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Sinn Fein - Structure and Activities

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SINN FEIN - Structure and Activities

The basic unit of Sinn Fein is the Cumann or club. In Dublin there are about 23 Cumainn, each based in a certain area like Ballymun or Rathmines. Every year a Cumann has an Annual General Meeting at which the members elect an officer board, which is responsible for organising and co-ordinating the activities of the Cumann for the following year. An officer board must consist of at least a Chairman, Secretary, Treasurers and delegate to the Comhairle Ceannair. Other essential positions are : Educational Officer, Public Relations Officer, and if possible a Finance Officer.

CHAIRMAN: The Chairman's job is to ensure that the Cumann involves itself in the activities of Sinn Fein as a whole and implements all decisions made by the organisation, where they affect the Cumann. He/she must keep order at Cumann meetings and see that the business of the meeting is carried out properly and efficiently.

The Secretary records all decisions made by the Cumann, in the minutes and deals with correspondence, filing etc.

The Treasurer keeps a record of Cumann funds and all items of income and expenditure. A financial statement should be made at every Cumann meeting, and a financial report given at the end of the year.

The Public Relations Officer issues statements to the media making known the opinions of the Cumann to the people on any particular issue. In many Cumainn the PRO compiles a local newsletter to communicate to the people the views of Sinn Fein on all issues, local and national, affecting them. A newsletter helps to establish contact between the local Cumann and the people as it can make the policies and ideology of the Movement relevant to the people in their day to day lives. Every member of the Cumann should contribute something to the Newsletter.

The Education Officer fulfills a vital function in the Cumann. His/her job is to ensure that every member of the Cumann understands the basic policies and ideology of the Republican Movement. Lectures are given at most meetings of the Cumann on various aspects of our policies and objectives. Every member should take part in the subsequent discussions. Education and discussion is designed as a guide to our activities so that we will be better equipped to reach our goal with an aware and dedicated membership.

The COMHAIRLE CEANNAIR : (Regional Executive), The Comhairle Ceannair co-ordinates the activities of all Cumann and gives them leadership on major issues. It is composed of an officer board, elected each year by the members at an Annual General Meeting, plus one delegate from each Cumann. In Dublin the Comhairle Ceannair meets once a fortnight. The function of the delegate is to report the activities of the Cumann to the Comhairle Ceannair to represent the views and proposals of the Cumann to it, and then to go back to the Cumann and give the members a report on the decisions taken by the Comhairle Ceannair. A report should be given to the Cumann after every delegate meeting. The Officer Board meets once a week.

The

ARD COMHAIRLE : The Ard Comhairle or National Executive is the governing body of Sinn Fein. It consists of 12 members, elected by delegates from every Cumann in the country at the Annual Ard Fheis. There are also delegates on the Ard Comhairle from each region and Comhairle Ceannair.

ARD FHEIS : The Ard Fheis is main policy making body of Sinn Fein. Resolutions from the Cumainn go forward to it on all aspects of our policies and on structure and rules. All resolutions passed become the policy of Sinn Fein for the next 12 months.

Sinn Fein therefore is a completely democratic organisation at all levels ensuring the maximum participation of all members in policy formulation and organisation.

ACTIVITIES

1. Propaganda: One of the most essential activities of a Sinn Fein Cumann is Propaganda, the dissemination of our Republican principles and policies among the people. If we want the support of the mass of the Irish people in the struggle for the re-conquest of Ireland we must make our policies and objectives clear to them. One of the best ways of doing this is through the sale of our papers, the United Irishman, the monthly journal of the Republican Movement, and the Irish People, the new weekly, urban paper. Members are required to sell the United Irishman at least once a week in pubs, at Churches, Shopping centres and any other outlets available.

2. Citizens Advice Bureau: Many Cumainn operate a Citizens Advice Bureau, and there is also a central CAB in Gardiner Place.

