aptly summed up in one quote from Joyce:

"Ireland, my Ireland,
My only love,
where Christ and Caesar
are hand in glove."

The shortcomings of our Constitution have become very apparent in recent years. We have seen the inability of successive governments to end land speculation or terminate ground rents. Court decisions over planning controversies, and over the Derrynaflan treasures, have rightly caused public outcry. They have shown how the Constitution can be interpreted for the benefit of private property owners and to the detriment of society in general.

We need a pluralist constitution, one without any vestige of sectarian attitudes, any privilege or bias toward any religious group or church. We need a constitution which meets the needs of a modern society on the road to industrialisation and urbanisation and which clearly specifies that the common good, the rights of society as a whole takes precedence over the rights of private property.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement has abolished poverty and unemployment and has halted the ravages of Thatcherism in Northern Ireland!

This must be so, because nobody is talking about these things any more. The SDLP is telling the unemployed Catholics that they can now hold their heads up and they are equal to the unemployed Protestants. The Unionist leaders are marching about breathlessly trying to get arrested and playing among themselves the "I'm-more-extreme than-you" game. The Provos, after their humiliation in the Republic's general election, seem to have added a new tack to terrorism: "if you don't give us a good vote we'll step up the slaughter".

Our members on the ground in the North, from both Catholic and

Protestant roots, recognise that all the ingredients are there for an upsurge of communal violence. Loyalist insecurity has never been deeper and their leaders, jostling for position, are feeding that insecurity in a calculated display of frenzied over-reaction. The Provos are ever willing to push for a final descent into sectarian anarchy. The world is a much simpler place when viewed through a gunsight in your own little God-given ghetto.

The result of the Agreement for us is that the already stony ground for the seeds of an anti-sectarian movement is stonier still. Many of our fears about this Agreement have been realised. It is a wedge between the working-classes. The failure to offer any consultation to the Unionist in the run-up to Hillsborough signing was a serious mistake. It added to their alienation and they felt excluded from a political process which was concerned with their future. Their fear that the Orange culture is about to be subsumed in some way is very real. Whether the threat itself exists or not is academic. Nobody can deny the reality for them of Provo savagery.

We believe the time is right for a generous gesture such as the relocation of the Secretariat offices or a temporary suspension of Secretariat and conference meetings. Many Loyalists have come to the conclusion already that absolute intransigence is basically unhealthy. Maybe they would be ready for talks on devolution and John Hume could then be forced to talk or be isolated.

For the Workers' Party the objectives in Northern Ireland are the same as in the Republic. The struggle is for Peace, Democracy and Freedom and the means of struggle is working class unity. So if the Anglo-Irish Agreement can be used as a vehicle for achieving a Bill of Rights and devolved government as steps towards democracy then we will use it. If it can't then it's better dead.

The Irish are taking quite a drubbing these days for being failures in modern economic terms — most of the attacks coming from our own commentators. But we should look for a moment at the things that make us stand out in the world — the performance of our young people in sport and in the arts. In literature, music, painting, theatre and films there have been dazzling and well-deserved international successes by young Irish people. Unfortunately most of their colleagues are on the dole or if they do get work they are often badly ripped off. Artists are workers and their work can be of immense value to society. They can hold up a mirror to the system and question it. Anything which stimulates self-examination should be nurtured and cherished, not starved and abused.

Probably the most internationally famous Irishman alive today is Bono of U2 — a group which has a commitment to peace, a commitment to civil rights and liberties and in particular a commitment to Ireland. When they made it internationally they didn't have to leave to make it. Those who say

our "Brightest and Best" are leaving are wrong. Most of our brightest and best are staying on determined to succeed here and also determined to make society succeed by changing it to benefit the majority of the people. U2 are committed to remain here and through investment here are facilitating the emergence of new musical talent and let us hope, stimulating the arts in general by their vitality and their quiet patriotism. This is of course true of many other groups also such as the Dubliners and the Chieftains. But isn't it in stark contrast to other celebrities, some of whom I have mentioned already, who keep shovelling money out of the country for investment abroad — which I would regard as economic treachery.

