

S I N N F É I N

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROGRAMME

INTRODUCTION

The object of this publication is to show that Sinn Féin is not only capable of looking forward to the future 32-County Republic and projecting its features in broad outline, but also that it is proposed to adopt a diversified struggle, on many fronts, in order to achieve it.

This programme will be said by some to be visionary. If it is visionary to propose means whereby Ireland may support an expanding population in increasing prosperity, cherishing all her children equally, then we are in the tradition of the visionaries of 1916.

It will be said by others to be perhaps possible, but too difficult; too many people benefit from the existing relationship with Britain; to cut links would involve hardship. If cutting off the supply of patronage money is hardship, then we promise hardship to those in receipt of it. We also promise hardship to those who regard it as a God-given right that they should be able to draw dividends from investments in the British Empire. We are prepared to forego the alleged benefits of the connection with Britain; we assert that these 'benefits' accrue only to a small fraction of the population, and that their abolition would leave us richer rather than poorer, in that it would enable us so to order society that the whole working population would be producing wealth. That this is possible may be proved by a simple sum: consider the net subsidy paid to the Six Counties by England - about £100m., - and add to it the net income from overseas investments (i.e. gross minus interest paid out to foreign investors here) which amounts to about £30m. This gives a measure of the 'benefit from the connection' accruing to a minority of the population. Now consider the benefit from breaking the connection; an extra 100,000 people at work at existing levels of productivity would increase the national income by over £130m.

This exposes the connection with Britain for what it is; a device for enriching the rich and keeping the poor in poverty. As a nation, by foregoing the alleged benefits we would be no worse off, but, in fact, better off in that we would have full employment in an expanding economy.

Why does Britain pay the subsidy? Because she considers it worth her while to pay out British taxpayers' money to keep Ireland divided and safe for British investors to draw profits. Also, by keeping Ireland divided, and by the device of imposing a unified financial system, she ensures that the bulk of the Irish economic surplus (the savings of the Irish people) is syphoned off and used to develop the British economy.

Thus, the nature of the connection goes much deeper than simply the occupation by foreign troops. It is therefore necessary to resist the forces of the connection in whatever form they manifest themselves; to broaden the scope of the national movement to include a conscious, organised economic resistance to the laws of imperialist economics which are keeping our country underdeveloped.

The ideas sketched here will be developed further in the

... / ...

sections which follow. These take the form of a sketch of things as they are now, followed by an indication of the changes that would be likely to be introduced under a 32-County Sinn Féin Government.

It remains to indicate the lines along which Sinn Féin may win the support of the majority of the Irish people for the realisation of its objectives. It is clear that resistance to the British forces of occupation in the Six Counties is alone insufficient. It will be necessary to develop the unity of the people around a programme of economic resistance to the non-military aspects of imperialist interference in Ireland. By this means it will be possible to safeguard the livelihood of the people, to frustrate the plans for a completely export-oriented, dependent, industrial economy on the East coast, and at major seaports, with the rest of the country a depopulated 'tourists' paradise', and to build up an institutional structure which will foreshadow certain state organs of the future Republican Government.

Thus there are two totally opposed concepts of Ireland in the future. On the one hand there is the Republican concept of a united, independent nation, with its own independent financial system, planning the investment of its economic surplus in such a way as to give full employment with an expanding economy, trading in a diversified manner with a large number of different countries to mutual benefit, including Britain, with which relations will at last be regularised, and assuming for the first time its rightful place as the leader of the ex-colonial nations in the struggle against imperialism.

On the other hand there is the Leinster House concept of a depopulated countryside producing beef, with isolated islands of precarious prosperity in the coastal urban areas, containing a few large factories manned by a declining work force producing with increasing degree of automation specialised consumer goods for export, well-developed ports to handle a substantial import/export trade, a well organised system for syphoning off potential discontent by subsidised emigration, an educational system tailored to fit the emigrant for work abroad. This concept excludes the Six Counties which will remain an economically depressed area dependent on British subsidies for its survival.

The choice for every Irishman worthy of the name is clear.

How therefore do we attain our objective?

Ever since Tone, Republicans have always recognised that the only ultimate factor influencing the imperialists is force or the threat of force. They have also recognised the necessity for political organisation and agitation in order to harness effectively the forces of opposition to imperialism. It is also both possible and desirable to organise resistance to the imperialist economic forces, which, in the whole country, derive from the military occupation of part of it.

This new departure has the advantage that since the imperial economic forces apply throughout the whole country, every Republican, and indeed every Irishman can fight them on his home ground in his own area.

It also has the advantage that it suggests means whereby the Protestant working class, once the beneficiary of patronage, but now condemned to or threatened with the dole both in Belfast and in areas west of the Bann, may be won to support national objectives, thus undermining the basis of Unionist power in the Six Counties.

Just as working people organise themselves into trade unions in order to defend themselves against that economic force which tends to

depress their wages, so the Irish Nation must organise itself in such a way as to defend itself against those economic forces associated with the imperial system which tend towards its depopulation and impoverishment.

Since the task of organising the nation to defend itself against the imperial economic assault is beyond the ability of either partition administration, even should it wish to do so, and since the 26-County administration has abandoned explicitly the half-hearted resistance that it once affected, this task must become the prime responsibility of the Republican Movement.

