

**Socialist  
Workers  
Movement  
Annual Conference 1993  
Conference Bulletin No. 1**  
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# Socialist Workers Movement Annual Conference 1993

Friday 26th February to Sunday 28th February  
Institute of Adult Education, 2 Mountjoy Sq. Dublin

## AGENDA

### Friday 26th February, 7.30pm

The International Crisis Speaker: *Chris Harman (SWP)*

### Saturday 27th February

- |             |                                              |
|-------------|----------------------------------------------|
| 10.00-11.45 | Reformism in the South                       |
| 12.15-1.15  | Our Sister Organisations                     |
| 1.15-2.15   | Lunch Break                                  |
| 2.15-4.00   | Socialists and the North                     |
| 4.00-5.00   | Socialists and the Working Class<br>Movement |
| 5.30-7.00   | The Return of the National Question          |

### Sunday 28th February

- |                                |                                      |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <sup>12.30</sup><br>11.00-1.00 | Building the SWM in 93               |
| <sup>12.30</sup><br>1.00-1.30  | <del>Selling Socialist Workers</del> |
| 1.30-2.30                      | Lunch Break                          |
| 2.30-3.00                      | Finance and Fundraising              |
| 3.00-3.30                      | <del>Students</del>                  |
| 3.30-4.30                      | Resolutions/Elections                |
| 4.30-4.40                      | Summing Up                           |

# **SWM Conference 93**

The SWM holds its Annual Conference every year at this time. Conference is the highest body of the SWM. It is at conference that policy is decided and the Political Committee is elected.

The Annual Conference is a meeting of all members of the SWM. Every member should make every possible effort to attend to hear and join in on the discussions and take your part in decision making.

Conference Bulletins like this are produced in the weeks leading up to Conference to prepare the discussion. Any member may have an article printed in the bulletin. Members are particularly encouraged to report their experiences of interest from their branch. Any member may submit a motion for discussion at conference and it will be circulated in a Conference Bulletin.

This bulletin contains the Political Committee's document on General Perspectives. This looks at the state of the world internationally and at home and proposes the priorities for the year ahead. All branches

should organise discussions on this theme in the next couple of weeks. Bulletin Number two will contain, among other things, material on the North and reports from the branches.

Send articles for bulletin, resolutions, etc to:

# General Perspectives

## The World Situation

The world capitalist system is in world-wide crisis. This is expressed in continuing economic turmoil and as a consequence great political instability as national ruling classes try to survive. This has further led to divisions within ruling classes which has weakened the extent to which their ideas hold sway over working class people.

## The Economic Crisis

The world system has been becoming more crisis prone over the last twenty years. For 25 years after the second world war, world capitalism experienced a period of sustained and dramatic growth, free from recessions. In the sixties nearly every country in the world was experiencing growth, in fact only a handful countries failed to grow in the sixties.

This economic growth meant a dramatic rise in life expectancies and reduction in infant mortality for most of the world's population. In the West it meant widespread access to important domestic items like fridges and washing machines. Free education was introduced in Ireland in this period.

During the seventies average growth of all countries had fallen substantially. The state capitalist countries of Eastern Europe in particular fell back. A dozen countries either failed to grow at all over the seventies or actually went backwards.

The recession of 1973/4 was short and sharp, heralding what the future held. 1973/4 was a turning point as crisis became a continual problem for the world system. In the USA, for example, the generation of heads of household after 1973 became the first in the country's history to have a lower standard of living than their fathers and mothers. Real take home wages in the US have today fallen to their lowest level since 1959.

But not every country was so badly hit. West Germany and Japan were barely affected by this recession.

1979/82 saw another recession, this time affecting more countries and more deeply. And even with the recovery of the mid-eighties, the number of countries falling back increased dramatically. In the eighties too, the stalinist economies stalled or went into reverse. These were the years in which the enormous volumes of world debt that now threaten any recovery were run up.

The recovery and boom of the eighties was not very thorough-going. Although there was a property boom and lots of stock exchange speculation, the underlying real productive economy of the advanced world did not move forward.

The recession that began in the Anglo-Saxon countries three years ago has now spread to involve all of Europe, including most recently the western part of Germany

and most ominously for the system, Japan, with a fall of 8 per cent in industrial output, a slashing of share values and fears for the whole banking system.