Sa domhain bheag ina bhfuil muid in ár gcomhnuidhe inniú níl aon mhaitheas bheith ag olagóin faoi brughadh na gcultúirí iasachta ar ár gcultúr fhein. Tá sé sin ag tárlú i ngach uile tír ar fuaid an domhain. Má tá ár gcultúirí láidir go leor níl aon baoghal dó. Tá sé sin soiléir ón ár gceol. Tá an ceol traidisiúnta láidir annseo agus mar sin tá sé ag brúghadh insteach ar cultúirí eile sa Eoraip agus annseo sa bhaile tá tionnchar mór aige ar meóin na daoine agus ar ceól ó chultúirí thar lear. Is as an gceol seo agus an meón seo a d'fhás U2.

Ach tá scéal eile ar fad le hinnsint faoin teanga agus an litríocht i nGaeilge. Tá siad lag mar tá an tobar dhá thriomú go tapaidh. Tuigeann an lucht oibre tabhact na gaeilge agus an litríocht agus an cultúr uilig a bhaineann leis. Tá sé le feiscint i mBaile Atha Cliath, i gCorcaig agus ins na bailte móra ar fuaid na tíre gurb é an gnath phobal, as a stuaim fhéin, gan cabhair ón stáit nó ón lucht gnó, atá ag bunú na scoileanna lán gaeilge. Ba choir dúinn glacadh le seo; ba chóir dúinn bheith ag tabhairt níos mó tachaiocht doibh; ba chóir dúinn Mairtín Ó Chadhain a léamh arís agus soisialachas na gaeilge agus na gaeltachta a fhoghlaim ath-uair.

Comrades and friends, I am sorry for having detained you so long but there are so many things crowding in my mind that I wished to say to you.

My purpose was to give you an understanding of the depth of history, of suffering and of struggle that has gone into the building of this party. To explain to you that the party is a weapon of struggle to bring freedom to the working class who have never known freedom. To point out that socialism is the goal to bring that freedom.

But while we must be very clear in our ideology we must not always maintain a doctrinaire approach. Socialism is not a dogma — it is a philosophy of life; it is a way of life. There are some truths of socialism which have stood all tests in all times — the theory of the means of production, distribution and exchange, the theory of the class struggle in a class society, the leading role of the working class.

But Marx believed that change was the only sure law of life. Socialism too

can change — or at least new facets come into view that were hidden in the heat of battle. These changes are now taking place all over the greater part of Europe and in the heartland of socialism, the Soviet Union, they hold out the hope of peace and progress for all humanity.

Sadly we are missing from this debate and this arena. Sadly we are missing from Europe, the homeland of socialism. This is because we never joined Europe, we only joined CAP.

The cold war warriors in Ireland would like to keep us on this side of the Liffey. They don't want us to cross the Seine and the Danube, the Vistula and the Don and take part in the great rebirth that is going on in the socialist countries of Europe. When we look to Europe we look to all Europe with hope.

We are not the first Irishmen to do so. It is not possible to walk through Hungary, Poland or Romania without coming across the stones of our monks or the bones of our soldiers. It is time we went back. It is time we stopped thinking of neutrality as a bandage that must not be taken off and thought of as a tool with which to shape and mould our future, the future of Europe and the future of the world.

For what is socialism without Europe? And what is Irish Republicanism without Europe? Here the great French Revolution reached out its iron hand and touched Wolfe Tone. Here Marx was born. Here the Industrial Revolution created a proletariat and the Russian Revolution saw it triumph. And in 1919 our new Republic hailed the new red star that shone over Moscow!

And because socialism is creative we must stay in touch with the unique humanitarian qualities of Italian or French or Hungarian socialism. Too often we allow our enemies to turn a socialist world into a place of grey skies. This is not how we see socialism.

Socialism is philosophy, economics and ethics: it is a philosophy of life which says that man is not a creature alone in the universe, an atom to be discarded, a wild creature in a jungle but a living loving part of a caring society: it is economics — it says man is a creature of need in a field of scarcity and that this scarcity is compounded by greed on the part of the ruling class. It is ethics: it says I am my brother's keeper.

What kind of socialism do we want in Ireland? We want a socialism that is true to its principles but adaptable to the genius of our people. We want to enrich town and country and enhance our cities, we want neighbourliness and courtesy to rule again, we want to walk the streets at night and greet our friends and neighbours, we want to retain our culture and traditions and absorb the best from other cultures in a constantly changing and developing pattern of life. We want to foster that gift for political improvisation which has marked us in all times and in all lands, be the result the Land League or the American Democratic Party.

Let us then build the Party for the workers, a party that like socialism will stand the test of time and yet change and change again to meet history rushing towards us.