Failure to undertake this task will allow the completion of the process initiated in the Famine times, the transfer of our rural population to the industrial cities of the oppressor, will allow the smaller of our industries to be closed down, and the larger to be bought up, automated and run in the imperial interest by a declining work force. Ireland would be reduced to be a nation of renters, hoteliers and gillies.

Sporadic resistance to this process has already broken out in the Western parts of the country. This resistance must be organised into an Economic Resistance Movement, the weapons of which are the Co-operative and the Trade Union.

The present unorganised resistance contains the following elements which are, in the main, conscious only of their immediate objectives and do not see their struggle as part of a national movement. The task of the Economic Resistance Movement will be to make the national objectives clear to the people concerned and to raise the level of the present spontaneous activity to that of consciously establishing a Resistance Economy independent of the imperial economy, except for mutually beneficial trading relations, where these are possible.

The elements are:-

(1) Farmers' co-operative trading organisations. These engage in bulk purchase of fertilisers, seeds, etc., and contract marketing of produce in such a way as to by-pass middlemen's profits. As well as increasing farm incomes and making more money available for the purchase of manufactured goods by farmers, this process reduces the role in the rural economy of middlemen's profits, which tend to find their way ultimately into foreign investment rather than native industrial investment.

(2) Farmers' co-operative production projects. These are mainly co-operative creameries, or tend to arise out of the trading organisations being financed by them, or else tend to arise in response to the possibility of obtaining vegetable contracts with the Irish Sugar Company.

(3) Fishermen's co-operatives. These also have based their recent breakthrough on getting control of a share of their trade and making it localised rather than Dublin-centred.

(4) Industrial Producer Co-operatives and Consumer Co-operatives.

(5) Co-operative financial ventures such as Credit Unions.

(6) Trade Unions, which in some industries, especially in the Six Counties, are fighting a tenacious rearguard action with regard to redundancies. This action has not yet assumed any national consciousness but is objectively national in content.

(7) Local industry, which may or may not be co-operatively owned, but which is kept going by the business offered by local

agricultural co-operatives, as for example, a mill kept going by orders for poultry and pig-feed from a local co-operative.

(8) State sponsored industries such as are concerned with sugar, alcohol and processed vegetables are under existing circumstances playing a useful role in developing an independent economy. They represent the fruits of a period when the 26-County administration concerned itself to a limited extent with economic development in the national interest. This period is now over. The existence of state industries serving the needs of the people is anathema to the British monopolists. In proportion as imperial economic penetration builds up in accordance with the 26-County administration's policy of putting Ireland up for sale, the existence of the state sector of industry will become increasingly precarious. Small units will be in danger of closure, so that their pattern of production can be made to conform with the imperial interests.

The workers and management of the state sponsored industries are therefore potentially part of the Economic Resistance Movement.

The objectives of the Economic Resistance Movement, based on the above elements, must therefore be as follows:-

(1) To develop agricultural co-operatives whose first step will be to gain control over trade and then to plough back the profits of trade into increased production.

(2) To develop a vigilance network so that any threatened closure of local industry will be met by the timely formation of a co-operative to raise the necessary funds both locally and by appealing to other areas and emigrant organisations, so that the local industry may be purchased and kept going as a co-operative enterprise. Refusal to sell out at a fair price to be countered by suitable local and national action, of such a nature as to redeem the price the foreigner is willing to pay.

(3) The development of links with the Trade Union Movement so that any threatened economic war by imperialist interests in the same industry would be defeated by the organised workers in the industry, by suitably organised actions.

(4) The development of the nation-wide 'Buy Irish' campaign into a national publicity campaign for support of the specific products of the Economic Resistance Movement, as well as Irish products in general.

(5) The development of a centralised co-operative trade organisation with the objective of facilitating trade between the various sectors of the E.R.M., to handle in an organised manner the trade between the E.R.M. and those sectors of the imperial economy with which fair trade is possible, to protect the members of the E.R.M. from the need to enter into trading agreements loaded against them, and to explore the possibility of entering into trade agreements with the Consumer Co-Operative Movement in Britain and in Irish cities, especially Belfast. To develop a foreign trade section, whose object would be to develop trade links with countries other than Britain, especially with the emerging African nations, with which direct trade routes should be established. (Present links go via Britain). This foreign trade section to assume the role of agent for any firm wishing to develop non-British trade links, and to foreshadow an organ of the future Sinn Féin Government, fulfilling a role at present inadequately fulfilled by Córas Tráchtála.

(6) The development of a co-operative financial system,

including insurance, so that the financial resources of the E.R.M. may be centralised and applied to its own expansion.

The central idea of the E.R.M. is to replace the investor's greed for private profit, which is of such a character that it is not invested in anything which gives less than the average return on investment available within the imperial system, by the creative energy of the ordinary common people in the rural and urban areas, who will find means of making a viable economy without the need for the investment capital to yield the average imperial rate of profit to outsiders.

The Economic Resistance Movement must also organise itself to oppose effectively the purchase of land by foreigners. Such purchases may, for example, be countered by the formation of co-operatives, raising capital locally and through emigrants' organisations for the purchase of farms as units, and their co-operative working as units by local farmers' sons who wish to return from abroad.