There are small signs of recovery in America where projected growth next year stands at 1 per cent and Britain, where the post Xmas sales were better than expected. But these small signs must be set alongside the increasing generalisation of the recession (especially in Japan and Germany). Unemployment is set to rise next year in Britain and Ireland. The international economic outlook is extremely sluggish.

At the same time, the collapse of the state capitalist command economies of the former Eastern Bloc has not been followed by the miracles which supporters of the market promised. The recessions which began in the period of perestroika have turned into wholesale slumps, with industrial output down by between 25 and 40 per cent.

There is no easy way out of the crisis for any national ruling class. During the mid to late 1980s capitals and states throughout the world tried to compensate for, and to some extent disguise, pressures on the rate of profit by massive borrowings. The result today debt overhangs which choke off possibilities of rapid recovery from crisis by simple reliance on market mechanisms.

Even if some recovery does occur in the most advanced countries, it is likely to be shallow and short-lived, given the pressures of past indebtedness.

In theory, there are two possible ways out of the crisis — If the rest of society was prepared to pay the price.

Firstly governments could let the crisis do its worst until enough bankruptcies had thinned out competition and sky-high unemployment brought down wages to Third World levels. Surviving firms might expect to be able to expand profitably in the aftermath. But the costs — leaving aside the political turbulence such destruction would involve — would be enormous. Firms are today so large that if a major bank, car company, electrical or computer firm went to the wall, the knock on effect in pulling down other firms could create an economic black hole. Ten years ago the arch free-marketeer, Ronald Reagan, intervened to bail out Chrysler motors then facing bankruptcy because of precisely these fears.

The other possible way out is for ruling classes to turn to massive state intervention to restore profitability to industries. This would involve massive inflation — which would devalue the debts of states and firms — but would badly hurt those sections of capital that have lent money. Only the largest states could hope to effectively use this approach as it would involve a massive disruption of international trade and increasing tension between states with the risk of real, shooting

trade wars. Inflation would encourage workers to fight over wages.

Governments find themselves unable to follow consistently either of these approaches. Instead they vacillate between talking of giving free rein to the market and then intervening the moment major enterprises threaten to go to the wall. And their failure to find a policy to deal consistently with the crisis attracts criticism from different sections of the ruling class, creating the conditions of general ideological crisis.

There is a general feeling that society has lost its way, that nobody has the answer added to which there is no capitalist explanation for the crisis. In 1973/4 they said the crisis was the result of the increase in oil prices; in 1981 they blamed the crisis government spending — "Keynesianism" and the 1980 were the years of monetarism and the deregulated "free market". Yet the crisis is back with a vengeance.

The paralysis that affects their system is most sharply evident in the governments of the former Eastern Bloc who cannot summon the courage to let the free market rip, with all the human misery and political instability that entails, but cannot either return to the command structures of the past. So Yeltsin manoeuvres while the economy collapses and the government becomes more and more isolated from both popular support and that of different sections of capital. In other parts of Eastern Europe, for example former Yugoslavia, the process of demoralisation has gone further leading to political disintegration and civil war.

But if the free marketeers have lost their self-assurance, those sections of capital that would like more state intervention are unable to re-assemble the discredited fragments of Keynesism into a viable economic programme as they once were. They half realise that in office they would be as inept as the apostles of the free market. Hence the way the Civic Union in Russia want to work with Yeltsin not against him; Clinton's cabinet appointments indicate that a Democratic Party economic policy will differ in no essentials from the middle of Bush (of whom it was said that he had a policy for every country in the world except America) and the refusal of Spring and his counterparts across Europe to put a coherent programme in opposition to the market.

And just as the ruling classes of the world can formulate no policy to restore the profit rate so they have no idea of how long economic recovery will be delayed. The comical sight of British finance minister Lamont predicting "green shoots" of recovery every three months for past eighteen months must be set alongside the programme for government worked out between Fianna Fail and Labour — predicated on growth assumptions that are no more than guesswork.

## Political Crisis

Economic crisis on such a scale cannot but cause political turmoil. It leads on one hand to deep divisions within the ruling class, with bitter infighting between proponents of rival policies and between rival interest groups.

