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## Workers' Party : Letter re. Ard Comhairle/CEC Meeting

Workers Party of Ireland

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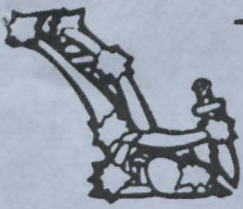
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# THE WORKERS' PARTY

## PAIRTI NA nOIBRI

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4 February 1991

**ARD COMHAIRLE/CEC MEETING  
WYNN'S HOTEL, SUNDAY 10TH FEBRUARY, 10.30am**

Dear Comrades

Please find enclosed the report of the Commission on the party programme and organisation. Also enclosed is a copy of the basic discussion document which was circulated last November and formed the basis of the Commission's work.

The report will be discussed on Sunday the 10th. The C.E.C. will amend or approve this report for circulation to branches in preparation for the Ard Fheis.

The importance of your attendance at this meeting and participation in the decisions cannot be overstressed.

Fraternally

Pr De Rossa  
Chairperson CEC

## REPORT OF COMMISSION TO CEC MEETING OF 10 FEB 1991

- 1 The Commission has met on seven occasions since its establishment at the end of November 1990.

It has discussed in depth a number of papers drafted by its own members, as well as submissions from branches and individuals.

2. Regional meetings were held in the following areas:

Belfast  
Dublin  
Cork  
Galway  
Dundalk  
Limerick  
Waterford

The reports from these meetings were also discussed by the Commission.

3. The work of the Commission falls into two major divisions

- (a) Broad political concepts underpinning the Party.
- (b) Organisation and Constitution.

The Commission has had considerable discussion on (a) and this forms the main body of our report to the CEC.

Shortage of time meant that we have only preliminary discussions on organisation and constitution. The thrust of our discussion to date is summarised in the attached document "Party Organisation and Constitution".

- 4 As requested by the last CEC meeting we have asked members for their views on holding a separate delegate conference on organisation and constitution. There appears to be no objection to this, provided a definite date is set for it.
5. From the regional meeting it is clear that our members see a continuing role for the Workers' Party as a distinctive democratic socialist Party. There is certainly no push for the Party to adopt a social democratic position. There is in all regions a wish to see the Party continue and strengthen its extra-parliamentary campaigning activity. The need to broaden the appeal of the Party was regularly stressed, but at the same time it was reiterated that class was still fundamental to the way our society is organised.
6. It was clear from the reports of the regional meetings that the Belfast meeting was markedly different in thrust and tone from the other regional meetings. The Commission was concerned about this and feels that the CEC should discuss this.

Triona Dooney  
Convener

## PARTY ORGANISATION AND CONSTITUTION

- 1 Part of the Commission's brief was to look at Party organisation and the constitution and identify what changes might be necessary there in order to pursue effectively the political objectives set out in the Party Programme.
2. Time constraints have not allowed us to have a full discussions on these as yet, but there have been preliminary discussions and the feedback from the regional meetings have also been available to the Commission.
3. We are not yet in a position to present a final draft to the CEC but it is possible to outline in general terms what the thrust of the Commissions thinking is:
  - (a) The way in which the Party organises will be determined by the political objectives and strategies which it decided upon. Organisation cannot be divorced from the politics of the Party. Our organisational form must optimise the resources - personnel and material - of the Party in pursuit of our political objectives.
  - (b) Democracy is the centre-piece of our politics. It must be central also to our organisation. Decisions must be made democratically and there must be collective responsibility for implementing those decisions. The concept of party democracy is expanded on in Appendix A (attached).
  - (c) The overwhelming view of the Commission, and of most of the regional meetings, is that it is neither necessary nor helpful to specify the term 'democratic centralism' in our documents on organisation and constitution. There is little support evident to us for the dropping of the concept of demoncratic centralism, but the approach adopted at the last Ard Fheis, where a description of democratic centralism was substituted for the term, seems to have broad acceptance, at least in the Republic.
  - (d) There is widespread support for making membership of the party more open and simplifying the induction process. This is seen as essential if the stated aim of becoming a mass party is to be realised. There is little support however, for the kind of 'paper membership' which characterises other parties.
  - (e) The revitalisation of the campaigning function of the party is generally regarded as of central importance to avoid drifting by default into being a purely electoral party. This is viewed as particularly important in a situation where much political activity takes place though single-issue groups and other community based organisations rather than through the political party system. Special committees could have a key role here.
  - (f) There is no evidence of any support for the development of a parliamentary party, though there are fears that this could happen by default if Party leadership bodies are not functioning effectively. The elected representatives of the Party must be fully integrated into the Party and we need better mechanisms for doing that than exist at present.
  - (g) There is widespread concern at the slow rate of progress in improving the representation of women at all levels of the Party. It is essential to consider possible strategies for overcoming this including the use of quota systems.