It is also important that the people concerned with this Resistance Movement never lose sight of the national objectives and never become complacent on the basis of minor initial successes. The imbuing of the movement with a national consciousness must be the responsibility of Sinn Féin.

This short sketch of the Economic Resistance idea outlines the extent to which the Sinn Féin Social and Economic Programme can be put into effect here and now even within the context of the existing political system.

In the sections which follow it will be noted that the level of detail varies. There will be certain areas where the detail suggested will be considerable, while other areas will be quite sketchy. Broadly speaking, details are to be regarded as tentative and illustrative. The broad picture is the main thing; in the real world the detail will be influenced by the situation of the moment.

F I N A N C E.

The purpose of a financial system is to provide, as well as a medium of exchange, a fund of credit whereby the economic surplus may be re-invested, thus enabling the economy to expand. The latter purpose at present is not being fulfilled.

The Irish financial system is integrated with that of England. It consists of a banking sector and an insurance sector; there is also a Central Bank under the 26-County administration whose function is purely nominal.

In order of strength of connection with Britain the leading Banks (controlling over 80% of the assets of the business) rate as follows:-

(A) The Northern Bank and the Belfast Banking Company have been merged into one bank called the Northern Bank Limited, which is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Midland Bank in England. The Ulster Bank is now owned by another English Bank, the Westminster Bank.

(B) The Bank of Ireland Group extends throughout the 32 Counties. Its Directors' other interests are mainly in old-established firms dating from Act of Union conditions. The Group includes the National Bank of Ireland, the Hibernian Bank and the Chase & Bank of Ireland (International). This latter bank is owned jointly by the Bank of Ireland and the Chase Manhattan Bank in America.

(C) The Allied Irish Banks consist of the Munster & Leinster Bank, the Provincial Bank and the Royal Bank. They are independently owned by Irish interests but pursue a policy in conformity with that laid down by the others which constitute the dominant force.

Thus, the whole banking system is based on absolute domination and is integrated with the British banking system.

The Insurance business is completely in the hands of the British Companies in the Six Counties and mostly so in the 26. The Irish and New Ireland Assurance Companies constitute a breach in an otherwise all-British structure. The former is state owned. They have consistently pursued a policy of investment in Irish industry. Together they control about 15% of the total insurance market.

Thus, firms controlling 8 - 10% only of the assets of the financial system as a whole (banking and insurance taken together) have oriented themselves towards investment in Irish industry. The remainder has consistently pursued a policy of investing its assets in British securities (in the case of the banks) and British equities (in the case of the British-owned insurance companies).

This is the major contributory cause of the failure of the 26-County economy to expand up to 1959. The savings of the Irish people, instead of being put to work in Ireland, are syphoned off into Britain.

The post-1959 'boom' is due (a) to relaxation of control of foreigners investing in Ireland, (b) to the actual subsidisation of such investment at the taxpayers' expense. Not only is the country being sold out, but we, the people, are subsidising the price out of our own pockets!

When the English pound notes were called in (in 1926) and Irish ones were substituted, the English pounds were lodged in London to act as 100% cover for the Irish note issue. The present function of the Central Bank is to administer this fund, and to keep it in step with the Irish note issue. A small fraction of the 100% cover is now held in

... / ...

7.
dollars as an empty gesture of 'independence'. The existence of this 100% 'Note Fund' (as it is called) is an effective guarantee against any genuinely independent measures ever being taken by the Dublin Government. Typical of the servility of Merrion Street financial thought is the fact that it is considered necessary to insure 100% against the eventuality that every Irishman might simultaneously wish to convert Irish to English money!

The present Act of Union financial system, as well as syphoning off Irish savings via banking and insurance into British investment, also facilitates private investors who wish to put their money into imperial interests. Much trading on the London Stock Exchange is done from Dublin; the financial pages of the Irish papers are a witness to this.

In fact, between banking, insurance and private investors in both parts of the country, well over £1,000,000,000 is held as foreign assets by persons and firms based in Ireland.

This link is strengthening; each takeover of an Irish firm by a British monopoly results in a two-way transaction; British money comes in to buy up Irish firms, after which the Irish ex-owners invest the purchase money outside Ireland.

A Sinn Féin Government having jurisdiction over the whole 32-County area would proceed to the establishment of a genuinely independent Irish currency, based on the productive capacity of the Nation. International payments would be made with gold rather than sterling.

A National Development Fund would be set up, to which would be contributed all foreign assets at present idle. This Fund would be administered by a National Financial Authority who would see to it that this foreign exchange 'nest-egg' was correctly invested into certain strategically chosen capital goods.

The 'idle foreign assets' referred to above are:-

(a) the Note Fund.

(b) a substantial part (possible 75%) of the individual banks' external assets at present held in Britain for trade purposes. Centralisation of these assets alone would enable them to be reduced substantially, and still give the same degree of buffering against trade fluctuations as at present. Reduction of trade fluctuations, by exercising control over trade would enable the centralised assets to be reduced still further. The surplus sterling bank assets would be transferred to the National Development Fund against an issue of Irish Government Bonds. The total bank assets would remain unchanged, except that a greater fraction would be held in Irish securities.

