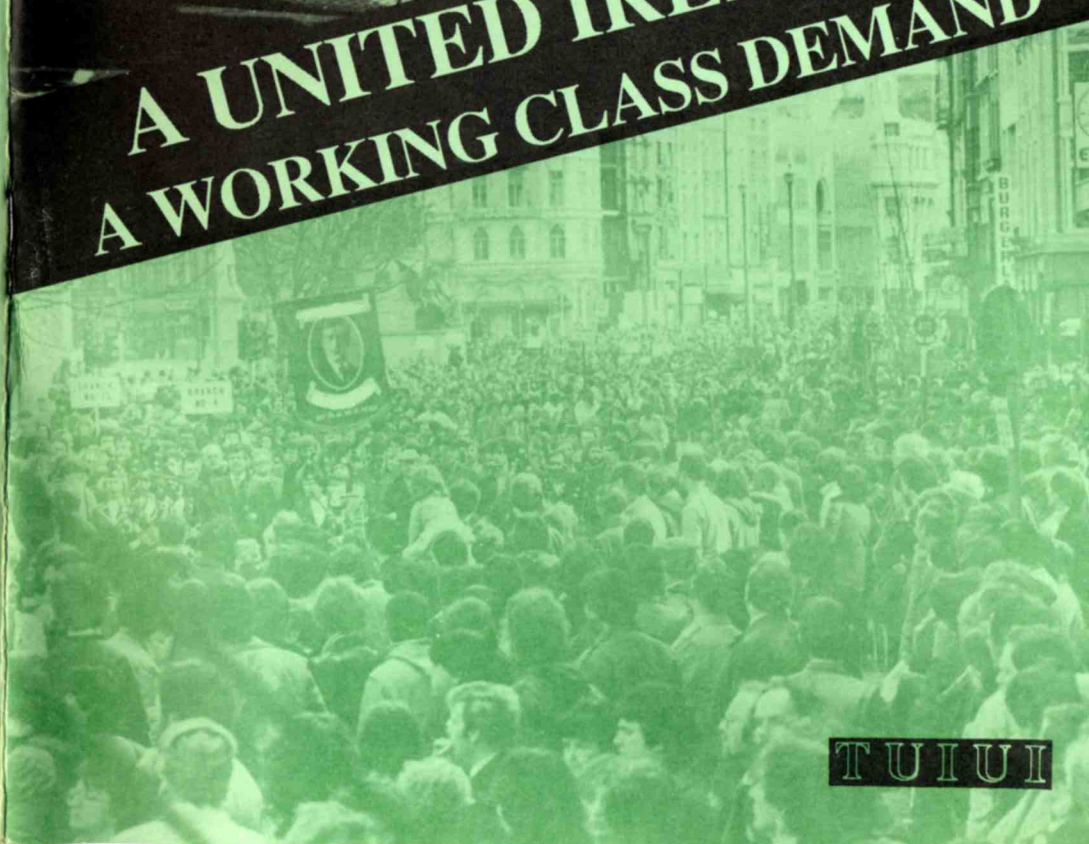


**A UNITED IRELAND
A WORKING CLASS DEMAND**



A United Ireland - A Working Class Demand

"As to the union between the two islands, believe us when we assert our union rests upon mutual independence. We shall love each other if we be left to ourselves. It is the union of mind which ought to bind these nations together".

Address from the Society of United Irishmen to the English Society of Friends of the People, 26 October 1791.

"We cannot conceive of a free Ireland with a subject working class; we cannot conceive of a subject Ireland with a free working class.

James Connolly

Published in October 1986 by Trade Unionists for Irish Unity and Independence

Trade Unionists for Irish Unity and Independence,
530 South Circular Road,
Dublin 8, Ireland

*Typesetting, Design, Layout & Printing by
Printrun/Laserworks Co-op,
6 Crow St. / 38 Clarendon St., Dublin 2.
Tel: (01) 771507*

INTRODUCTION

TRADE UNIONISTS FOR IRISH UNITY AND INDEPENDENCE (TUIUI) was founded in 1984 in Dublin, and is sponsored in an individual capacity by some 40 leading Irish trade unionists. It is not a political party, with policies on a wide range of issues. On the contrary, the sponsors of TUIUI are members of different political parties and organisations, or of none. They would probably all describe themselves as socialists, using the term in the broadest sense, who share a common view on the national question and partition, in particular.

What is this view? It is the classical one, advanced by James Connolly, the great Irish labour leader and theoretician. Connolly argued that the two central issues in Ireland, national independence and the emancipation of the working class were complementary, rather than antagonistic. Accordingly, achieving national independence in Ireland was a prerequisite to the ultimate goal of a Workers' Republic.

As active trade unionists, the sponsors of TUIUI are engaged on a daily basis in fighting for the rights of workers in the industrial arena. Alongside this, we are concerned to advance the cause of Irish labour in the longterm, and in this regard, we recognise the enormous damage inflicted on Ireland by partition, from a working class point of view. We therefore assert that the achievement of a united Ireland will contribute to the progress of Irish workers, north and south.

This pamphlet represents an attempt to develop these arguments. Its main thrust is towards a British audience, as the interest in Ireland within the British trade union and labour movement has increased in recent years and there is a need for them to hear an authentic Irish trade union voice. However, many of the issues raised in our pamphlet are pertinent to our own trade union and labour movement and indeed, to workers outside these islands. We therefore hope that our publication will stimulate and contribute to the growing debate concerning "Northern Ireland".

We would stress the need for such a debate. For too long, the partition of Ireland was the forbidden subject, and to some extent, this still remains so. We are told that raising the subject threatens "trade union unity". Obviously, there are problems, but these must be faced up to. At a time when the Irish and British Governments are making agreements involving the future relationship of the two islands, with the participation of the EEC and the United States, it is dangerous that

the representatives of the Irish working class should remain mute. We are therefore insisting on a debate. All that we ask is that it be conducted in the best fraternal traditions of our movement. We trust that our pamphlet has not infringed this tradition. It is issued in a constructive manner, hopefully, to elicit constructive responses.

1. HISTORICAL ASSESSMENT

An extract from the report of the New Ireland Forum¹ graphically illustrates the misery and suffering of the people of Northern Ireland since 1969:

"The most tragic loss is that of the deaths of over 2,300 men, women and children. These deaths in an area with a population of 1½ million are equivalent in proportionate terms to the killing of approximately 84,000 in Britain, 83,000 in France or 350,000 in the United States of America. In addition, over 24,000 have been injured or maimed. Thousands are suffering from psychological stress because of the fear and tension generated by murder, bombing, intimidation and the impact of security measures. During the past 15 years, there have been over 43,000 reported incidents of shootings, bombings and arson. In the North, the prison population has risen from 686 in 1967 to about 2,500 in 1983 and now represents the highest number of prisoners per head of population in Western Europe. The lives of ten of thousands have been deeply affected. The effect on society has been shattering. There is hardly a family that has not been touched to some degree by death, injury or intimidation".