On the other hand it also produces deep pools of bitterness in the rest of society. The scale of this bitterness in the US was shown in the LA riots; in western Germany a few months ago by the public sector strikes and in Greece by the wave of strikes last summer, etc. More recently massive strikes shook Australia and Italy.

Even without a focus for action, the bitterness exists: the massive anti-Bush vote in the USA (as well as large-scale abstention from the election); the huge swing against Fianna Fail to Labour here in Ireland; the large anti vote in the Danish and French Maastricht referenda last year, as well as the defeat on the substantive issue in the abortion referendum here; and the massive disillusionment with Yeltsin in Russia.

A ruling class which has lost its self confidence and has become divided among itself encourages disillusionment from below. And bitterness from below exacerbates the divisions and fears within the ruling class. These are the classic conditions for political instability.

In the Horn of Africa, former Yugoslavia and in the south and south-east of the former USSR these tensions have been most extreme and have led to the splintering of the state itself and bloody civil wars. And the major imperialist powers have seemed incapable of restoring a stable political structure to great swathes of the globe. Instead they are faced with wars and civil wars which threaten to spill over into much wider confrontations involving large armies and modern weaponry close to strategically vital regions of Europe and the Middle East.

The intervention in Somalia and former Yugoslavia demonstrate three typical features of imperialism today.

(1) The days are gone when stability rested on the East versus West bipolar world of the cold war. Today everything is more uncertain. And the big power military interventions were characterised by a lengthy period in which differences and uncertainties between and within allied imperialisms caused them to hesitate and vacillate before sending in the troops.

(2) What are essential strategic imperialist interventions are dressed up in humanitarian clothing. In Somalia the "war-lords preventing aid getting to the starving" was the pretext. In Iraq, saving Shias and Kurds was the excuse.

The US has to convince those ruling classes that look to it for support that it has the means and will to ensure an international arrangement which safeguards their interests. It was to ensure ready access to oil and to re-assure the corrupt oil sheikdoms that the US undertook the war against Iraq two years ago and



returned in January.

Somalia has been going back economically for fifteen years. When the Russian empire collapsed, and Russia ceased supporting Ethiopia, the US left the collapsing Barre regime in Somalia. A civil war and a famine later, the US wants to show the world that it can sort out the situation. The famine is almost over, and the amount of food distributed as a result of the US intervention is tiny, but the invasion has two possible goals from the point of view of US imperialism.

(a) To cobble together a client regime out of the contending war lords to ensure capitalist stability and safeguard US interest-- as they did in Panama;

(b) To pave the way and create expectations of a similar intervention in Bosnia and the rest of the former Yugoslavia and impose a nineteenth century imperialist solution.

An intervention in former Yugoslavia is justified by the "ethnic cleansing" and "war crimes" of the Serbian forces. Yet here too the process of establishing a stable order in the region will involve a deal with the Tudjmans and Milosevics or their equivalents -- one which will encounter considerable difficulty getting the agreement of the US, Britain, France, Greece, Germany and Bulgaria to name just six and not to speak of the humble Albanians, Macedonians, Croats and Muslims in whose name the intervention is being carried on.

(3) These interventions are prompted by the disintegration of the New World Order and the world crisis of capitalism. Somalia is starving because Sub-Saharan Africa is going backwards economically and socially because of the inability of the capitalist system to develop it and the depredations of the IMF. Yugoslavia fell apart because of the

crisis of Titoism, itself the result of the collapse of communism and the crisis of the world market.

The other side then has lost a lot of self-confidence. They argue among themselves. They have no explanation of the crisis and therefore their "cures" only amount to attacking working class people.

In general, our side is emerging from the long years of down-turn. Workers are cynical of their leaders and bitter at the contrast between the wealth of the few and relative impoverishment for the many. Yet we cannot speak of a generalised upturn in working class activity yet.

The years of defeats and retreats have left our side lacking in self confidence. That is why hundreds of thousands were prepared to take action in Britain, for example, over the pit closures, if they got the lead from the TUC. When that lead was not given, the anger was stalled. Similarly, our petitions over the Waterford Glass plant have been well received around the country. Yet the Glass workers did not feel confident enough to take action on their own behalf and eventually accepted the modified plan.