The National Financial Authority would take over and extend the functions of the present Central Bank. It would have at its disposal a substantial fraction of the investment funds generated internally within the economy, would be responsible for the stability of the independent currency, and would function so as to regulate the amount of credit available in accordance with the needs of the expanding economy. In proportion, as the initial investment of 'nest-egg' foreign exchange became exhausted the National Financial Authority would become increasingly dependent on internally generated savings, which would by then, however, have become more substantial, thanks to the initial injection of productive capital.

The National Financial Authority would be directly responsible to An Dáil. It would consist of the nationalised banking and insurance system, re-organised and under democratic control, in order to serve the national needs instead of the needs of imperial monopolies. No

other lending houses except those allowed by the State will be allowed to operate.

The Balance of Payments would be regulated by letting the Irish currency unit find its own level in accordance with the needs of trade. This would probably result in a revalued currency unit.

The regulation of the balance of payments by revaluation would be superior to the present method which operates in both parts of the country: restriction of the Irish market for cheap imports from Britain by a differential unemployment rate, supplemented slightly in the 26 Counties by tariffs and quotas. Cheap imports are of little use to the unemployed. Devaluation would act as an automatic universal tariff. It would only affect the cost of living in so far as this depended on import content. Thus, basic food, clothing and housing would be little changed in price in the home market.

The Stock Exchange would be restricted to the role of raising finance for the private sector of the Irish economy. Trading in foreign shares would be forbidden. Legislation would be introduced curbing speculative unproductive acquisition of wealth by individuals, but favouring raising capital for new productive ventures.

The interest rate on loans would be used as an instrument of economic planning by the National Financial Authority. Strategically important sectors of the economy would receive cheaper credit.

The National Debt would be honoured in full, at its present level. But it would become relatively less important, as future government financing would become independent of loans from private bodies. It would instead depend on direct control of the credit structure via the National Financial Authority, coupled with the direct control of re-investment of the economic surplus by a National Development Authority set up for this purpose. Current government expenditure would be met out of taxation in full.

Import of capital would be controlled and foreign domination of any sector prevented. Foreign land purchase and export of capital by nationals would be forbidden. Income from existing privately owned external assets would be taxed heavily. Retired foreigners wishing to settle here may have this rule waived.

Credit Unions will be developed and extended on a local basis and will enjoy the right, now denied to them, of financing local community projects. Co-operative banks will also be developed, representative of such interests as the Trade Unions and Farmers' organisations.

The whole taxation structure will be reformed fundamentally. The basic unit for the payment of tax will be the firm or organisation rather than the individual; income tax will be restricted to the professional, managerial and other high income strata, distinction as at present being made between earned and unearned income. The objectives of taxation will be:-

1. To finance the State.
2. To re-distribute wealth.
3. To favour initiative and enterprise.
4. To act as a planning instrument.

The basic tax will be a selective turnover tax, levied on production and services. The tax would fall less heavily on industries producing the basic necessities. (The definition of 'necessity' is

likely to change as the economy develops). All industries will pay some tax; this will vary both on the above principle and on a regional basis according as it is desired to encourage industrial development in particular industries or regions.

Thus, the basic taxation policy will be to allow the provision of cheap necessities (food, clothing, housing, public transport, books, education, also the means of increasing productivity; tools, machines). Central funds will be channelled towards underdeveloped areas as a matter of policy.

Co-operative industry and agriculture will be favoured by tax concessions; private industry will be encouraged to reward workers' productive initiative by bonuses linked to productivity, and ultimately to convert to co-operative ownership.

The high tax on unearned incomes would be scaled down in case of retired people who have no earned income. This may also have the effect of encouraging retired foreigners to settle here, which form of permanent tourism would benefit the balance of payments and help the economy generally.

I N D U S T R Y.

The industrial wealth of Ireland is characterised by the domination of its 'commanding heights' by British owned firms, or by firms with substantial interests in Britain.

Dominating the Six-County economy are Gallahers, Harland and Wolff, and Shorts, all outright British owned. Of the linen firms, few still remain independent; the industry is in decline and the Linen Thread Co. of Glasgow is buying firms up one by one, while others are closing down. Scotch whisky firms have dominated and crushed the Six-County distillers. The price of survival for the Six-County linen industry has been the floatation of shares on the London market (e.g. 'Old Bleach' Linen Co.) and/or the setting up of subsidiaries in Britain (e.g. Kinnaird Textiles).

To find firms with purely native ownership it is necessary to go to less than £100,000 capital. Here about 1,000 small firms exist, 90% of which have independent ownership. These control about a quarter to a third of industrial capital.

So discriminatory is the Unionist structure that the rise of a Catholic property-owning class has been substantially prevented. Scrutiny of the names of the Directors of even the smallest firms (£10,000 to £30,000 capital) suggests perhaps 10 - 15% Catholic ownership, this being confined effectively to building contracting and small-scale retailing. Thus patronage in employment is a powerful weapon for keeping the Protestant working-class 'loyal' to Unionist mythology, even against its own true interests. Similarly, patronage of the small 'independent' firms by the British-owned giants is a factor which prevents the emergence of national mindedness in the smaller Protestant property-owning class. This patronage ultimately results in takeover; independent small property is unable to resist the economic power of the monopolies and is in decline.

