
Materials

Workers' Party of Ireland

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EEC Elections

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EEC Elections

Wed June 21st at Head-Office a General Members Meeting will be held to discuss the EEC Elections. In view of the decision by the Ard Comhairle that we contest the EEC Elections 'in principle'; this meeting on June 21st should be looked upon as a convention; that is, if the assembled members decide that the Dublin Area should be contested in the forthcoming EEC Elections then a candidate(s) should be selected. Therefore, a full attendance is requested.

Elections to the European Parliament will probably take place in June 1979. The Local Government will probably be pushed back 1 year to 1980. However, we should not treat this as a certainty: we must work towards 1979 as the year when the Local Government will be also held.

However we must concern ourselves here, with the EEC Elections. The Party has decided in principle to contest the EEC Elections subject to the usual practical considerations eg. candidates, finance etc. It is essential if at all possible, that we contest this election especially in the Dublin area. There will be opportunities for publicising the policies of the Party. Organisationally, it will also provide us with an opportunity to test our electoral support and machine and gain recruits.

While over the next 3 to 4 years we will contest at least three elections ie. EEC, Local Gov. and Dail the particular policies we must push will differ to an extent from campaign to campaign. There is no conflict between these issues all that it means that we emphasise some of our policies more than others at specific times. While we have very definite national policies and we have gone a long distance towards developing a Local Gov. policy we seem to be less definite on many policies relating to specific EEC affairs. While we have developed a policy towards the EEC itself we have not gone much further in most areas..

Constituencies for EEC Elections

There will be 4 constituencies with a total of 15 seats:-Dublin city and County 4 Seats: Rest of Leinster 3 Seats: Munster 5 Seats and Connought/Ulster 3 Seats. The population of the Dublin constituency is just less than 1m. with approx 600,000 voters and 200,000 houses while in the 5 constituencies we contested in the General Election we covered approx 60,000 houses..

Finance

There will be substantial amounts of money required to pay for such a campaign. Normal election expenses include Manifestos; envelopes; posters; leaflets; transport; other publicity; meetings; deposit, etc (Deposit is £1,000) Over £6,000 would be needed and if this figure is more than most would have thought it is worth noting that it is less than the combined total for the Dublin area in the General Election.

As the time is short we must make our decision soon; also we must examine ways in which we can raise these amountd of money. While the Ard Comhairle may be able to contribute to the election fund this may be little as there will probably be more than one area contested. Therefore, most of this money will have to be raised within the Dublin Area.

Type and Control of Campaign.

Much will depend on the number of areas to be contested in the country...if more than one area the Dublin campaign will have to fit into the national campaign.

One way or other the Ard Comhairle will have a large part to play in the control and type of campaign. We must examine the practical aspects of any campaign, eg, whether it should be a centralised campaign or on an all Dublin Basis; or whether it should be handled in each local area with the co-ordination, literature, etc coming from the C.C. and Ard C.

The various aspects that need examination are finance, control, transport, how to get the maximum number of personnel to work, and how each of these should be utilised. On first examination a form of local campaign would appear to be most effective. As we have to cover more areas than in the General Election the work-teams may not be broken down on a strictly constituency basis. Further examination is required.

Issues

As mentioned previously there are specific issues ~~to be~~ which we have to push in EEC Elections. We need to examine each EEC issue of current and long term importance. Where we have policies we must ensure that they are clarified. If we have not got policies on issues then they must be developed. All issues must be examined even if only to decide that we do not wish to have a public opinion on it. Firstly, we need to examine the effects of EEC membership on this country to date. What are exports/imports in relation to other EEC countries! How much do we export/import from each EEC country? What types of goods are exported/imported? How has the origin/destination of our exports/imports changed since entry to the EEC? What are the developing trends? How has entry to the EEC affected agriculture in this country? Where is the investment coming from? Why? What types of industry are setting up here? how has EEC entry affected existing industry? How would we have developed outside the EEC in relation to agriculture and industry? What alternatives, if any, are there at present, to EEC membership? What development on the political front are taking place within the EEC and how are other workers and communists parties facing up to these? What are the progressive aspects and benefits of EEC membership? and more importantly, how can we maximise these? How can we influence and effect decisions of the EEC? These are some of the problems we need to examine in formulating our policies and educating our members and candidates. Some of the issues we need to formulate/clarify our policies on are as follows.