- (h) The Regional Council structure is not viewed as particularly valuable in many parts of the country. Co-ordinating committees should convene meetings where these make organisational sense - e.g. Wexford, Waterford and Kilkenny can meet together fairly easily, though they are in different Euro-constituencies.
- (i) The reporting function of regional delegates does not work well, leading to badly flawed communications within the Party. Ways of ensuring that each constituency is represented on the CEC should be explored.
- (j) Elections to the CEC and EPC should be by proportional representation.
- (k) Consideration should be given to allocating a half-day of the Ard Fheis to workshop sessions. These would be organised by Specialist Committees.
- (l) A continuous programme of membership development should be set in place.

## Appendix A

### PARTY DEMOCRACY

1. The Workers' Party is democratic in its own organisation. Decisions are made democratically and there is collective responsibility for implementing those decisions. The leadership of the Party is elected democratically and is accountable to the membership.
2. The Workers' Party is a voluntary organisation. People join it because they believe in what it stands for and want to contribute towards promoting that. Party structures give them a mechanism for democratic input to the formation of policy and strategy, as well as a structure for the implementation of decisions. Decisions have support where there is confidence that they are democratically arrived at. Similarly, members work effectively within the Party structures to the degree that they understand these are necessary for effective and unified action in promoting the objectives of the Party.
3. The key element in the Party discipline is therefore political understanding. Members must understand why the Party operates as it does if Party rules are to have credibility. This becomes increasingly important as the party grows. We need clear and simple Party rules, but these are not a substitute for developing the political consciousness of our members.
4. Democratic input to the Party is not just a right of membership - it is a responsibility as well. The Party needs the talents of all its members in developing policy and strategy to meet increasingly complex challenges. The full participation of party members in the decision making process is encouraged at every level of our organisation. Our internal structures will be developed to increase the involvement of all our members in political education and debate, in policy development, in campaigning, in the election of public representatives and the party leadership.
5. Each branch, constituency and region of the party must be a centre for campaigning activity and informed political debate. Our approach will be one of achieving the greatest possible level of membership participation, consistent with the development of an effective party organisation.
6. It is vital also that we protect the integrity of the decision making process. For us that means adhering to the decisions of the Party once they have been democratically arrived at and supporting those charged with implementing those decisions. Experience has taught us the value of political consistency and the importance of collective responsibility within the party organisation at all times.

Those elected as Party leaders or public representatives will be expected to maintain a regular dialogue with other members, supporters and the public to ensure that our organisation is responsive to the range of needs it must be able to meet. We will also work to achieve maximum co-ordination between our public representatives and the party organisation. Every effort will be made to avoid any form of elitism or bureaucracy within the party.

In a vibrant, dynamic organisation there will be of necessity differences of opinion on policies or tactics, and the Party will be the richer for that diversity.

Those differences must be resolved through party structures. Open and free debate will be encouraged and as much use as possible made of consensus decision making. However, where necessary, decision will be made by majority vote and these decisions must be adhered to by all our members.