The 26-County economy is dominated by a small group of old-established firms; Guinness, Jacobs, Carrolls, Gouldings and Sunbeam Wolsey, typify this group. All have subsidiaries or associates in Britain. Their directorships interlock with each other and with the financial structure. The policy of all these firms, having saturated the home market, is expansion by building factories in Britain (and the Empire in the case of Guinness) rather than diversification within the Irish economy. The Sunbeam Wolsey-Unidare-Pye complex is an exception to this; however, this diversification is in association with British monopoly-capital and is of a secondary nature (research and development is done in Cambridge; production in Ireland uses cheap Irish labour and middle management).

Some sectors of the Irish economy are dominated by British subsidiaries (Dunlops, Ranks in the flour milling, Fry-Cadbury, the petroleum distributors).

An appreciable sector is dominated by State owned or sponsored industries; E.S.B., C.I.É., and the Sugar Company being among the largest.

The firms named account for about half of the assets of the 26-County public companies; they, therefore, may be regarded as the 'commanding heights' of the economy.

Significantly, recent growth rates indicate the following trends:-

(1) Small, nationally owned firms are in decline and are being taken over.

... / ...

(2) The larger firms of the state sector are barely holding their own.

(3) The British associated or dominated sector is growing rapidly (Guinness, Gouldings, Fry-Cadbury, Ranks) as are other foreign owned firms (Shannon Industrial Zone).

Thus, the condition for rapid growth at present is to be integrated with the British economy. The trend is towards increasing specialisation under the control of British firms, a process the end-product of which is a Six-County type economy.

Looking at Irish industry from the angle of products, one can make a broad classification as follows: (a) industry based on local raw materials, (b) industries based mainly on skill and technical ability, (c) building and construction. There is also the classical subdivision into Producers and Consumers goods.

The outstanding features of the present divided economy are:-

(1) Distortion of the Producers Goods Industries (based mainly in the Six-County area) in the direction of supplying specialised products, for which demand is highly unstable, to the English market. Underdevelopment of the Producers' Goods Industries in the 26-County area, despite State subsidy of foreign ventures.

(2) Failure to develop agriculture-based industries to any great extent, owing to the British economic pressure for agriculture to specialise in the export of live cattle. This holds for both areas. The Sugar Company is beginning to reverse this trend in the 26-County area by proving that possibilities exist for industrial processing of agricultural raw materials in areas other than the East coast. Another important agriculture based industry is distilling.

It is noteworthy that most of the older-established East-coast food-processing firms are British owned (e.g. Batchelors) and as such are, of course, not interested in Irish social-economics, development of underdeveloped regions, etc. Similarly the mills, which are dominated by the Rank organisation, are operating a centralisation policy which puts their own profits before local social needs; the social capital to be written off does not enter the balance-sheet when a mill closure is decided.

Dairying is largely in the hands of old-established co-operatives which, by and large, have shown little enterprise and few have diversified into the other lines of business open to them, such as cheese manufacture. The reason for this may perhaps be traced to the dead hand of the British Ministry of Agriculture, under whose auspices they were formed, in Sir Horace Plunkett's time. This however requires analysis.

Bacon production, once an important export, has fallen on evil days, owing to a highly variable product. This is a result of lack of scientific control. A variable price has deterred producers. There are signs of improvement here, largely due to the work of the Agricultural Institute. The belated establishment of this body, a generation later than its European equivalents, is an illustration of the lack of attention paid to scientific research in Ireland.

(3) Failure to develop native industrial 'know-how'; neglect of potential 'know-how' (in the form of scientifically trained people) which is produced in abundance for export by our universities. Failure to build up an adequate indigenous research and development framework in which economically important discoveries and inventions might be brought to fruition (Norway, with the same population, spends ten times what we do on applied science). The cult of the 'foreign expert'. Any 'know-how based' industry at present in Ireland, of a foreign subsidiary,

work-horse type low-cost high-load plane suitable for internal freight and bus-type passenger transport in underdeveloped countries, would diversify naturally towards manufacturing automatic process control equipment of a relatively simple type directed at the needs of the underdeveloped countries, our own of course in the first place, as well as more sophisticated electronic equipment for the more advanced sectors of our own economy.

The motor vehicle industry, at present consisting of a diversity of small assemblers, will be integrated in such a way as to produce a small number of basic types adapted to the needs of the people, rather than to the imagined needs of the status-conscious, copied from the imperialist rat-race society. Modular construction devices will be adopted in order to get an adequate variety with a few standard mass-produced elements.

The philosophy behind vehicle design will be durability, safety, reliability and comfort, rather than speed and built-in obsolescence as at present. A suitable public transport vehicle will be developed for the rural areas. Tractor production will be similarly integrated and rationalised. An export trade will be developed of a suitable type of vehicle, adapted to small farm economics, to the under-developed economies, whose needs will overlap with ours in many ways.

Similarly, agricultural and horticultural machinery production is capable of considerable development. The use of electricity and compressed air as motive power for labour-saving equipment adapted for use over small areas (an acre or two) is in its infancy and should be developed rapidly with the aid of scientific research.

The electrical industry, similarly, will be oriented towards the needs of industrialising the nation and equipping its agriculture. Basic units such as electric motors will be standardised, avoiding the situation which exists in Britain where a multiplicity of firms make units that are not interchangeable. Portable power-tools will be developed, for all industries which at present depend on manual crafts, especially the building industry.

