

1975-11

## Special Bulletin, General Meeting : 24th November, 1975

DIT Students' Union

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# SPECIAL BULLETIN

Mon 24th. Nov.

# GENERAL MEETING

TUES 25th NOV 11-1p.m. C28

KINEMA

The College Principal  
has given permission for  
everyone to attend the  
General Meeting.

At the General Meeting the following timetable will be followed  
in order to get through the business:-

A. Fight the Cuts

- |   |                    |
|---|--------------------|
| 1. Discussion on how to fight the cuts.                               | 11.00 - 11.20 a.m. |
| 2. Motion to U.S.I. Congress on Fighting the Cuts.                    | 11.20 - 11.35 a.m. |
| 3. Motion Adopting this Unions policy on Fighting the Cuts this year. | 11.35 - 11.50 a.m. |
| 4. Address by U.S.I. President  | 11.50 - 12.00 p.m. |

B. Prisoners

- |  |                    |
|--|--------------------|
| 1. Discussion on prisoners in H-Block      | 12.00 - 12.45 p.m. |
| 2. Motion on prisoners to U.S.I. Congress. | 12.45 - 1.00 p.m.  |

\* Elections for Delegates (4 Delegates and 2 Observers) to the Annual U.S.I. Congress (in January) will take place at the meeting. The attendance will be given a ballot paper entering the meeting and they will be collected at the end.

Motion on A2 : page 2 (over)

Motion on A3 : page 2 (over)

Motion on B2 : page 5.

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## MOTION ON A2

### U.S.I. CONGRESS Notes with Anger:

1. The further deterioration in education as regards capital expenditure on new buildings, equipment etc.
2. The increasing hardships being experienced by the students and staff as a result of lack of suitable accommodation, sufficient financial support for students and low salary levels of teachers and other workers in the Colleges.

### CONGRESS considers the situation:-

To be of crisis proportions calling for large scale opposition to successive governments' policies of cutting back in all social spending including education.

### CONGRESS Declares:

1. That the past methods of dealing with the governments by U.S.I. has not resulted in any significant change in policy towards education - at any level.
2. That U.S.I. has been mistaken in its idea that we, as students, are a pressure group in the society - since this would mean that we have the same position as the bankers, building societies, large ranchers, industrialists etc., who by "lobbying" and simply putting forward "good plans that make economic sense" will change the Governments Ideas.

In short we are not going to get a favourable decision from the government of the rich by asking them to let the poor into education or a better deal for those already studying or working in education.

3. That the line of USI to date has led to a serious situation of passivity and disillusionment amongst the 70,000 members of USI and policy on education financing.

### CONGRESS Therefore Resolves

That all future campaigns against the cuts and for expansion of education must be based on:-

- a. Relying in the first place on our membership to take the fight to the government on the streets and other militant actions.
- b. Establishing and building links with parents, teachers, college workers and the public for joint protests against the governments anti-people education policies.

## MOTION ON A3.

### This General Meeting notes:

The plan adopted by U.S.I. of having a "week of activities" against the cuts to include -

- a. On Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of this week College based protests by our students.
- b. Postering of city to gain public support on Thursday 27th November.
- c. A Demonstration on Friday 28th Nov. culminating in a token occupation of a government building.
- d. The idea of influencing the next election by registering students to vote in the area they live in while at College.

### This General Meeting Considers

1. This plan to be seriously defective since it does not reflect the urgency of the crisis in education and the necessity

of carrying out a consistent fight against the cuts.

2. That we should support the activities b and c above in order to express solidarity with the rest of the student population.

3. That we ourselves in this Union should support an occupation of a government or public building in order to take the fight up in a more serious fashion and to call on the rest of the students on Friday to do likewise thro' their Unions. This occupation will take place this afternoon Tuesday 25th November by volunteers from this General Meeting.

### This General Meeting Adopts

The posters presented to this meeting as this Unions posters for general postering on Thursday.

# If We Are to be Serious.....

Every year the situation in the "Education" system (at least that is what it is called) grows more serious. With an expanding population our farsighted governments(!) have provided shrinking funds for Colleges and schools, student financing and wages and salaries in the system.