2. Many Cumann operate a Citizens Advice Bureau, and there is also a Central CAB in Head Office. The function of the CAB is to establish a centre where people can come and have their problems dealt with. These problems range from bad housing conditions, Tenants in trouble with landlords or the Corporation, to people ~~xxxxxxx~~ in trouble with the law who have no idea of how to get legal advice. The CAB is also an information center where the people can find out their rights under the Social Welfare Acts etc. A good Cumann can start successful agitations from CAB cases. The CAB also identifies Sinn Fein in the public mind as an organisation working for the people and defending their rights and interests. Every member should help in the work of their CAB, or if their Cumann doesn't have one they should help out in the Central one, especially any member with specialist knowledge in law or Social Services, such as students or social workers.
3. In accord with Sinn Fein's policies of becoming involved in the day to day struggles of the ordinary people, it is vitally important that a Cumann should have a high level of involvement in local organisations. This can only occur if the members of the Cumann are members of the organisations of the people in their local area. The ~~xxx~~ peoples' organisations are Tenants and Residents Associations, also local youth clubs, cultural and sports organisations like the GAA and the Gaelic League, and economic organisations like Credit Unions. The excesses of private enterprise society forces working people to come together to defend their common interests. This is why Trade Unions and Tenants organisations are formed. As such these organisations have a vital role to play in the revolutionary struggle. First of all Republicans in these organisations must identify the main problems affecting or worrying the people. This can only be done by attending the meetings and taking part in the activities of Tenants and Trade Unionists. Having identified the problems, we must discover the best means to fight for the peoples' rights. Our task then is to persuade the Tenants, for example, to adopt our ~~xxxx~~ strategy on the Rents Strike. If our tactics are correct, Republicans will become identified as leaders of the peoples struggles. This policy not only gives the people a radical leadership, but it also involves the mass of the people in the struggle for the re-conquest of Ireland ~~for~~ ^{by} her people.
4. Each Cumann is obliged under the Constitution of Sinn Fein to adapt the policies of the organisation, where possible to specific local conditions. Agitations could be started on ground rents, campaigns for more community facilities, more housing, employment etc. All instances of political patronage and corruptic, the disregard shown for the peoples' rights by speculators and developers should be exploited to the full and exposed by a Sinn Fein Cumann. The Irish language and culture should also be encouraged by Cumann. If halls are available locally a Cumann can run Ceilithe and ballad sessions. This generates an awareness among the people of their own culture and traditions, as well building up a Cumann's finances.
5. Since the ban on entry to Parliament has been removed, Sinn Fein will contest all local and general elections as far as our resources allow and candidates will take their seats where elected. The contesting of elections is likely to become an increasingly important part of Sinn Fein's activities. Participation in Parliament is merely an extension of the Social, Economic and Cultural aspects of the struggle and brings the Peoples' fight into the heart of the enemy camp.
6. Sinn Fein relies for financial support primarily from its own members and supporters. A Cumann has to contribute something every month for the maintenance of the Comhairle Ceanntair, and also has to pay an annual affiliation fee to the Ard Comhairle. In order to finance its own activities as well, a Cumann should have regular fund raising events. All members are required to take part in these, whether they be collections, socials, raffles etc. The major collections during the year are the National Collection and the Easter Lily collection at Easter.

DUTIES OF A MEMBER

1. Every new member is on probation for a period of three months. If at the end of that period he/she is found to be an unsuitable member or if you have not been an active member, you may be expelled from the organisation. New members must be in a Cumann for two months before they have a right to vote, and only those who have been in Sinn Fein for at least 12 months may be elected as officers, except in the case of new Cumann being formed.
2. Almost every Cumann meets once a week. Members should attend every Cumann meeting if possible. If a Cumann is to operate properly and efficiently it must have the maximum participation of all members, and if there is not a good attendance at Cumann meetings, very little activity can be planned or organised. Any member who attends less than 12 Cumann meetings a year, ceases to become a member of Sinn Fein. If you cannot attend a meeting, you should contact your Cumann Secretary, find out what activities have been organised and say when you are available for them.
3. At each Cumann meeting, a subscription is taken up from each member. This is usually a fixed amount, but students and unemployed members can subscribe only what they can afford. There is also a levy of 10p. per member per month which goes to the Comhairle Ceannair. All new members must become registered members of Sinn Fein immediately. If you are not given a registration form to fill out, ask the Secretary to get one. You then get a membership card, which costs 50p. Members must be registered once a year. .
4. A member has a duty to become involved in as many areas of Cumann activity as possible, both internal and external. External activity consists of Paper sales, Citizens Advice Bureau work, local agitations, activities organised by the Comhairle Ceannair and Ard Comhairle etc. Internal activity : this consists of the Educational Programme, discussions and the internal business of the Cumann. Members should contribute and take part in the Cumann's discussions. An organisation is only as good as its members are, so the more discussion, constructive ideas and proposals from the ordinary members, the better revolutionary organisation we will have.
5. A resolution was passed at the 1972 Ard Fheis, making it compulsory for all members of Sinn Fein (who are eligible to do so) to join a Trade Union. The Trade Union Movement is the largest and most powerful working class organisation in the country, so it absolutely vital that Republicans join their Trade Unions - and not simply join them, but be active in promoting the rights and interests of Irish workers.
6. A member of Sinn Fein cannot belong to any other political party. Your first and only political allegiance must be to Sinn Fein. There is no room for divided loyalties or ambiguities. If we want to lead the Irish people in a Socialist Revolution, we must have a single-minded party of dedicated revolutionaries, totally convinced of our aims, policies, tactics and strategy.
No member of Sinn Fein can be also a member of the Free State armed forces or police.
Neither is there any room in this Movement for passengers. We only want people who are prepared to become active Republic Socialists, people who are determined to fight and eventually overthrow the established order and Imperialist domination of our country, to the best of their talents and abilities.