Considerable engineering research effort will be put into the standardisation and modularisation of all industrial equipment, in order to reduce breakdown delays and spare part stock-holding problems.

The extractive industries will be developed beyond the present role of production of ore for export. Refining will be done on the spot and an associated chemical industry will be built up. The rate of production of non-ferrous metals will be geared to the needs of the economy, with a modest surplus for export if this proves to be advantageous, instead of allowing wild-cat get-rich-quick speculative exploitation as at present. The coal-mining industry will be modernised; techniques and equipment adapted to thin-seam mining will be imported and adapted. The Geological Survey will be expanded and equipped in such a way as to improve rapidly the knowledge of the nation's mineral resources. The present level of knowledge is based largely on old work, before modern methods became available, and relates only to surface rocks. Irish geologists and geo-physicists will be invited to return from abroad to contribute to the national effort, which will include development of sea-bed gas resources. There will be no need for foreign experts; our people are the experts in many foreign countries.

Agriculture-based industries will be developed in proportion as agricultural production is diversified away from live cattle; the dead meat trade will be developed, with the northern European and tropical countries (where meat production is a problem). Bones will go towards fertiliser production, reducing our needs for imported phosphates. Offal will form a basis for a pharmaceuticals industry (already successfully initiated at Roscrea). Vegetable processing will be developed along the lines initiated by the Sugar Company, especially

... / ...

in the Western parts of the country.

The distilling industry will be among those to be nationalised and will be fully developed in the National interest.

The economics of local steel production will assume a different appearance with a 32-County economy supporting a heavy engineering industry. The logical place for this would be Derry with its port, direct rail links with the rest of the country, and relative proximity to Belfast. The economics of Haulbowline are already marginally sound. With Irish currency at its natural level the picture would become more favourable.

The planning of industrial development would be such as to avoid centres of population exceeding (say) half a million, to provide a number of well-spaced large industrial centres, providing a steady base-load of heavy freight for the rail network, and a high level of inter-urban business express passenger traffic.

The building industry would be re-organised in such a way as to give steady employment to its work-people. The level of skill would be raised by means of education and training. Voluntary amalgamation of Trade Unions would be encouraged, the objective being the development of skilled building craftsmen, with wide technical knowledge, adaptable to the use of new methods and new materials. (Otherwise what would plasterers do when plastic panelling becomes universal?). In this process, training will be universal, there would be no redundancy, wages and productivity would increase.

Co-operative builders' groups will be encouraged to develop to supplement the small contractor. The larger contracting firms would come under Government control.

Stability of employment will have absolute priority. Salaries and wages will be on the basis of equal pay for equal work as between men and women.

While Tourism can be a very important factor in the economic life of the country, neither the nation as a whole nor any particular locality should be so geared as to be solely dependent on tourism for prosperity. Dependence on outside factors should be kept to a minimum.

Tourism can sap the independence and strength of character of the people and is not a dependable source of income because it can be adversely affected by weather, wars, depressions or transport strikes.

In an expanding, diversified economy, however, tourism can be safely built up as a method of gaining foreign currency. Tourism will be encouraged by cheap Air and Shipping fares. Foreign owned hotels and holiday camps will be nationalised. A standard scale of services and charges will be laid down by the State Tourist Board and suitable promotion undertaken both at home and abroad.

invariably depends on the parent company for its scientific research and development. There is, therefore, insufficient basis on which to grow a native applied-scientific tradition; there are not enough people doing scientific research to generate the necessary intellectual atmosphere. It is interesting to speculate how the Ferguson Tractor might have been developed by an Irish-oriented Belfast engineering industry, in order to revolutionise small-farm agriculture.

(4) Industries based on extracted mineral wealth are sacrificed to a policy of sale of rights to foreign concerns, whose sole concern is rapid exploitation when world prices are high, followed by neglect if the price drops. The melancholy history of Avoca may yet be repeated at Tynagh.

(5) Relative backwardness of the Building Industry as regards stability and conditions of employment, as well as the use of modern methods. This contributes to the high cost of housing, although in this the interest rate is the dominant factor. A small number of highly mechanised, large-scale building firms exist; these are associated with British interests and are at present making large profits out of the rebuilding of central Dublin in the Imperial image. The same situation exists in Belfast; large office-blocks for importers' offices are replacing older industrial-type buildings.

The Republican Government's programme for industry will have as its central principle that control over the further growth of the economy shall be in the hands of the people.

It will, therefore, be necessary for the Government to obtain a controlling interest in the 'commanding heights' firms or key industries. The policy of the managements of these firms will then be to improve the performance of the economy as a whole rather than to maximise the profit of the individual firm, as at present. Likewise, the policy will not be to stamp out competitors, but to enable a rational structure within each industry to be obtained, taking into account local and national needs.

Firms which make reasonable efforts to orient themselves towards the development of the national economy will be left in private hands. By this is meant the pursuit of a policy of low dividends to shareholders, high rates of internal development based on undistributed profits, a substantial portion of which should be spent on scientific research and development co-operatively within the industry (on the lines possibly of the Research Associations in Britain). State incentives would favour co-operative enterprises as the most socially desirable.