EEC Budget.

Approx. 70% of the EEC budget is spent on ~~price/support~~ agriculture with almost 90% of this going on price support. Approx. 4.5% is spent on social affairs with the regional fund getting only 6%. The method of funding the EEC budget has changed from specific national contributions to what is described as the EEC's 'own resources' system.

This means that the EEC budget will be funded by (a) Common customs duties (b) Agricultural Levies (c) The revenue from a rate of VAT not exceeding 1% applied on the basis of uniform rules to all retail expenditure subject to VAT. While the base rate will be harmonised it is not proposed to have similar VAT rates throughout the EEC. This may change in the future as there are proposals being discussed by the EEC commission on tax harmonisation. It is important that we formulate a very definite policy on the EEC budget.

Agriculture/Fisheries

This area is one where we have formulated policies: these require further clarification and explanation especially in relation to changes required in the CAP regulations concerning exports of processed foods and the amounts of the EEC budget to be allocated to price support etc.

Regional/Social fund.

How are these funds allocated? How can we ensure that we get a greater share of these funds and how can the overall funds be increased?.

Control of EEC

The direct elections to the EEC Parliament are an attempt to give a democratic face to the EEC. The real power will be held by the EEC commission. There are means of influencing the commission and parliament from inside and out. Groups such as the IFA and IFO have been active in this area. ICTU through ETUC can push their point of view. So also can the multinationals. It is important that we examine exactly what powers the EEC Parliament will have. On the long term there are plans for political union of all EEC members. We must develop an attitude to this as it would obviously involve further loss of sovereignty, and involvement in a military alliance (NATO)

Monetary Union

This is another long term proposal which has been discussed without success for years. The CAP with the Monetary Compensatory Amounts is an attempt to have a monetary ^{union} for agriculture. This needs discussion especially in relation to the periodic weakness of Sterling and the effects that any break with Sterling would have on our economy.

Competition Policy

This affects mergers, monopolies ~~etc~~ etc. It is important that we examine the regulations that restricts the activities of some State Companies.

We must also look at the way State Companies are operating in other EEC countries eg. the State Banks in France and Italy. This is important in view of our policy on Bank Nationalisation and expansion of the State Sector.

Transport Policy

There have been proposals recently covering transport eg. the length of time spent behind the wheel etc...this is important in view of the campaign organised against it by the Haulage Companies and the present bus-owners campaign.

International Relations

The EEC has entered Trade Relations with other countries from the Third World and Socialist camp. There are many restrictions attached to these agreements especially with the third world as many of the agreements stipulate that the processing must be done within the EEC. Agreements that treat the Third World as a source of raw material to feed the factories of Europe must be resisted. Ireland is in a similar unhappy position.

Miscellaneous

The EEC has or is planning policies in all sorts of areas including Energy, The Environment: Education etc. These have relevance in relation to the proposed nuclear power station and oil refinery.

Publicity

Having established our policies we must make sure that they get proper coverage. Our candidate(s) must also get coverage. It will be necessary to organise seminars/public meetings on the EEC and the affects on our policies, something that is necessary to educate our own members and the general public. Our papers the IP, UI, Idym and Students publications will have to make the election an issue while pushing our policies. The question of whether we should issue a policy document prior to the election should be examined.

Conclusions

The above is aimed merely at stimulating discussion among our members on the complexities of contesting an EEC election. It also shows the vast amount of work that has to be done in order to organise an effective and coherent campaign(s) especially as our Public Position will be under scrutiny from other parties on the Left. We must also realise that all constituencies have a Rural and Urban aspect to them.

However, it is hoped that the General Members meeting of June 21st will provide a starting point in tackling many of the problems outlined above. Two decisions must be taken at that meeting (1) whether we should contest and if the answer is yes, the (2) who should be the candidate?. Every cumainn should see to it that as many of their cumann members as possible attend this meeting.