But it must be remembered that the lack of self confidence among workers is to some extent balanced by the paralysis of the ruling class. In general they too lack the confidence to launch a generalised assault on the working class. So the attacks are piece-meal: For example, McCreevey's dozen cuts on Social Welfare, chipping away at provision. The government in the South has so far lacked the confidence to launch a wholesale repudiation of the PESP. These conditions of relative social balance combined with instability, crisis and anger from below make for a very volatile situation in which big conflicts can break out at any time.

We are in for a protracted period of crisis and instability. And this is not just because capitalism is in deep trouble. There also exists no substantial political current that can give expression to the exasperation of masses of capitalism's victims.

## The Left

This era has been characterised as one of reformism without reforms. The parties of social democracy are forced -- due to their refusal to break from dependence on the capitalist state -- to accept the logic of capitalism and, in or out of government, can do little more than simply bicker over the tempo and pace of attacks on workers and the oppressed. However that is not the end of the matter. These parties have as their voting base masses of workers and make their pitch on a distorted notion of class. They represent a rejection of capitalism on the ground of capitalism. The crisis of capitalism encourages workers to break from the openly capitalist parties, and look to a solution that promises to make life better for workers without requiring them to fight for their own liberation. Labourism has, therefore, a very right-wing face in today's circumstances while still harnessing the elec-

toral support of large numbers of workers.

The collapse of communism served to discredit the Russian model. Stalinist leaders in the former Eastern Bloc have been quick to adapt themselves to either nationalism or free market ideas in order to hang on to power.

The western Communist Parties have been moving to the right for years. They used to proclaimed the Russian system as the way forward and spoke in a distorted way in class terms. In parts of the world, Stalinism influenced the more militant layer of workers. But where they had the size (France, Italy) used their base to seek a part of government. In such coalitions, they were indistinguishable from Social Democrats. After the collapse of communism, these parties have typically reconstituted themselves as "Parties of the Democratic Left"—straightforward reformist parties—as the majority of the Workers Party did here.

Stalinist ideas still exist though. The "theory of stages" propounded by Stalin: "The Left must first create an alliance with progressive liberals that limits itself to the democratisation of society, only then can socialist ideas be raised", still influences national liberation movements and the old left.

The decline of the big continental Communist Parties has had another effect though. Although they used their influence among militant workers to hold back struggle, they represented a sort of stabilising "ballast" in the working class movement and more widely, ensuring basic ideas of trade unionism, anti-racism and class maintained some influence. Today this ballast doesn't exist. Moods can swing more widely within the working class. So European society is more volatile. But while reactionary ideas can be sharp, the explosive potential of class movement is greater. While there can be a growth of the right, there are opportunities for revolutionaries.

The rise of the far-right in Europe is an expression of the failure of reformism to provide any hope. It is no accident that the greatest advances for fascism have been made in France which for the last decade has seen a Socialist presidency preside over austerity, cuts, unemployment, etc.

But the example of Germany demonstrates that the emergence of the small fascist core can provoke a large anti-fascist movement. While the growth of Nazi movements is worrying, the anti-fascist sentiment exists to counter them.

The countries of the former Eastern Bloc most dramatically crisis ridden. The failure of the left does not mean that oppression finds no expression. The initiative has passed for the time being in the CIS and the former eastern bloc to nationalisms of one sort or another. Nationalism can offer no way forward, but it can take a very painful experience to convince workers from oppressed or non oppressed nationalities that this is the case—particularly in the absence of any class based alternative.

But we should not fall into despair at these developments. In the first place the realities of class life are continually reasserting themselves even in the most depressing circumstances. Last year, for example, a general strike in Beirut of all places toppled the government! Whatever the temporary attractions of Yeltsin's Greater Russian chauvinism or Milosevic's and Tudjman's ethnic demagoguery, none have provided much in the way of food on the table, jobs or money for workers. Their stars may burn brightly, but always briefly. And the attractive power of class action always threatens to topple them. Let it be remembered that it was strikes and mass demonstrations of workers that did for their Stalinist predecessors just a couple of years ago.

It is also important to remember that despite the bankruptcy of the reformist socialists, social democratic consciousness will be a major ideology that revolutionaries will have to struggle with from now until the victory of workers power.

