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Letter from Ellen Hazelkorn : re sub-committee on the Labour Market for the Economic Affairs Comm. of the Workers Party

The Workers Party

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5 December 1990
32 Ashdale Road
Terenure, D6W
tel. 901305

Dear

I have been asked to convene a sub-committee on the Labour Market for the Economic Affairs Committee of the Workers' Party. Your name has been suggested to me as a potential member of this group.

The terms of reference for this sub-committee are broadly focused on examining the political and public policy implications of the transformation of Ireland's class structure with reference to, inter alia, the labour market, employment, new technology, the new international division of labour, emigration, social mobility, etc. Clearly the concept of class also needs to be re-examined in terms of domestic and global economic developments within capitalism. It seems to me that a major imperative for such a group would be to examine the above in terms of the likely impact of projected global changes in capitalism into the 1990s.

These terms are extremely broad and loosely phrased, and virtually include every conceivable topic. What the actual objectives of such a sub-committee could or should be are not so clearly defined and I would welcome any suggestions. Given the geographical spread of potential sub-committee members and my own time constraints, I propose to operate via correspondence and telephone. I will willingly circulate the result of any ideas received in response to this initial notice.

In the meantime, it seems to me that one realistic goal would be the holding of a one-day seminar (March 1991) on the theme "Reassessing Class in the 1990s". The role of such a conference would be to bring together, present and analyse the result of current research already being done by academics, trade unionists and researchers. (The likelihood of this sub-committee conducting its own original research would be both unrealistic, I think, and largely redundant. Instead, it could better serve a clearly-house function.) The recently published Understanding Contemporary Ireland presented the result of ESRI research but in a restricted and undigested form. It seems to me that the function of a one-day seminar would be to popularise and assess the social and political implications of much existent work. For a conference of this sort, I would like to see as broad an audience and list of participants as possible being invited. Possible topics could include:

1. changing structure of the labour force
2. new technology and new patterns of work
3. social mobility reassessed
4. Ireland and the international division of labour (which would include a 1990 Ard Fheis commitment to hold a conference on emigration)
5. the political relevance of "class"

Other suggested topics and speakers are welcome. Rosheen Callandar, as chairperson of the Economic Affairs committee, suggested the possibility of publishing a booklet on related issues. It seems to me that such a venture would be achievable on the strength of a seminar of the type suggested above, which could bring together the papers and contributions in a published format, possibly through the use of tape-recording facilities on the day.

I would welcome your comments on the above and apologise to those of you who were awaiting an earlier notice from me. If you feel you would be in a position to make other contributions to a sub-committee of this sort, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Ellen Hazelkorn