To many people, the "*Irish Question*" is a confused mess of senseless violence, a religious feud between sections of the Irish people, with Britain doing her best to hold the line for decency and fair play. This image is reinforced daily through the media.

But can the crisis in Ireland be dismissed glibly as Irish people re-enacting the battles of the 17th century? Is Britain merely playing the role of honest broker between warring factions? The answer to these questions is obviously no.

(1) The New Ireland Forum was set up in 1983 by the Irish Government, with the involvement of the main political parties in the Republic and the Social Democratic and Labour Party in the North. It reported in May 1984.

But in order to understand the crisis and find a way forward, some knowledge of Irish history is necessary.

The crisis in Northern Ireland, involving deaths, violence and repression, is new. Its roots lie in the long struggle of the Irish people to achieve an independent all-Ireland state, in opposition to Britain's claim to rule any part of Ireland. Ever since the first Anglo-Norman invasion of Ireland in 1169, the Irish people have resisted foreign domination. It took England four centuries to complete the conquest and the period since has been marked by regular uprisings.

An important feature of the conquest was the plantation of Ulster, the most northerly province of Ireland and this consisted of forcing the native Irish from their land to be replaced by settlers from Britain. These settlers differed in religion from the native Irish, and **THUS RELIGION BECAME A BADGE OF DISTINCTION WHILE IN REALITY THE DIFFERENCES WERE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL.** These differences were submerged for long periods, only to re-emerge when it suited the ruling class to whip up sectarianism. This was done in the 1790s, when the Orange Order was created to counter the influence of the revolutionary "United Irishmen".²

At the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries, Britain was faced with a determined national independence movement in Ireland. The response of the British Conservative Party was to stir up religious hatred and promote opposition to independence by fomenting sectarian strife. Eventually, when the movement for independence could no longer be contained Britain decided on partition in 1921. Limited independence was conceded to 26 of 32 counties of Ireland, with Britain retaining the 6 counties in the north-east, which had an area with an industrial majority favourable to her own interests. Thus partition was born and the "settlement" was imposed on a war-weary country under threat of "immediate and terrible war", by British Prime Minister, Lloyd George. Ever since, the territory known as "Northern Ireland" is disputed. Under statutes enacted by the British Parliament, it is British. On the other hand, Article Two of the Constitution of the Irish Republic reads:

2. The Society of United Irishmen, a radical anti-imperialist organisation, was founded in 1791 under the leadership of Theobald Wolfe Tone. Tone's name is frequently invoked and it is important to remember what he stood for. He stated that his objective was "to break the connection with England, the never failing source of all our political evils". He then added, "I unite the whole people of Ireland, to abolish the memory of past dissensions and to substitute the common name of Irishman in place of the denomination of Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter - these were my means". Unity was not an end in itself. It had a political purpose.

"The national territory consists of the whole island of Ireland, its islands and the territorial seas".

From the British point of view, partition worked initially. Britain continued to exercise economic domination over both parts of Ireland, which remained within Britain's "sphere of influence". Neo-colonialism was in existence long before the term gained wide acceptance when used in the 1950s to describe the imperialist powers "going but staying" in their colonies. The nationalist minority in the north were kept in their place by institutionalised discrimination and repression, and a civil war was engineered in the south, which stultified political development in Ireland for generations. Connolly's³ grim warning had come through - "partition would result in a carnival of reaction north and south".

In addition, partition enabled Britain to pretend that the Irish question, which had bedevilled British politics for years, had been resolved. On the surface, Britain seemed no longer to have any direct involvement. Both lots of Irish had got what they wanted, Mother England had done the best she could and any subsequent conflict was entirely the fault of the implacable Irish. This strategy succeeded for a time and for almost fifty years the Irish question ceased to be a major issue in British politics.

2. THE FAILURE OF PARTITION

The weak link in the partition settlement was the nature of the devolved Northern Ireland "state". It included within its boundary, a large nationalist minority and the "state" could only exist by denying to that minority their political and civil rights. They were discriminated against in employment and housing; the elections in the areas where they were in a majority, such as Derry, were rigged by gerrymandering the electoral districts; the electoral franchise was restricted; repressive special powers were enacted and a sectarian armed police force and the paramilitary B-

3. James Connolly (1868-1916) founder of the Irish Socialist Republican Party (1896) involved in the foundation of the Irish Labour Party (1912) and for a time, General Secretary of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union; founder and commander of the Irish Citizen Army, the first worker's army in Europe: executed by the British Government in 1916, he remains the greatest leader and theoretician produced by the working class in Ireland.

Specials were created. Throughout the decades there was resentment and opposition, until in new circumstances, the civil rights movement of the late 1960s exposed what the OBSERVER newspaper called "John Bull's political slum".

The response of the Unionist administration in Belfast was traditional and predictable - let loose the B-Specials and organise pogroms - it had worked before in the 1920s and 1930s. But this time, the TV cameras were focused on events in Derry and Belfast. The brutal attacks by the Royal Ulster Constabulary on peaceful civil rights marches and the attacks on Catholic areas in Belfast by mobs, in many cases led by the RUC and B-Specials, horrified people around the world. The civil rights demands had exposed the contradictions within Northern Ireland, and with the Unionists demonstrating an unwillingness to make any real concessions, further conflict was inevitable. It must never be forgotten that the violence of recent years was initiated by the Unionists in response to the civil rights campaign, and violence begat violence.

For a time, the British Government remained inactive, hoping that the local administration at Stormont would resolve the crisis. In 1969 extra British troops were sent to assist them, but Stormont staggered from one crisis to another. Eventually internment without trial was introduced in August 1971; torture of prisoners became widespread and in January 1972, "Bloody Sunday" occurred - the murder of 13 peaceful civil rights demonstrators in Derry by the Paratroop Regiment. These events ushered in a new stage. In March 1972, the British Government dissolved the local administration in Belfast and instituted direct rule from Westminster, clearly demonstrating where the responsibility for Northern Ireland lay. Thus, the Irish question was back in British politics with a vengeance. The Frankenstein monster had returned to haunt its maker!

3. BRITAIN'S ROLE

Far from being a referee between warring Irish factions, Britain has at all times had its own interests to protect in Ireland. The view of any section of the Irish people are of interest to Britain only to the extent that they help or hinder the implementation of British policy.

Partition was mooted not by any section of Irish opinion, but by the British Government. No single political party or organisation in Ireland supported it. But the effectiveness of British propaganda over the years has ensured that the attitude

of the Unionists to partition at the time is now almost forgotten. As "unionists" they were opposed to any form of Home Rule for any part of Ireland. To them, the "union" was sacrosanct and any diminution would inevitably lead to the break-up of the British Empire. Hence the significance of The Solemn League and Covenant, signed by Unionists on 28th September 1912. It read :

"being convinced in our consciences that Home Rule would be disastrous to the material well-being of Ulster, as well as to the whole of Ireland,"

they then pledged themselves to :

"use all means which will be found necessary to defeat the present conspiracy to set up a Home Rule Parliament in Ireland".

The exercise was not to exclude Ulster from the control of a Dublin Parliament, but to retain all Ireland within the Union.