When expressed as a proportion of the Gross National Product the amount of money spent on education has fallen steadily every year for the last eight years and is about 5.6% now. The likelihood of an Irish student getting a third level education is roughly half the E.E.C. average and so on. Nearer home the budget for this system, the Dublin V.E.C. Colleges, was cut by about a million pounds this year. Library books, necessary maintenance, not to mention expansion of the Colleges were axed by the Department of Education.

Dublin is an educational blackspot. Here secondary students have about one chance in 40 of getting to College, while for the rest of the State they have 1 chance in 14 - still an absurd situation for a so called civilized country. The situation is not in dispute, what to do about it is!

A serious situation demands a serious response from us. Token actions "highlighting" of the problems, hitting our heads against a stone wall by confining ourselves to "action" within the Colleges as if the College authorities were in the main responsible has left the student movement pessimistic and weary. No way could the hive of action (?) proposed by the U.S.I. leadership over the past years be

considered as serious let alone effective in winning the least demand from the government. It is clear that we need a plan which will force concessions from the government. If asking, lobbying, organizing with a "pressure group" mentality could bring change, we would have achieved it years ago. This is not the case. The government is the government of the southern and foreign ranchers, bankers, industrialists what they give to the ordinary people is fought for - taken in fact! This is how we must get organized.

The achilles heel of the government and the ruling politicians is that which causes them embarrassment, loss of money for their rich backers and ultimately loss of ability to rule. The extent we will have to go on this road in order to make them concede our demand to stop the cuts, depends on them. With this in mind we are urging that a discussion at College level and nationally should not be an empty one.

The plan of campaign we adopt has to take regard of the present ability of the students to carry the struggle through. One of the most straightforward and simple moves to strengthen our forces is for close co-operation to take place between students of a geographical area, Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway, Belfast etc.

A one day march on its own

is not sufficient to cause the government even mild discomfort. The demonstration is a useful rallying point and propaganda exercise but it has to be preceded and followed by more serious activity aimed at the government. The best plan on these lines would be for a series of occupations to take place in quick succession over a number of weeks. Sometimes one or two colleges co-operating together. Because of the lack of experience in this type of tactic they would be short-lived and given up after an agreed period - say a half-day, three hours or whatever.

This would then be followed by a large demonstration in the main centres on the same day with smaller demonstrations in isolated areas.

The second stage would be to recommence the occupations but without warning to initiate one which seemed like the rest but around which every College would be organized to make it stick, with mass rallies outside to prevent ejection by the police.

In support of this programme the various unions would adopt an industrial estate to leaflet the workers, organize parent/teacher/student committees, public meetings etc. Also the students would be organized to picket government functions, state occasions, foreign visits by heads of state council meetings etc.

The key to the plan is to use our forces in such a way as to build up the fighting strength of the student movement without exhausting it or being adventurist.

# WHY THE HYSTERIA?

## The H-Block Issue

Over the last two weeks or so a very confused discussion has taken place on the question of support for, or against the prisoners in British jails in Long Kesh and Armagh. At times this has given rise to high emotion bordering on hysteria. The latest development in this trend has seen a number of people coming up to attack the Union and the very basis of the students' organisation in this college. This type of attitude, which uses a specific issue (i.e. the prisoners issue) to undermine everything, is not going to help the students or apprentices in the least. Each issue is separate and has to be judged on its own merits.

### WHAT IS

#### THE PRINCIPLE?

As in every problem brought up for discussion amongst the students and apprentices there is only one approach we can adopt. We must decide everything from the aspect of what is right and wrong in the real world. Especially, we must be careful that the students and young people are clearly not on the side of those who oppose the legitimate aspirations of the Irish people or who oppose demands for social progress. For us it is a matter of principle for students to be on the right side of any conflict in society **NO MATTER HOW COMPLEX THE ISSUE!**

#### IRREFUTABLE FACTS

It is true that the Provisional IRA and the INLA have shot British soldiers, UDR and RUC reservists and as a by-product killed innocent by-standers and children. The British government and to a lesser extent the Irish government, largely supported by the news media, have tried to isolate this as the main issue. This view has gained some credence in the thinking of a lot of people and amongst students.

Whether we like it or not this entire country was colonized over a long period by Britain. It is indisputable that the colonization was carried out with all the coercion and suppression

which is the hallmark of colonialism everywhere in the world. This is the source of the basic injustice in the present-day situation in Ireland, and colonialism is just as unacceptable here as it is in say, Afghanistan or Vietnam.