Although the lack of a substantial revolutionary socialist alternative in the working class around the world means there is unlikely to be a rapid breakthrough by our class, there will be plenty of opportunities in this protracted crisis for our ideas to gain influence around the world.

## The Irish domestic situation

The Irish economy is facing real problems. Last year GNP grew by 3.5%—higher than most other European countries. But this occurred at a time when unemployment stood at 300,000. Economists predict that it would take a growth rate of 5% plus to contain the rise in unemployment. This sort of growth rate has only ever been achieved in the best years for Irish capitalism. The prospects of sustaining such a rate of growth year on year in the outlook period are virtually nil. Indeed with the spreading of recession to Japan and Germany and the prospects of, at best, sluggish recovery in Britain and the USA, the outlook for Irish industries in the world market cannot be rosy.

The budget deficit and the pressure that the Punt is under following Britain's devaluation last year and the continued instability in the European Monetary System point to trouble ahead.

It has been noted before that emigration has provided a safety valve for Irish capitalism. But with the USA, Britain, Germany, Australia and Canada all in difficulties themselves, emigration has virtually stopped. The inability of Irish capitalism to provide anything like enough jobs will see unemployment further increased. But politically it will mean more bitterness as there is now no escape from conditions at home for most young working class people. Put simply: if they want a better life they will have to stay and fight for it. The new Coalition government will be forced, therefore, to continue to

cut social provision and bosses will continue to attack wages and conditions at work.

Fianna Fail, which has dominated politics in the Republic since the thirties, is in decline. Ireland is now an urban country, the rural roots of Fianna Fail are therefore withering. This and other social changes that have taken place over the last decade or so have seen its ability to appeal to traditional Catholic conservatism also diminish.

The last couple of years have seen developments that have accelerated this process. The reality of mass unemployment and low pay in the face of the Goodman scandal, the X-Case and the associated outcry and demonstrations, the Abortion Amendment vote. All are unmistakable signs of changing expectations. And this too is reflected in the swing to Labour. The Mary Robinson victory two years ago indicated the rise of an urban, social democratic consciousness. The swing to Labour in the recent election confirmed the trend. We argued this against the cynics in our own organisation who thought the Robinson vote was just a liberal, middle class, trendy, modernising vote. And events have proved us correct.

We argued two years ago for a vote for Mary Robinson and welcomed her election, not because she herself would make a difference—the duties of a president are largely ceremonial, or indeed that she was particularly left-wing, she had been on the right wing of Labour and promoted her campaign in as apolitical a way as possible. But because we identified Fianna Fail as the major party of the Irish bosses and understood that many workers would vote for Robinson as a break from Fianna Fail.

We argued similarly for a Labour vote at the last election for the same reasons. We said that Labour in power would be no better, but if the party that Larry Goodman bankrolled was on the run, if workers in large numbers were beginning to think of themselves as workers and not simply Irish men or women, this was an development of first importance and had the potential to put our class in a stronger position. The point is about consciousness. Emerging class hatred was directed at Fianna Fail, we shared that hatred and wanted to encourage it. The more workers broke from Fianna Fail the more they would be likely to fight for their own class interests, even if they continued to have illusions in Labour. And fighting to defend their class interests was the surest way they would overcome their illusions in reformism.

It is clear from our activities around the new Coalition government that many workers have illusions in Labour's capacity to make things better. We know that the financial difficulties of the state mean that Labour will not be able to deliver and that further attacks on workers are on the agenda. The point about these illusions is that they are not fantastically deep. Most workers realise that the new government will not be brilliant but they feel some sort of a government must be formed and Fianna Fail is not as bad as Fine

Gael and the PDs (attitudes shared by the old left and older trade union activists). The attitude of many workers is 'Let's wait and see'. We can expect the "honeymoon" to be quite short therefore as sections of workers come into conflict with the new government over PESP, wage restraint, etc.

The trade union bureaucracy has welcomed the "Programme for Partnership Government" and will be involved through the National Forum on Unemployment and other bodies of the "Social Partners" in selling the new government and its policies to the trade union membership. The fact that many of the old left in the trade union movement believe that Fianna Fail is not really the major bosses' party in Ireland makes it likely that in the short term it will be students, young unemployed and others disconnected from the trade union movement where anger at the new government will be most widespread. But in any event it cannot be long before significant opposition spreads more widely among sections of workers.