In a speech in the House of Lords in December 1921, the Unionist leader, Edward Carson, bitterly denounced the Treaty, which gave limited independence to the 26 counties. He declared;

"I did not know, as I know now, that I was a mere puppet in a political game. I was in earnest, I was not playing politics. What a fool I was. I was only a puppet and so was Ulster and so was Ireland, in a political game that was to get the Conservative Party into power".

Carson and the Unionists were blinded by their prejudices and were unable to perceive that Britain had decided on a new political arrangement, tailored to meet her requirements. However, they were correct in declaring that partition had no friends on one side of the Irish sea. It was solely a British creation.

4. PRESENT BRITISH POLICY

The stated policy of the British Government is that there shall be no change in the constitutional position of Northern Ireland without the consent of the majority of the people in Northern Ireland. HOWEVER, THIS IGNORES THE FACT THAT THE UNIONISTS ARE A MAJORITY IN AN ARTIFICIAL STATE. The line drawn across

the map of Ireland in 1920 had no historical basis. It does not conform to the boundary of the Irish province of Ulster, three of whose nine counties are in the Republic, the other six comprising Northern Ireland. Thus, to equate "Northern Ireland" with Ulster is false. Furthermore, two of the North's six counties have nationalist majorities and the remainder have substantial nationalist populations. There is no distinctive physical feature delineating a border. In fact, *it was a political division*, the idea being to carve out an area sufficient to contain a unionist majority and then to regard that majority as sacrosanct. Britain conferred on a minority the right to frustrate the aspirations of the majority of the Irish people and then conceded to that minority a veto on any political change in the constitutional arrangement. This was not done out of any regard for the welfare of that minority but as a device to ensure continuing British domination over ALL of Ireland.

While it is irrefutable that imperial interest was the reason for partition, it has been argued that this consideration no longer applies and that Britain would be only too happy to withdraw from Ireland, if only she were able. Why then, does Britain still maintain partition?

Is it out of concern for the wishes of the Unionists? One would be hard put to find many on the Shankhill Road who now believe this. They are aware of the many examples of those who gave "loyal service" to Britain, only to be jettisoned during the de-colonisation process - Ugandan Asians, Tamils, and more recently, the Hong Kong Chinese, to name but a few. Self-interest is the only consideration in these situations and the Unionists suspect that if it suited Britain, they would be cast aside, like a child discarding last year's toy. This is one of the reasons for the break-up of the Unionist monolith in recent years and the outburst of unionist violence. They feel the icy wind of insecurity, now blowing stronger as a consequence of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. One must therefore look for other reasons for Britain's maintenance of partition.

Colonial conquest does not simply involve territorial claims or occupying armies. It is bound up with the social, economic, cultural and political expressions of power. These issues are particularly relevant in the case of Ireland, because of our geographical proximity to Britain. The two islands have been brought closer with the advent of modern communications systems. Accordingly, political events in one island have repercussive effects in the other. Born out of this situation is the deep belief that a united and truly independent Ireland represents a threat to the hegemony of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. This view is strongly held by many within the Conservative Party, including Margaret Thatcher, the born-again jingo imperialist and self-proclaimed champion of the union.

But the world today is different than 1921, when partition was forced on the Irish people. Britain is a declining world power, in hock to the United States. Thatcher's Britain is as obsessed with war preparation as it is with smashing the trade unions. Yet the continuing crisis in Northern Ireland makes Anglo-Irish relations precarious and draws world attention to Britain's dirty back yard. While the policy makers at Westminster search for solutions, they are not over-concerned about the continuing war situation in Northern Ireland. Indeed, it has its uses. Valuable military expertise is being gained, new weapons and tactics for urban situations are being tested, society generally is under computerised surveillance - all in the name of defeating the "terrorist". If they can contain violence at an "acceptable level", the deplorable expression used by former British Home Secretary Reginald Maudling, they hope to buy time to defeat vigorous opponents of British rule, while seeking out new political forces in Ireland, with whom they can reach an accommodation.

Returning to the argument that Northern Ireland is a military laboratory, the British miners, during the course of their heroic strike, encountered at first-hand methods of "crowd control", perfected in Northern Ireland. The former Chief Constable of the RUC, Sir Kenneth Newman has displayed some of the lessons learnt in that post, in his present role as Chief Constable of the London Metropolitan Police. Many police forces in Britain now carry stocks of plastic bullets and it is only a question of time before they are used.

The Economic Aspect

Despite the greater part of Ireland having been independent for 65 years, British involvement in the economy did not diminish. In fact, with the advent of free trade and the expansion of multinational companies, it is probably greater than at any time in the past. Irish banks, credit companies, insurance and assurance firms are largely British dominated. Most of the property speculation in Ireland is British, and British supermarkets and department stores control a large slice of the market, despite the retention of Irish names. Protecting these financial interests is of concern to Britain and in this regard, partition serves a function - a divided Ireland is a weakened Ireland.

Obviously, in global terms, the economic significance of Ireland from a British point of view, should not be over-stated. Some might therefore argue that it is not worth the trouble. However, it must be borne in mind that any profit from Ireland goes to British capitalists, while the cost of the continuing crisis - the massive security bill - is borne by the British worker.

The Military Dimension

The fundamental reasons for the maintenance of partition today are military. Ireland

straddles the western approaches; and in a conventional war, or a nuclear war preceded by a conventional one, Ireland could be strategically important. This was clearly expressed by Lord Windlesham, an Irish peer, during the debate of Britain's original application for EEC membership. In the House of Lords in 1961, he said;

"One has only to look at the map to see that the situation of Ireland, to the extreme west of the whole organisation, gives it a special position. Cobh has probably the finest inland anchorage in the world...the old naval base at Haulbowline in Cobh harbour still exists and is in excellent order..."

Then there is the great airfield at Shannon, the furthest west of any airfield or airport in Europe. Its potential for expansion is enormous, unlimited and incomparably greater than anything which exists in Northern Ireland...Then there is the projected Shannon deep-sea port, which if developed will take tankers of 100,000 tons and more into the Shannon, which in times of war might be of enormous importance and value, and again would be situated to the extreme west of the whole NATO set-up"

But for Britain, there is a problem. The Republic of Ireland is a neutral country and is the only EEC country *not* in NATO. On the other hand, Britain (and NATO) have bases in Northern Ireland and these must be retained, or alternatives obtained. The relevance of Ireland's neutrality, in the context of partition, was highlighted in a revealing speech by Michael Mates, Conservative Member of Parliament, in Dublin in October 1984. Mr. Mates, who is chairman of the Inter-Party Committee of Westminster M.Ps. on Irish affairs, informed his Irish audience:-

"You're asking unionists if they are prepared to give up their allegiance to their sovereign and their association with the United Kingdom. That might be difficult, but if enough wanted it we might give way.

But if you say that you don't want anything to do with Western defence, you're actually asking them much more than to give up their allegiance to their sovereign. It has to do with two totally different attitudes to Western defence.