Repeatedly the Irish people have through various means - armed, parliamentary and civil disobedience etc. - sought to secure genuine national independence. This aspiration has consistently been pursued through mass movements led by the likes of Tone, O'Connell, The Fenians, Parnell and Connolly. It was this aspiration which led the Irish people to overwhelmingly reject the Irish Parliamentary Party and vote in Sinn Fein in 1918. Subsequently the majority of the people backed up the armed struggle in the War of Independence with a campaign which set up an alternative administration - even to the level of a parliament. It was not an isolated armed struggle. This would seem to be the underlying problem with the present Provisional campaign. We will return to this below.

The fundamental injustice of foreign interference and annexation remains. Even when the struggle goes through various twists and turns, or ups and downs, which may necessitate a change in tactics it does not in any way mean that we have to give up.

This is a very important question for us. The way we fight is determined by the ability of the people to carry it through, by the level of political preparedness of the mass of the population and **NOT BY WHAT THE BRITISH SAY ABOUT HOW WE SHOULD FIGHT.** This is what the British authorities in the north try to create confusion around. Knowing this they (and Stormont before them) have done their best to create divisions between the people.

In particular, as in 1912, the late 1930's and in 1969 whenever the people, irrespective of religious or political differences, came together (e.g. Larkin's and Connolly's organisation of all the Belfast workers - even the RUC -; the organisation against unemployment in the 30's and the Civil Rights demands of the late 60's) the state authorities either actively or passively condoned vicious sectarian attacks and pogroms. Thus all of Connolly's and Larkin's good work in Belfast was swept away in the hysteria of the Unionist anti-Home Rule campaign in 1912. This has led people to the correct conclusion that any attempt to bring about a basic social change in the society cannot be realised because it is thoroughly bound up with the solution to the injustice of national oppression and division.

It is based on this conclusion that we assert that nobody can deny the absolute right of every Irish man and woman to oppose foreign domination and division of our country and people. To take any other stand is to go against all of history and to place us on the side of the per-

/Contd.....

petrators of oppression. This position would be intolerable for any right-minded person.

### **HUMANITARIANISM IS NOT THE ISSUE**

The question of support for the patriotic men and women in H-Blocks and Armagh is the particular issue under discussion at the present time. There is a body of opinion that says that the prisoners are deserving of support on humanitarian grounds. What is this humanitarian argument? This view argues that we should support the prisoners because conditions are so inhuman and more recently that some of the prisoners will die on hunger strike.

This argument, which tries to obtain support for the prisoners by making people feel guilty, is unsound. It does not distinguish between those imprisoned for opposing British rule in Ireland and those prisoners who have actively opposed the aspirations for unity of the majority of the Irish people by being the tools of colonial oppression. In general the UDA and UVF prisoners are fewer in number, serving lighter sentences and are only imprisoned in order to give a veneer of "British impartiality" and "respectability" to the situation. There are numerous instances where the authorities actually have protected the perpetrators of crimes against the people such as the paratroopers in Derry in 1972 and the killers of innocent by-standers such as Majella O'Hare and Michael who was shot while painting slogans on a wall.

### **CRIMINALS?**

The only 'crime' that the patriotic prisoners are 'guilty' of is of actively opposing British imperialism and its various Unionist manifestations. Not only have the Brit-

ish enacted special legislation for trying "political" offences but they have an internationally established and condemned system of extracting confessions under torture followed by trials in special courts. These are political courts for political 'offences'. Eighty percent of the convictions are solely on the basis of signed confessions. Surely, nobody faced with this overwhelming evidence can regard these people as common criminals!

### **THE PROVISIONALS & THE POLITICS OF TERRORISM**

While the majority of Irish people support the aspiration to national unity, and are opposed to British interference in Ireland, and equally large number of people are disillusioned with the politics and activities of the Provisional IRA. This disagreement with the politics of the provisionals is on the basis that they have shown themselves incapable of uniting the mass of people against British imperialism and for genuine social change in Ireland. They have damaged the ability of the people to take up the issue correctly by sectarianism, religious backwardness and isolated armed action in itself without mobilizing the whole of the population to support and maintain it.