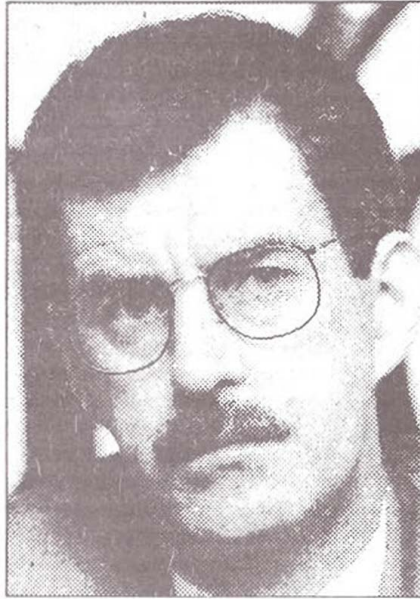
The situation is the moment is that there is an enormous vacuum on the left. This means that many organised left have abandoned the field of battle, which leaves us relatively exposed. At the same time we have the field relatively clear to ourselves.

The Labour Lefts have been entirely taken in by Coalitionism. Where ten years ago Labour Left could organise meetings of 100 in Dublin, they are now quiet. Joan Burton has taken a job in the Coalition government. Emmet Stagg resigned the Labour whip last year in protest at talk of coalition. Today he supports the FF/Lab coalition. In fact at the Special Delegate Conference only a handful of delegates opposed the deal. Michael D Higgins, who joined us in the campaign against the Gulf War two years ago refuses to come out against the latest action against Iraq. He has also swallowed the renewal of Section 31 censorship of television and radio.

Sinn Fein in the South have become almost invisible. Ten years ago in the depths of the downturn and in the aftermath of the H Block campaign, it could act as a pole of attraction to disaffected youth, ex-Lefties etc. The complete failure to make gains electorally in the South and failure of its nationalist preoccupation to connect with the concerns of Southern workers have left it an irrelevant group in the Republic today. At the demonstration outside the Labour Party Special Conference in January, the Provos chanted "Yes to Coalition, No to Extraterritorial". In the South Sinn Fein has disintegrated.

The Militant is in decline and is agonising about whether to re-enter the Labour Party. Their adaptation to Labourism involving an opportunist political line and exaggerated claims of their successes have left them with a declining organisation. Having devoted massive resources to the election campaign of Joe Higgins they saw their vote decline, leading to demoralisation.

Those who argued in the past that there



Dick Spring

could be no political revival before there was a resurgence of militant trade unionism were mistaken. The balance of class forces today is such that while there is bitterness and anger, many workers do not have the self confidence to fight back industrially. The years of defeat have produced a reluctance to enter battles which workers have, for the present, little confidence they can win. So in industrial disputes, rank and file workers still look to the leadership of the officials. This can change, but for the moment its more frequently the case. But the volatile mood has seen big outbreaks of anger over the past year expressed outside of the workplace and trade union movement. That is why our work of general propaganda and among students has been so important. And our ability to respond to the Gulf War, the X Case and the bigots has shown the correctness of limited agitation.

We can expect the struggle to re-emerge in many workplaces over the next period, but the syndicalist notion that everything must be measured by the trade union struggle must be rejected. So must any sectionalism. A socialist today must be able to respond the outbreaks of anger over a wide range of issues.

But if our class has its weaknesses, the other side also fear that an all out attack on workers might provoke huge resistance. This why Labour in government is of such use to them. Labour have offered to help do Fianna Fail's dirty work. But the difficulties of the economy and the low rate of profit make it likely that the ruling class will be forced into attacks that will provoke that resistance.

## The tasks ahead

We are facing a situation of great opportunities. The long, drawn out economic crisis, the political crisis of the "New World Order" and the ideological crisis of the ruling class mean that larger numbers of people are open to socialist ideas than for a very long time. We have the opportunity in the outlook period to begin to build a substantial revolutionary

socialist party in Ireland. The problem is to respond and here the attitude that members have is key. The major danger is that we will miss opportunities.