Neutrality was at the heart of your Irishness, but it was alien to Britain and to the Britishness of unionism. There you have a stumbling block twice the size of any other"

One can assume that forward-looking sections of the British ruling class do not fear a united Ireland as such, but they fear it outside their control. Partition was imposed by Britain to retain her influence within Ireland and she will only undo partition when she is satisfied that all Ireland is securely tied into the Western military alliance.

Already, pressure from Britain and the EEC is being exerted to undermine Irish neutrality. As a consequence of new technological defence systems, the west coast of Ireland has taken on a new significance as a base for early warning systems. It is possible that methods of communications already exist there, linked to RAF (NATO) radar systems. Irish neutrality and what bit of sovereignty remains is being whittled away through foreign policy co-ordination and agreed "security" positions.

While the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, the Irish Labour Party, Irish CND and all Left and democratic organisations are unequivocal in defending Irish neutrality, forces in the Southern establishment would be prepared to trade it off in return for some form of "Irish dimension" in the North. This is central to the Anglo-Irish Agreement of November 1985.

At the time of partition, the most reliable agents and "junior partners" for imperialism in Ireland were the Unionists landlords and capitalists in the North. In return for "holding the line" for imperialism in Ireland, they were given a relatively free hand to run the North as they saw fit. They have now outlived their usefulness, as the dominant sections of the capitalist class in the 26 counties have abandoned any notion of independence and are prepared to settle for the "junior partner" role, as shown by the 1965 Anglo-Irish Free Trade Agreement and the joining of the EEC simultaneously with Britain in 1973. In contrast, the Unionists have now become an embarrassment to Britain. However, on the time-honoured principle of divide and rule, the British Government will not place all its eggs in one basket. Thus, we see the Anglo-Irish Agreement being sold to Irish nationalists as a major step forward, in that it gives the South a say in the running of the North, while the Unionists are being told that it guarantees that there will never be a united Ireland.

In fact, one of the first consequences of the Anglo-Irish Agreement was to further involve and institutionalise the Dublin Government in maintaining British "Security". In this area, there is now co-responsibility for a situation deriving from Britain's imposition of partition, against the wishes of the majority of the Irish people.

One thing is clear about the Anglo-Irish Agreement, it no more provides a solution than did the Act of Union of 1800 or the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921. Any solution that does not vest control of Ireland in the people of Ireland cannot and will not succeed. A solution must be found which corresponds to the wishes of the MAJORITY of the Irish people. Such a solution must also enable the working class movement to exert its influence over the course of events, thereby protecting its future.

5. DEMOCRATIC SOLUTION

The most cursory examination of Irish history shows that British involvement in Ireland has at all times bolstered reaction in Britain itself. It is our contention that the struggle for democracy and socialism in both islands can be best served by British withdrawal from Ireland and an end to all interference by Britain in Irish affairs.

Partition was instituted by Britain to suit her interests, and Britain must be made take the initiative in dismantling it. This entails ending the Unionist "veto" and replacing it with a policy based on real majority rule. The "veto" is undemocratic as it allows the minority to dictate to the majority. It is also counterfeit, as there is no such thing as a unilateral right to union, and the British Government and people have every right to dissolve the union with Northern Ireland if they so wish.

It is hypocritical of the British Government and unionists to prattle about "democracy" and "majority-rule". In the last all-Ireland general elections in 1918, Republicans and Nationalists won 75% of the votes. In municipal elections in January 1920, out of 126 councils, 72 went to Republicans, 26 to Republican-Nationalist coalitions and 29 to Unionists. In elections in June 1920, **28 counties out of 32**, 182 rural districts out of 206 and 138 Boards of Guardians out of 154, returned Republican majorities. Even the May 1921 "partition" election (separate 6 county and 26 county elections) when aggregated, returned a total of 130 Republicans, 6 Nationalists and 44 Unionists. Despite these elections being held during a period of military repression, the majority of the Irish people clearly indicated where they stood on independence. But all these REAL, and not gerrymandered majorities, were ignored by Britain.

Removing the Veto

The "veto" must therefore be removed and replaced by a new British policy of ending the union and undoing partition. This would require a declaration from Britain of the intention to withdraw from Ireland and hand over sovereignty to the Irish people and their representatives. This would involve the widest possible consultation between the two Governments and political and social forces in Ireland, including the trade union movement.

TUIUI said in our founding statement - "a change in British policy is needed, and the demand must be made on Britain to declare its intention to disengage from

Ireland and hand over sovereignty to the Irish people, while ensuring that all legitimate safeguards are provided for the rights of the Unionists as a minority. They would naturally be involved in discussing and negotiating the constitutional, political and financial arrangements for a new all Ireland state". They would be welcome in such a state, but they cannot veto its existence.

The argument of "unity by consent" - in reality, upholding the Unionist veto - is a cop-out and is an excuse for doing nothing. Some Irish politicians use a variation on this argument, when they talk of "unity through reconciliation" and "winning of hearts". Why should the Unionists consent to giving up their privileged position? Why should the tail voluntarily stop wagging the dog? There will be reconciliation and consent but only when the majority of Northern Protestants shed the backward ideology of Unionism and realise that their future must be worked out on the island of Ireland. The Protestant ethos and culture can and will flourish under an Irish flag rather than under the Union Jack.

Equally fraudulent is the proposition contained in the Anglo-Irish Agreement that the British Government will accept and facilitate Irish unity if a majority in the North wish it. **THE LINE DRAWN ACROSS THE MAP OF IRELAND IN 1920 WAS DESIGNED PRECISELY TO PREVENT SUCH A MAJORITY EVER EMERGING.** The British Government was therefore safe in giving such an empty commitment. As TUIUI said at the time, it is comparable to a dealer in a card game committing himself to paying out his opponent's winnings, when he has marked the cards in advance. Nevertheless, we find politicians in Ireland, north and south, trying to convince the people that this gesture by Britain represents a major shift in policy. It is a cosmetic exercise and nothing else.

The Effects of Ending the Veto

We acknowledge that there are those who argue that a declaration of intent to withdraw by Britain would provoke a Unionist backlash - the "bloodbath" theory. They seem to be blind to the bloodbath that has existed in Northern Ireland in recent years, brought about in the first place by Unionist reaction to the civil rights movement. Unionist threats of further violence are blackmail, which sooner or later must be faced up to. Certainly the process of decolonisation or disengagement has not been smooth or easy elsewhere, but mainly because rival imperialist powers contrived it so. The forces of unionism are only powerful because they are backed by the British state machine. Left to themselves, they will fragment and lose their sense of purpose. There will be few willing to die for an identity which they themselves are increasingly becoming unsure of. Today, the once powerful unionist monolith is split and the value of being "British" is seriously questioned.

The adoption by Britain of a policy of working towards disengagement from Ireland would cut the ground from under the Unionists and release the progressive forces within the Northern community that must now stay mute. It would divide the Unionist camp between those who are willing to look for the best arrangement within a united Ireland and those rejecting that perspective.