As we pointed out above this type of armed action will not defeat the British in Ireland. In the War of Independence the opposite was the case. It was the betrayal of that movement and military struggle by a section of the then republican leadership who were prepared to allow themselves to be taken in by the British imperialists promises that led to partition.

The political differences we have with the Provisionals are issues about how

and at what times any method is used to best defeat British rule in Ireland. It is not a question of whether it is right to do so. It is a problem we have to resolve. But we cannot resolve it in any way by supporting British suppression in the north. Therefore we call on the students of Bolton St. to support the demands of the patriotic prisoners for political status.

### **MOTION TO CONGRESS**

We further propose the following Motion to go from this Union to USI Congress:-

#### CONGRESS SUPPORTS:

The aspiration of the Irish people for genuine national independence.

#### CONGRESS DECLARES:

Its absolute opposition to British interference in Ireland.

#### CONGRESS CONDEMNS:

The imprisonment of patriotic men and women who have stood up against British rule in Ireland and rejects any attempt to brand them as common criminals.

#### CONGRESS THEREFORE SUPPORTS:

The legitimate demands for political status by the patriotic prisoners in the H-Blocks and Armagh jail,

*Brendan Whelan  
Benion Stone  
Jimmy Graham*

# An Alternative View

ONCE again we see the battle lines being drawn and the trenches being dug in the Northern Ireland situation. People of both sides are burying themselves in unretreatable positions. I am referring of course to the H-Block issue. It is easy enough for us to pontificate on this issue this side of the border, far from the smell of blood and the high emotions and to lend our support to either side.

It is true over the last couple of years that a relatively stable pattern of violence has emerged, if you call violence stable. It seems that the British have won the apathy game against the Provisionals, life still goes on. However it was different in the late sixties and early seventies when the Provisionals trived in the era of civil rights, police brutality and internment. They had a large number of supporters then, on both sides of the border who did in varying degrees aid them in their bloody campaign.

However circumstances have changed since those days and so have their supporters. No longer have they (Provisionals) got the high level of mass support they once had among the working class Roman catholic population of Northern Ireland. This was due to many reasons but mainly when their true activities emerged. Such things as mafia style gangsterism, protection rackets, kangaroo courts worse than any Diplock or Special Criminal Court, drug smuggling, terrorizing young kids and old dears who dare to question their activities.

The disillusionment and apathy which greeted these developments tended to dis-unite their supporters against the British.

So this is where the H-Block and hunger strike comes in.

This is a very skillfully and carefully planned development.

Essentially it is designed to provoke the community into a sharp division leading to an escalation in sectarian violence on both sides and eventually will result in more deaths.

The men at the centre of the controversy are suffering what the European Court of Human Rights called as 'self inflicted abasment and humiliation to almost a sub-human level'. It would be naive to believe that political motive was dominant in inspiring them to commit their crimes of armed robbery and murder. They are members and taking orders from an organisation which is fascist, racist and sectarian in both deed and behaviour who arbitrarily kill and maim people who detest them. They have killed men women and children intentionally and unintentionally they seem to regard the tactics that they use should not be used by their opponents.

They ask for humane treatment from their jailers, treatment most of them certainly did not give to their victims and at the moment to their community by raising the level of tension again.

They have been convicted in courts without juries for the simple reason that they have killed and intimidated jury members previously. For the above reasons and

more I will not support the H-Block hunger strike.

However in finishing, the general approach to the H-Block protest down here in the south has been to say the least hypocritical. From the Irish press article condemning the British government, while choosing to ignore that its founder and its controlling family let 3 hunger strikers die in the Curragh in the 1940's.

The apparant reluctance of the Taoiseach and his party to voice their views he just called it 'tragic' so was the comment. The noted absence of the College branch of Fianna Fail from any of the meetings on this subject in this college, which all goes to show that some people are only in it for the power electoral advantage and some even for the money.

The prisoners have colleagues herr in southern prisons in identical situations of no political status, yet there is no controversy over their predicament.

It is obvious some people are being manipulated (in this college and elsewhere) in indirect ways by people who have much more darker motives, which they dare not make public as this may betray their tribal hatreds and passions.

If this union adopts any attitude on the H-Block issue I will seek to dis-associate myself from it and will have my monies returned because I still value my right to free political association and to me the union would no longer be a student defence organisation but a body with predominant political views, which I am not prepared to support.

Yours,

DAVID CONWAY

D42/M/4