Already we have seen the effectiveness of the Open Door recruitment policy in practice. In the couple of months up to Marxism we recruited about 20 people. At Marxism we recruited another 25. Between Marxism and Xmas we recruited a further dozen or so. In Branches where comrades went out to recruit we built – Galway grew from 4 to 12 in the relevant period. Where old expectations were not overcome we did not do so well.

The growth we saw was because people were asked to join by members. We would make greater progress if every members was implementing the perspective and asking people to join quickly; following up with dropping off the paper and taking up the arguments, and encouraging contacts to join us in activities. Newer members are in general better at doing the business than longer-standing members.

This indicates that many members still need to adapt fully to the opportunities opened up by the general political situation outlined above. Branches must therefore ensure that those members who are in tune with possibilities are at the front of the branch. Longer standing members who don't adapt to the new situation are in danger of becoming irrelevant or at worst a block on the building of the SWM.

The other side to the Open Door recruitment policy is education and integration. We seize the opportunity by taking the willingness to fight and a desire to build a real socialist alternative as the starting point for someone becoming a member and not requiring that someone is completely clear on every corner of our politics before they join.

But new members are not likely to remain unless they acquire a rounded understanding of our politics as well as becoming involved in our activities. It cannot be assumed that his will happen on its own.

Therefore every new recruit should, within a week of joining, meet with a couple of members of the branch, including a relatively experienced member, to discuss what it is to be a member. This involves regular attendance at the branch meeting, selling the paper, involvement in branch activities, paying dues, etc. New members must be integrated into these branch routines very quickly and the importance of these routines explained at this meeting.

The new member should be given a copy of "Arguments for Revolutionary Socialism" and an arrangement made to discuss the pamphlet at a one to one meeting in a week or so's time. Here the process of uncovering any confusion or disagreement with any of ideas can begin and the process of discussion and argument to help the new member understand our full politics be undertaken.

Each branch must also organise educational for new members around such topics as Human Nature, The North, Reform

or Revolution. The Party, etc.

New members who join us are hungry for ideas and unless we provide them in an accessible way in Branch discussions and educationals we will be failing them. Some new comrades take time to become convinced of all our positions, for example on the North or Abortion or the UN. Similarly it may take discussion to convince each member of the importance of branch meetings, participating in paper sales and contact work. The job of more experienced members is to be continually talking to members taking up these and other arguments so that the new member rapidly becomes someone who is themselves contributing to the building of the party.

The following is a list of items of branch organisation to be implemented by all branches:

(1) The Branch Meeting must have a lively discussion led off by an upbeat speech of no more than 20 minutes. The speech must be delivered in an accessible style, free from jargon at geared to the contacts that are in the room. The first ten minutes of discussion is reserved for questions. If the questions are slow in coming the chair should prompt the meeting with comments like: "Our propaganda has opposed Labour going into Coalition: But what wouldn't Labour moderate the anti-worker policies of Fianna Fail", etc. Longer standing members must not make long "expert" contributions. They should use their experience to concisely answer questions or resolve confusion, in a way that drives the meeting forward. If they cannot make short points they should not contribute at all.

(2) Every branch meetings must organise a piece of activity in the coming week. The key to integrating new members in this period is activity. The branch committee should not come along with everything cut and dried – the branch should be a place where activity is discussed, decided upon and organised. Nothing fall out of the sky so comrades must come along to the branch with ideas for activity.

(3) Every member should be given responsibility – keeping track of Labour Party pamphlet sales; Socialist Review; Bookstall; subs; Personal Sales; etc. No member should have more than one responsibility. A branch where one member is contact organiser, SW organiser, secretary, bookstall organiser, etc will not win and keep new members. It will also destroy the heroic member.

(4) The Branch Committee should cover the following jobs: Branch Sec, Paper Organiser, Contact Organiser, Meetings Organiser. At least half the committee should be members who have joined recently. The committee should come with ideas for activities to the branch and be prepared to take initiatives at short notice.