Whether any stage will be peaceful or painful will depend on the level of struggle and the balance of forces involved. Of crucial importance is the labour movement, with its anti-sectarian and secular philosophy and its concern to emphasise working class unity and the supremacy of working class interests. Partition has damaged the labour movement and is the main reason for the contradiction of a relatively well-organised and militant trade union movement, with a weak political arm. A declaration of intent to withdraw, leading to the prospect of a united Ireland, would give the labour movement new hopes and aims. Free of the constraints of the unresolved national question, the dynamic of class politics would open the way for the re-emergence of the vitality of the labour movement.

Within the ranks of the labour movement, there are individuals who, while appreciating the injustice of partition and the inevitability of Irish unity, argue for a gradualistic approach and the underplaying of the demand for British withdrawal. They maintain that their concern is to preserve whatever unity exists among the workers in the north. Raising the partition issue, they assert, polarises the communities, so they limit their demands to immediate social and "bread and butter" issues. Obviously, some who hold these views are sincere. Others are merely demonstrating their opportunism. True socialists should voice the aspirations of the majority of the Irish people and not seek to impose their own preconceived ideas on how that majority should proceed.

Another form of objection to Irish unity is the argument that a united Ireland will embody the reactionary and conservative modes of society in the south - a new version of the belief that home rule equals Rome rule. While some politicians in the south and other elements might indeed desire such an arrangement, perhaps including some of the repressive measures prevalent in the north, Irish republicans, democrats and socialists would champion a new democratic progressive all-Ireland state. These forces, together with the trade unions and the Irish Labour Party, have been to the fore in demanding the extension of civil rights in the south on a wide range of issues, including divorce, family planning, women's rights and penal reform.

NOBODY WOULD CLAIM THAT THERE IS A SHORT OR EASY SOLUTION TO THE SO-CALLED "IRISH QUESTION". IT HAS BEEN AROUND FOR A LONG TIME AND HAS ACCUMULATED LAYERS OF MISTRUST AND CONFUSION. A CHANGE OF BRITISH POLICY WILL NOT BRING ABOUT AN OVERNIGHT MIRACLE.

NEVERTHELESS, SUCH A CHANGE MUST BE MADE. THE DEMAND OUTLINED ABOVE WOULD BE THE FIRST STEP IN UNFREEZING THE SITUATION AND BRINGING NEW FORCES INTO PLAY.

If the Anglo-Irish Agreement can achieve anything positive, so much the better. No one will object if the communities in the North are brought closer together, but we do not believe that the Agreement will accomplish this. Any agreement that tries to pretend that unionism and the desire of the majority of the Irish people for unity can be reconciled, is doomed to fail. Equally, the notion that the communities can be "taught to live together" by placing the issue that divides them on the "back burner", is politics of the cloud cookoo land variety.

Allied to the undisputed fact that the majority of the Irish people want a united country, is the evidence of opinion polls that the majority of the British people favour withdrawal from Ireland. It is therefore a question of compelling the present British Government to move in this direction, or committing a future one to such a course of action.

6. THE IRISH LABOUR MOVEMENT AND PARTITION

"Such a scheme, the betrayal of the national democracy of Ulster, would mean a carnival of reaction both north and south, would set back the wheels of progress, would destroy the oncoming unity of the Irish Labour Movement and paralyse all advanced movements while it endured.

To it Labour should give its bitterest opposition, against it Labour in Ulster should fight even to the death if necessary, as our fathers before us".

Connolly on Partition ("The Irish Worker" March 1914)

The Irish trade union and labour movement opposed partition when it was proposed in 1914, and this opposition continued. Under Connolly's leadership, the working class played a leading role in the 1916 Rising and the Labour Movement participated in the struggle for national independence from 1918 to 1921. In the subsequent years, individual trade unions and trade unionists were involved in

demands for a united Ireland, recognising that the Irish Trade Union Congress had been correct in 1914 in declaring "that partition will intensify the divisions at present existing and destroy all our hopes of uniting the workers of Ulster with those of Munster, Leinster and Connaught on the basis of their economic interest".

Connolly and James Larkin fashioned the trade union and socialist movement in Ireland. Both were socialist republicans. Connolly's main theoretical contribution was to explain the relationship between the national struggle and workers emancipation. They were complementary, he explained, but the working class must seek to establish its leadership over the whole process, as other classes would compromise. "Only the Irish working class remain as the incorruptible inheritors of the fight for freedom in Ireland", to use his own words.

Connolly's predicted effect of partition was correct. It distorted the economic structure of both parts of Ireland, making each excessively dependant on Britain. The result has been continuous unemployment and emigration, both north and south, even in worldwide boom periods. The labour movement, existing in this atmosphere, struggled to survive.

The North

Unionist ideology and political separation from the working class in the South, have had a negative effect on the working class movement in the North. The struggle for better social conditions, the campaign for democratic rights and an understanding of imperialism in Ireland have all been affected. Because of this, sections of the working class movement have failed to face the pro-imperialist, and therefore anti-working class, basis of the union with Britain and have confined themselves to programmes based purely on social and economic needs, without reference to the political context in which these struggles take place. This has not only weakened the effectiveness of action on such demands but it has led these sections to ignore the necessary struggle against repression and for democratic rights. Consequently, they either acquiesced with the unionist position that the Northern statelet is inviolable or to invent or support political myths, such as the "two nations" theory.⁵ Thus they ignored the basic anti-working class nature of the weapon of sectarianism in the hands of the Unionist parties and its objective benefit to imperialism. Indeed their failure to combat Unionist ideology and to come to a working class understanding of the role of imperialism, has led to a situation where, in practice, they have lent support to these class enemies.

4) Together with Ulster, the four provinces of Ireland.

5) The belief that the Catholic and Protestant communities constitute separate nations.

THE DIRECT RESULT OF THIS HAS BEEN TO HOLD BACK THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CLASS-CONSCIOUS WORKERS' MOVEMENT AS A MAJOR POLITICAL FORCE, AND CONSEQUENTLY TO ENDANGER THE HARD-WON UNITY OF THE ORGANISED TRADE UNION MOVEMENT.

There are many examples of this in practice. We mention just two. In the anti-Catholic pogroms at the time of the foundation of the Northern statelet, militant trade union shop stewards were hounded from their jobs in the Belfast shipyards along with Catholic workers. During the Outdoor Relief Campaign of the 1930s, Catholic and Protestant workers jointly built barricades against the RUC, B-Specials and the British Army, but were eventually divided on sectarian lines and defeated.

However, it would be wrong to suggest that the situation is all black. The Belfast Trades Council played a key role in the events which led to the formation of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association in 1967. It in turn had been encouraged by sections of the British Labour Movement and the Connolly Association in London. The Irish Congress of Trade Unions, an all-Ireland organisation, has taken a stand for civil rights. Leading trade unionists have struggled to keep sectarian strife out of the workplace and bravely confronted the loyalist lock-out in 1974, by leading a march to work. Trade union officials and activists put their lives and future in jeopardy by confronting thousands of workers, members of their own unions, who were caught up in the campaign of reaction.