The investment programme will be planned with the aid of the National Development Authority and financed by means of the undistributed profits of the state-directed commanding heights of the economy, by State-created credit under the control of the National Financial Authority, by means of the external assets as re-organised for the purpose, and by foreign loans if necessary.

The Engineering industry will be modified and re-equipped in such a way as to enable it to manufacture products necessary for the mechanisation and control of most of the agricultural and industrial operations carried out in the 32-County economy.

Ship-building capacity will be retained and used to build and equip a merchant fleet large enough to carry the bulk of our trade; this will be an expanding and diversified trade with countries other than Britain, so that a substantial fleet will be needed. Revaluation of Irish currency could render ship-building for the export market highly competitive. But the main line for expansion of the heavy engineering industry will be in the direction of supplying the needs of the 32-County economy for mining and ore processing equipment, reactor vessels for the expanding chemical industry, mechanical handling equipment, heavy commercial vehicles etc. The aircraft industry, as well as developing a

A G R I C U L T U R E

The ownership of agricultural land is unevenly distributed among the population of both parts of the country. About 60% of the agricultural holdings are of 30 acres or less, while less than a tenth of the holdings are of 100 acres or more. The latter group in the Six Counties occupies 20% of the land; in the 26 Counties it accounts for 36% of the land.

In both parts of the country most holdings are small and there is still a lot of land in large holdings, despite the activities of the Land Commission. The trend is for the small holdings to be amalgamated and their owners to emigrate, so that the middle group is increasing at the expense of the small group. The large group is stable.

Not only is the land inadequately distributed, but also the type of farming practised helps the robbery of the small producer in order to line the pockets of the large. The staple product of Irish agriculture, store cattle, is the instrument of this process. The production of this commodity is so ordered that the costly and risky operation of rearing calves is carried out largely by the small farmers in the North-West, West and South, while the large farmers finish the process with maximum gain and minimum risk and labour.

Thus, there is an inter-regional pattern of exploitation, which functions within the overall British-imposed pattern of national exploitation, whereby Ireland as a whole is kept economically dependent on Britain. This structure also encourages the growth of a merchant element which preys on agriculture as a whole, thriving on seasonal and regional price differences. Thus, the social structure for the whole country has wide regional variations; by and large the ranches, which are the main beneficiaries of the present system, are situated in the East and the small holdings in the West.

Agricultural Trade Unionism is strong in the East, among the workers on the large estates. This accounts for the idea, prevalent in Labour circles, that the farmer is basically an employer and, therefore, has nothing in common with the urban workers. In fact, however, two thirds of the agricultural population enjoy a standard of living ranging from modest to absolute impoverishment.

Agriculture in the Six Counties enjoys a higher level of income than does that of the 26 Counties. This may be attributed to the greater emphasis placed on dairying, as well as to the high level of subsidy enjoyed.

The main feature of Irish agriculture, in farms of all sizes, is its variability of productive level. By and large, the more land a man has, the less per acre he gets from it. The pure grass-land large farm (ranch) is the least productive of all. Yet the pattern of production imposed by the live cattle trade perpetuates this wasteful type of land usage.

It is quite possible to obtain a family income of over £1,500 per year on a 30 to 40 acre farm of moderate land. Large farmers having 1,000 acres or so who farm at this level of intensity employ perhaps 100 men and are equivalent to an industrial firm with perhaps a quarter of a million to a million pounds capital.

The basic problems which prevent all farming being at this level of intensity, with corresponding increase in the national income, are (a) the uncertainties and fluctuations associated with the marketing structure, (b) the technical problems presented by farm management, (c) lack of capital to invest in elementary amenities such as piped water, as well as basic requirements such as fertilisers. The relatively

... / ...

few farmers who have been able to scrape together capital sufficient to make use of available state grants have prospered. The rest continue to exist in poverty on emigrants' remittances or have emigrated themselves, letting their land on conacre. "The absentee landlord" has assumed a new meaning.

The relatively few successful farmers who have managed despite everything to prosper on small or medium farms have done so by the following means:-

1. Investment of all available personal and government grants capital.

2. Establishment of a farm plan diversified enough for the various activities to complement one another, but not so diversified that the various activities interfere with each other and dissipate the effort.

3. Taking advantage of all available government services (scientific advice, artificial insemination etc.)

4. Establishment of some control over market conditions by entering into regular contracts (milk, beet, vegetables, wheat, barley etc).

5. The cultivation of a methodical attitude to the use of their own time. (In industry this is known as "work study" and is imposed from above). A good farmer working for himself does this as second nature considerably increasing his own productivity.

Despite this, the profit to be obtained from investment of capital and effort into a farm is substantially less than that to be obtained by investing a corresponding amount of capital in industry. The reason for this is that agricultural production is basically seasonal and supports a stratum of merchants who live by exploiting the seasonal variations in price. The farmer, therefore, on the average sells at a depressed price. A further reason is that industrial capital tends to be grouped in larger productive units and can take advantage of economies of scale.

It is possible to overcome this chronic agricultural depression within the existing framework to some extent. Two methods exist - the first, State subsidy, is widely practised in Western Europe. This, by relatively favouring the larger producers, has had the effect of developing an industrial-type agriculture, with considerable mechanisation, low wages, high profits, high dependence on the chemical industry and declining quality of produce.