(5) Street sales. Each branch should organise lively street sales. A street sale is not a couple of dismal members standing around

with copies of the paper. It consists of a display highlighting the theme of the week; a petition is frequently a good addition and it can help if a number of members have petitions on clip boards to ask passers by to sign; Slogans should be agreed beforehand and shouted; Time to Organise sheets will be handed to each seller by the sale organiser at the beginning of the sale, handed to each person buying a paper who is asked to fill it in then and there, and collected by the sale organiser along with the paper money at the end of the sale. Someone who is filling out a Time to Organise sheet should be talked to and told of upcoming meetings, etc and rapidly followed up through contact visiting.

(6) Contacting. An enthusiastic and well-organised member should be appointed contact organiser and should keep an up to date list of contacts. All Time to Organise addresses as well as those signing attendance sheets at meetings, etc should be kept alongside the names of the personal sales of members. These contacts should be visited every month with the paper, new pamphlets, lists of upcoming meetings and activities. They should be contacted to come along to activities too. Every member of the branch should be allocated to see a couple of people in this way. It should always be remembered that people who will not join yet (because they have been asked and have said no) will often take a couple of SWs for their friends if asked.

(7) Personal Sales. It follows from the nature of the period that numbers of people are interested at some level in what we have to say but may disagree with us on certain question or not be prepared to make the commitment to join just now, will come closer over the period ahead. Even knowing socially a member has influenced people in the near past. Therefore the process of selling the paper to a couple of friends or acquaintances is important in building our periphery. As society radicalises and big battles unfold, today's even distant personal sales are tomorrow's members. This is a job every member can and must do: To take at least three papers every month – one for themselves and a couple to sell to people they know. Every socialist must sooner or later "come out" in front of their friends and the process of selling a paper to someone regularly places every member in an organised relationship with others outside our ranks.

The feedback so far has been encouraging although results are still patchy. In Dublin in December 130+ papers were sold (including members' own) through personal sales. This shows two things: (a) that the target of at least 3 per member is realisable and (b) that not all members are implementing the scheme. What is needed is that every member participates in all branches. Every branch must appoint a Personal Sales organiser to collect personal sales money and ensure that every member is taking at least three papers a month.

(8) Activity: The SWM Branch must be the socialist focal point of each town. Activities

do not mean sitting in committee meetings with clapped out lefties in largely fictional campaigns. The key to building a branch is steering clear of the rest of the left. The radicalising people moving towards our politics are generally not campaign moralists, members of other groups, etc, but people new to politics. A branch that does not find activities from lobbies of health boards to petitioning for Waterford Glass workers, etc that involve non-members is failing to meet the challenge of the new period.

(9) Industrial Sales. We believe the working class is the key to change. And the coming year is pregnant with possibilities of struggle at workplaces. It is no longer possible to downplay workplace sales. Building up these sales is slow with disappointing results at first. But the prize is to establish a series of industrial militants around us and as the tempo of struggle rises, many of these will join our party.

This means persistence and perseverance today. Using the Time to Organise sheets and establishing regular paper drops to individuals are appropriate here too. Also you don't need to be convenor to sell a paper to a worker – students and unemployed comrades can sell just as well – you just need to be able to get up in the morning.

(10) Down with sectionalism: A student that confines his/her activities to the college is a student activist not a revolutionary socialist. Similarly with a trade unionist. The general nature of the crisis makes it more important than ever for every member to be equipped with an all-round understanding of socialism, and this involves BOTH reading and educationals AND all round activity integrated in branch life.

## Summation

It's time to change gear. The downturn of the eighties is gone. We cannot yet speak of an upturn in mass struggles, but a new mood of bitterness and anger exist and the emergence of large scale struggles in the not too distant future is on the agenda. The other side are in dead trouble: their economies are in crisis; they have no explanations that satisfy themselves, let alone masses of the exploited and oppressed; Imperialism is in crisis, seeking to re-assert it's control in the New World Order, but divided among themselves and fearful that their interventions will end in tears. We have got the monkey of stalinism of our backs. It's now our turn to say to the enthusiasts of the free-market "Go back to Russia!". Larger numbers of people are prepared to give our politics a hearing.

Our task ahead is to continue the impetus on recruitment while consolidating and integrating those recruits. If we grasp the opportunities we can have a party of 200+ revolutionaries in the next year or so – something that has never existed in Ireland. And grasping the opportunities is exactly what our work over the next year is about.

■ **The Political Committee**



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