To understand this, it must be acknowledged that the trade unions in Northern Ireland are not immune from the sectarianism of society. This sectarianism was promoted by Britain to maintain her control, to which was added patronage and privilege. This mainly took the form of conferring large tracts of land on supporters, who then became the local magistrates and defenders of the realm. However, in the area around Belfast, with the growth of industry, a different situation prevailed. Nevertheless, religion would still do the trick of dividing them. It served no other function and certainly not that of promoting "Christian Values". If Ireland was located elsewhere, different skin colours would have done just as well. **THUS UNIONISM AND ITS ORGANISATIONS BECAME SYNONYMOUS WITH PROTESTANT SUPREMACY.**

The north, in common with the rest of Ireland, has suffered from continuous unemployment and social deprivation. In this situation, it was easy to create divisions among workers through a policy of discrimination. Available jobs and houses were given to Protestants in preference to "disloyal" Catholics. Thus, the majority of skilled workers, usually the most stable section of any trade union movement, are Protestant. However, as in all such situations, both "sides" are damaged. One as direct victims of discrimination; the other as a party to it and

being paralysed through fear of losing their relatively privileged position. On economic and industrial issues, the record of the trade union movement in the North is commendable, but the political strength of the labour movement is negligible. This is the legacy of sectarianism and the acceptance of unionism.

The South

In the South, the Labour Movement, free of religious sectarianism, has been able to take a stand on partition. The Irish Congress of Trade Unions, an all-Ireland body, is precluded from doing so, to avoid alienating unionists in trade unions in the north, and so maintaining its organisational unity. Two of the biggest unions in Ireland have definite anti-partition policies, the Irish Transport and General Workers Union and the Federated Workers Union of Ireland. (Both unions draw on the tradition of Connolly and Larkin.) The ITGWU, with 150,000 members is the biggest union in the country. The FWUI with 51,000 members, is the third biggest, but the second within the Republic. Together they represent 46% of the total ICTU membership in the South.

The 1979 Annual Report of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union, in a section dealing with the North, stated:-

"The ITGWU adheres to the view of Connolly that national independence is an integral part of social emancipation. We believe that an indication by Britain of its intention to disengage from Ireland and encourage Irish unity is one of the first necessary steps in uniting the working class and realising the socialist vision of our land".

At the 1985 Annual Conference, the ITGWU re-asserted this position.

The Federated Workers Union of Ireland at their 1979 Annual Conference declared:-

"That the traditional policy of our Union and of its founder, James Larkin, is in favour of a united Ireland and opposition to partition".

They too went on to call for British disengagement from Ireland. Other unions have historically been opposed to partition, and together with the ITGWU and the FWUI, it can be stated that the vast majority within the trade union movement in the Republic stands for the unity of the country. *Surely they are entitled to request the British Labour Movement to listen to what they have to say?*

7. THE BRITISH LABOUR MOVEMENT AND IRELAND

"I have become more and more convinced, and the only question is to drive this conviction home to the English working class, that it can never do anything decisive here in England until it separates its policy with regard to Ireland most definitely from the policy of the ruling class. Not as a matter of sympathy with Ireland, but as a demand made in the interests of the English proletariat".

(Karl Marx, November 29th 1869)

Despite the long historical relationship between the two islands, or perhaps because of it, there has been more confusion in Britain concerning Ireland than any other colony. Well-intentioned and politically aware socialists in Britain frequently find it easier to understand situations thousands of miles away than the one on their doorstep. Where there is confusion, prejudice and ignorance, there is a disinclination to act. Consequently, support within the British Labour Movement for Ireland's long struggle for independence, has frequently been muted and half-hearted. This criticism is not stated here in a spirit of reproach, but because by recognising the failings of the past, they can be avoided in the future.

If we desire a solution to this long-standing dispute, *which upholds Ireland's independence and neutrality*, it must be brought about by the democratic forces of both islands. Hence the mobilisation of the full strength of the British trade union and labour movement is essential, as we enter what is clearly a crucial stage.

There have always been individuals and organisations in Britain who understood the imperialist nature of the conflict between Ireland and Britain and who unselfishly championed the Irish cause. The Society of United Irishmen in the 1790s had links with the radical London Corresponding Society. The Chartist Movement in Britain made repeal of the Act of Union, which bound Ireland to Britain, one of the demands of the People's Charter of 1842. The International Working Men's Association, founded by Karl Marx in 1864, stood for Ireland's national rights and the Parnellite Home Rule Campaign twenty years later received support in Britain.

It is worth recalling the attitude of British Labour when partition was being impos-

ed on Ireland in 1920. While initially confused and indecisive, the Parliamentary Party was moved to action and during the debate of the Partition Bill at Westminster proposed :

"That the British army of occupation be withdrawn;

That the question of Irish Government be relegated to an Irish constituent assembly elected on the basis of proportional representation by free and equal secret vote;

That the constitution drawn up by the assembly be accepted, provided it afforded protection to minorities, and prevents Ireland becoming a military or naval menace to Britain".

This was rejected by the British Government. There then followed, on 16th November 1920 in Dublin, a special conference of the Irish Labour Party and Trades Union Congress, attended by hundreds of delegates and with the participation of British Labour. This conference endorsed Labour's Westminster proposals and in the words of the REPORT OF LABOUR COMMISSION TO IRELAND,

"for the first time since 1914, the British and Irish Labour Movement were in true alignment on the great issue of Irish self-government".

Ireland has always been an issue of contention within the British Labour Movement, roughly corresponding to the "left" and "right" divide. Hence support for Ireland's demands has fluctuated in line with the ebb and flow of the ideological struggle within British Labour. It reached a high point in 1920, but just as partition removed Ireland from the Westminster stage, it also removed it from the agenda of Labour. There was a fall-off in sympathy, accentuated by Ireland's neutrality during the Second World War. The result was the enactment of the 1949 Ireland Act by the Labour Government. Nevertheless, it must be said that a vigorous group of "left" M.P.s, entitled "The Friends of Ireland" opposed the Ireland Act, some to the detriment of their careers. One of them, Geoffrey Bing, wrote a fine pamphlet, "John Bull's other Ireland", which was published by *Tribune*.

In the late 1950s, a new campaign of education was commenced within the British Labour Movement, initiated in the main by the Connolly Association. Concentrating on the many abuses of democracy in the six counties, trade unions were involved, together with such organisations as the Movement for Colonial Freedom and the National Council for Civil Liberties. Labour M.P.s were lobbied, and thus when the present crisis developed in the north in 1968, following the attempt to suppress the peaceful civil rights movement, some of the groundwork had been laid for building a solidarity campaign.

Such a campaign now exists and within the British trade union and labour movement there is more support than at any time since 1920. The British Labour Party has called for the ending of the Diplock Courts and "Supergrass" trials and the banning of plastic bullets and strip searching. On partition, the 1981 policy statement expressed support for a united Ireland but only with the consent of the majority in the North. Obviously, Labour does not yet accept that there already exists a majority in Ireland in favour of unity and that appeasing a minority is a denial of democracy.

A major problem in Britain is the role of the trade unions. Repeatedly at Labour Party conferences, a majority of unions use their bloc votes to defeat Irish motions. The main reason for this is that most of the members of these unions in Northern Ireland are unionist supporters and the easy option is to keep any discussion of Ireland off the agenda. This is the unionist veto at work in the trade union movement AND IT MUST BE TACKLED. Not only is the veto used to stifle discussion on Irish unity within the Irish trade union movement, it is used to the same effect in Britain.

THIS DENIES THE MAJORITY IN BRITAIN THE RIGHT TO ADOPT PROGRESSIVE POLICIES ON IRELAND AND THEY ARE INCREASINGLY RECOGNISING THIS. Within many trade unions, the debate has commenced and Irish unity support groups have been formed in some. These are important developments, which must be supported and encouraged.

8. A PROGRAMME FOR ACTION

First, and perhaps perversely, we would state what should not be done!

We are opposed to the proposal that the British Labour Party should organise in Northern Ireland. It is contradictory to state that the Party policy is to withdraw, while simultaneously organising these. In reality, this is unionism under the guise of labour. Furthermore, it is arrogant and foolish to assume that a party with headquarters in London could maintain an organisation in the North, overcoming the sectarian differences, when local attempts to build such a party have proved so difficult. The best contribution that socialists in Britain can make is to help create the conditions within which the Irish people can build their own socialist organisations.

In 1984, the Annual Conference of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions adopted a motion condemning the use of "Supergrasses" in Northern Ireland. It was tabled by the Northern Ireland section of the National Union of Public Employees. In 1985, the Belfast Trades Council submitted a motion to the Women's Conference of Congress, calling for an end to the degrading strip searching of women prisoners in Northern Ireland. This motion was carried and was then adopted at the full ICTU conference in July 1985. Unfortunately, the British TUC has not taken a stand on even these basic civil rights demands.

In the area of employment, the McBride Principles must be operated. Drafted by Sean McBride, the highly respected international jurist, they are based on the Sullivan Principles, governing investment in South Africa by American companies. The McBride Principles have been adopted by the New York City Council, the Massachusetts State Assembly and by the AFL/CIO (the USA equivalent of our ICTU). They consist of a set of "rules" for American companies investing in Northern Ireland and are intended to ensure a fair distribution of jobs to Catholics.

It is essential that the lack of civil rights and repression be tackled and demands must be made on the British Government. The main issues are:

- * constant harassment by the British army, UDR and RUC.
- * the use of plastic bullets.
- * degrading strip searching of women prisoners in Armagh gaol.
- * the one-sided administration of the judicial system.
- * the use of non-jury (Diplock) courts.
- * convictions on the sole evidence of paid informers (Supergrasses)
- * discrimination against the Catholic community, especially in employment.

Therefore

The British Government must be pressed to disengage from Ireland.

The British Labour Party must be committed to unconditional support for a united Ireland. It must drop the undemocratic "unity by consent" position.

This necessitates an increase in the educational campaign in the British trade union and Labour Movement.

Resolutions on the lines of TUIUI policy should be carried through to the highest policy making conference of the Labour and Trade Union movement.

Invitations should be extended to TUIUI for speakers.

Delegations from trade union and labour movement organisations should visit Ireland, north and south. TUIUI can assist such delegations.

There should be further support for the existing organisations, such as the Labour Committee on Ireland, the Connolly Association, the Campaign to End Interference in Irish Affairs and others who are trying to stimulate debate on the question.

More must be done to involve the international trade union and labour movement.

The defence of Ireland's neutrality must be a high priority and must be of concern to the British and international peace movements.

There is no doubt that Ireland will be united. What remains to be decided is when, and perhaps more importantly, how? Will there be some new alignment of forces in these islands, designed to ensure that when a united Ireland emerges it does not threaten the financial and military interests of capitalism, or will it be a new alignment we would desire? One in which Irish workers, north and south lead the movement to unite our country, with the support and encouragement of the British and International labour movements, thus forging new bonds of comradeship and solidarity and opening up new possibilities.

How the Labour and Trade Union Movements of our two countries respond to the present challenge will determine the answer.

THE McBRIDE PRINCIPLES

The McBride Principles call on all employers in Northern Ireland to:

- * Increase the representation of individuals from under-represented religious groups in the workforce including managerial, supervisory, administrative, clerical and technical jobs
- * Ensure adequate security for the protection of minority employees both at the workplace and while travelling to and from work.
- * Ban provocative religious or political emblems from the workplace.
- * Publicly announce all job openings and encourage special recruitment efforts to attract applicants from under-represented religious groups.
- * Abolish job reservations, apprenticeship restrictions and differential employment criteria, which discriminate on the basis of religion or ethnic origin.
- * Develop training programmes that will prepare substantial numbers of current minority employees for skilled jobs, including the expansion of existing programs and the creation of new programs to train, upgrade, and improve the skills of minority employees.
- * Establish procedures to assess, identify, and actively recruit minority employees with potential for further advancement.

TRADE UNIONISTS FOR IRISH UNITY AND INDEPENDENCE

INDIVIDUAL SPONSORS

Des Bonass	Head Office Staff, Amalgamated Transport and General Workers' Union
Michael Brennan	Area Secretary, Electrical, Electronic and Plumbing Trade Union
Bernard Browne	Branch Secretary, Federated Workers' Union of Ireland
Al Butler	Assistant General Secretary, Local Government and Public Services Union
Christine Carney	Assistant General Secretary, Local Government and Public Services Union
Hugh Cox	Branch Secretary, Irish Transport and General Workers' Union
Francis Devine	Tutor, Irish Transport and General Workers' Union
Eric Fleming	Branch Secretary, Irish Transport and General Workers' Union
Gerry Fleming	General Secretary, National Painters' and Decorators' Trade Union
Philip Flynn	General Secretary, Local Government and Public Services Union; Executive Committee, Irish Congress of Trade Unions
Eddie Glackin	Branch Secretary, Federated Workers' Union of Ireland
Noirin Greene	Executive Committee, Irish Transport and General Workers' Union
Michael Halpenny	Executive Committee, Irish Congress of Trade Unions Assistant Branch Secretary, Irish Transport and General Workers' Union
Ben Kearney	Branch Secretary, Amalgamated Transport and General Workers' Union; President, Dublin Council of Trade Unions
Peter Keating	Branch Secretary, Federated Workers' Union of Ireland

Kate Kirwan	Chairperson, No. 17 Branch, Federated Workers' Union of Ireland, Member Women's Committee, Irish Congress of Trade Unions
Sean Lyons	Clonmel District, Amalgamated Transport and General Workers' Union; President, Clonmel Trades and Labour Council
Kevin Mac Connell	Joint General Secretary, National Engineering and Electrical Trade Union
Finian Mac Grath	Secretary, Dublin North City Branch, Irish National Teachers' Organisation
Gerry Mac Intyre	Assistant Branch Secretary, Irish Transport and General Workers' Union
Cathal Mac Liam	Assistant Branch Secretary, Irish Transport and General Workers' Union
Peter Mac Loone	National Officer, Local Government and Public Services Union
Matt Merrigan	Former District Secretary, Amalgamated Transport and General Workers' Union; President, Irish Congress of Trade Unions
Alice Moore	Assistant General Secretary, Local Government and Public Services Union
Noel Murphy	Secretary, Cork Operative Butchers' Union
Sam Nolan	Organiser, Union of Construction and Allied Trades Technicians; Secretary, Dublin Council of Trade Unions
Daltun O Ceallaigh	Trade Union General Secretary
Jack O Connor	Branch Secretary, Federated Workers' Union of Ireland
Kevin O Driscoll	National Officer, Local Government and Public Services Union
Michael O Reilly	Branch Secretary (Dundalk), Amalgamated Transport and General Workers' Union
Joe O Toole	Executive Committee, Irish National Teachers' Organisation
Seamus de Paor	General Secretary, Irish Post Office Engineering Union; Executive Committee, Irish Congress of Trade Unions
Ken Quinn	Branch Committee, Federated Workers' Union of Ireland

Séamus Redmond	General Secretary, Marine Port, and General Workers' Union
Seán Redmond	General Secretary, Irish Municipal Employees' Trade Union
Thomas Redmond	Branch Committee, Federated Workers' Union of Ireland
Jerry Shanahan	Organizer, AUEW-TASS; Vice-president, Dublin Council of Trade Unions
Anne Speed	Branch Officer, Irish Transport and General Workers' Union

TUIUI STATEMENT ON THE ANGLO-IRISH AGREEMENT

TRADE UNIONISTS FOR IRISH UNITY AND INDEPENDENCE, which represents a significant body of opinion of the trade union movement, expresses opposition to the Agreement between the British and Irish Governments, and we call on our colleagues in the Trade Union and Labour Movement to similarly oppose it. While we are anxious that the suffering of the people of the six counties should cease as soon as possible, the need remains to work towards a lasting solution, which can only be based on upholding the right of the majority of the Irish people. Anything else is undemocratic and, therefore, cannot last. It is only when majority rule prevails that an enduring peace can be won.

From an Irish point of view, does this Agreement advance the cause of Irish unity? An Taoiseach, Garret Fitzgerald says "no". He is adamant that it is not intended to. What then is the intention? In a Channel 4 interview, he stated, "we are concerned to create a situation - this is the whole purpose of the Agreement - in which the alienation of the minority from the structures of Government, security system, judicial system, can be dealt with." In other words, make the set-up in the North less oppressive and the Nationalists will accept it. The Nationalists are alienated partly because they have been oppressed under partition, but mainly because partition has denied them their right to be part of the overall Irish nation. Providing civil rights while denying a political right solves nothing.

Considering An Taoiseach's own words, the consultative role conceded to the Irish Government seems to be for the sole purpose of moderating the excesses of Unionism. Living under partition would then be more tolerable for the Nationalists, and they might stop supporting the IRA. Their aspirations extend beyond this, and they will be doubly disappointed that the agenda for the first meeting of the Inter-Governmental Conference, as emphasised by the British, will concentrate on cross-border security. Dr. Fitzgerald should have insisted, in his discussion with the British, on action on other issues, such as anti-Catholic discrimination, supergrass trials, Diplock courts, strip searching of women prisoners, the use of plastic bullets and widespread harrassment by the army and police in Nationalist areas.

This Agreement is a repudiation of the New Ireland Forum, which stated that the structure which the Forum wished to see established is a unitary state. Two further structural arrangements were also examined - a federal/confederal state and joint authority. However, faced with the rejection of these three options by Margaret Thatcher in her infamous "out out out" speech, the Irish Government backed down and abandoned them. Unfortunately, the Inter-Governmental Agreement does more than this. It will underwrite partition, by the Irish Government's acceptance of the "right" of the Unionists to opt out of an all-Ireland arrangement. Not surprising, Thatcher declared triumphantly, that "the legitimacy of the Unionist position has been recognised by the Republic in a formal international agreement".

Recognising the fact that the Unionists wish to remain within the United Kingdom does not confer on it any moral right. The Irish Government has also rejected the historical assessment contained in the Forum Report. In Section 4.1 dealing with the Unionist veto on any change in the form of Government in Northern Ireland, the Report stated that 'this fails to take account of the origin of the problem, namely the imposed division of Ireland which created an artificial political majority in the North'. It is incredible that the Irish Government, which set up the Forum, accepted the description of the Unionists as an "artificial majority", but have now accepted the "right" of this artificial majority to frustrate the right of the real majority, of which the Northern Nationalists are a part.

The Forum Report also stated (Section 5. 1.4) that "the present formal position of the British Government, namely the guarantee, has, in its practical application, had the effect of inhibiting the dialogue necessary for political progress. It has had the additional affect of removing the incentive which would otherwise exist on all sides to seek a political solution". Presumably, the Irish Government made no attempt to move the British from this position, which "inhibits political progress", as they have now adopted this position themselves.

In the light of the analysis contained in the Forum Report, the commitment by the British Government to accept Irish unity if a majority in the North wished it, is a fraud. The line drawn by British across the map of Ireland in 1920 was designed precisely to ensure that no such majority would ever emerge. The self-proclaimed defender of the union, Margaret Thatcher, is, therefore, safe in giving such an empty commitment. It is comparable to a dealer in a card game committing himself to paying out his opponents' winnings, when he has marked the cards in advance.

The Irish Government must demand the end of the Unionist veto, together with a declaration from Britain of the intention to withdraw from Ireland. The rights of the Unionists would entail their involvement in negotiating the constitution, political and financial arrangements of a new all-Ireland state.

Finally, the Agreement is the culmination of a drift in Irish Government policy towards closer political and security co-operation with Britain, the EEC and NATO. The offer of money from President Reagan and the orchestrated support from other American politicians, the EEC Commission and likes of Chancellor Kohl, indicate the strategic and military interests of the US and NATO in closer Anglo-Irish co-operation.

The members of TUIUI believe in a united Ireland as a necessary step towards achieving a united working class, thereby facilitating the advancement of Irish workers. Our desire to see a united Ireland is hard-headed and practical and is not based on sentiment. We desire a united Ireland so that we can progress towards a 32 County Workers' Republic, the cherished aim of Connolly and Larkin. This Agreement will not advance the cause of Irish unity and it must, therefore, be rejected. Instead, the Irish Government and those within Ireland who believe in unity, must assert this belief in a positive and vigorous manner and should develop the alliance with progressive forces in Britain and internationally, in a new campaign against London and Belfast unionism.

Title: A United Ireland: A Working Class Demand

Organisation: Trade Unionists for Irish Unity and Independence

Date: 1986

Downloaded from the Irish Left Archive.

Visit www.leftarchive.ie

The Irish Left Archive is provided as a non-commercial historical resource, open to all, and has reproduced this document as an accessible digital reference. Copyright remains with its original authors. If used on other sites, we would appreciate a link back and reference to the Irish Left Archive, in addition to the original creators. For re-publication, commercial, or other uses, please contact the original owners. If documents provided to the Irish Left Archive have been created for or added to other online archives, please inform us so sources can be credited.