The Irish agricultural price-structure is dominated by the existence of subsidised industrial-type agriculture in Britain, so that its effective independent development is prevented. The key factor in this dependence is the store cattle trade. A subsidiary factor in the case of the Six Counties is the fact that the farmers themselves benefit from the relatively high subsidy. This subsidy is, of course, outside their control; it depends on the whim of a foreign Government.

A further factor operating mainly in the 26-County area is the Dole, on which large areas depend. This Dole is so regulated that it constitutes a rural survival subsidy rather than an agricultural subsidy; increased production, if achieved, is penalised by loss of Dole. A system better adapted to perpetuating poverty would be hard to devise. Various other rural services exist in the 26 Counties which are effectively subsidised, such as rural electrification. The total rural subsidy in the 26 Counties, including also the butter export subsidy, is not so far off the rate paid in the Six Counties as to be unworthy of comparison. Thus, the argument that the Six-County farmers would lose their subsidies if they came in with the 26 Counties' is not so potent as it appears at first sight.

... / ...

It is, however, necessary to stress that Six/26-County comparisons are irrelevant; both parts are stunted by Partition. The correct basis for comparison is Six/26 versus 32 Counties. The point here is that the united Republic would have a sufficiently well developed industrial sector to be able to support agricultural subsidies on the European scale, should that method of raising agricultural production prove to be sound.

The second method of overcoming chronic agricultural depression is for the farmers to organise co-operatively in such a way as to control their own marketing channels, and to establish direct and close links with urban and export markets. Gains in farm income comparable with the average Six-County subsidy have been obtained without difficulty in the few areas where co-operative marketing of this type has been established. Further gains are possible by co-operating in the use of machinery and in production generally.

It is, therefore, possible in the short run for considerable gains to be made, even within the existing framework, along co-operative lines. This is a national objective, worthy of the full attention of the Republican Movement; failure to proceed along these lines, as noted in the Introduction, will allow rural and national decline to continue to the point of national extinction. Development of this co-operative movement on a 32-County basis is likely to run into political obstacles, the overcoming of which will raise the level of political consciousness of the people, and render the unification of the Nation more rapidly possible.

A 32-County Sinn Fein Government, would be in a position to allocate funds for agricultural investment into projects which would strengthen the the farmers' own organisations and encourage the growth of production and marketing co-operatives. Guaranteed prices and market stability would enable investment to be properly planned. Subsidies would be tailored in such a way as to reward small-farm enterprise and to develop a broad, well-balanced and diversified agriculture. The existing 'Dole' would be consolidated into a 'depressed area' subsidy which would remain, irrespective of increases or production, becoming relatively less important as the areas became economically awakened. (This latter point is also a short-term objective, realisable by agitation within the present framework, and with positive consequences for strengthening the national co-operative movement if successful).

The 32-County Government would be concerned with the redistribution of land to those who needed it and were capable of working it. Large farms at present at a low productive level would be taken over. There would be established a maximum amount of land to be owned by any citizen. In all cases, where the State takes over land which is naturally a productive unit, these would be leased to families who would work them as co-operative units. These would act as pilot schemes to help the spread of the co-operative idea.

The land of absentee landlords would be subject to compulsory purchase by the state; where the absentee is an emigrant small farmer he would be encouraged to return and participate in co-operative development; if he did not wish to do so, he would be given the option of taking the purchase price in the form of a pension fund for retirement to Ireland when he wished.

The State would assume immediate control over marketing arrangements and would establish a guaranteed price system for all agricultural produce. At the same time, the formation of marketing co-operatives would be encouraged so that the profits at present enjoyed by merchants, (these often accumulate into personal fortunes which are invested abroad against the national interest) would be ploughed back into farm enterprises under co-operative control.

Existing scientific services (soil-testing etc) available

... / ...

to farmers would be extended and popularised. Credit facilities at nominal interest rates would be provided for farmers. The maximum support would be given to the development of regional markets under co-operative control. Likewise, the supply of local industry with suitable crops for processing would be organised on a co-operative basis.

The pattern of production would be mainly oriented towards intensive livestock production and fodder-crops, as well as horticultural-type developments. This is quite consistent with growing enough wheat for the home market while a situation of underdevelopment exists in the country. Cheap imports of such commodities would be in the national interest only in a state of full development when they could be bought with Irish exports without an adverse balance of trade. Meanwhile, the trend would be to supply most needs of an expanding industrial home market and to export only certain specialist products commanding high prices, such as processed food of all kinds and dead meat.

It should be the aim of the 32-County Republican Government to increase rather than decrease the rural population, which stands at the moment as the lowest in Europe. It would be socially desirable to encourage village settlements rather than isolated individual farms.

F I S H E R I E S .

The Fishing Industry, after a long period of decline, has begun to increase its production again. This process has been based on the growth of fishermen's co-operatives employing boats in the 30 - 50 ft. class well adapted to inshore fishing based on a large number of small fishing ports.

The 26-County Government, operating through a state-sponsored body (An Bord Iascaigh Mhara) is making attempts to develop the industry, but on a basis and in a direction considered to be unsound by the fishermen themselves.

Taking the advice of foreign experts, whose contacts when in the country did not include spokesmen of the principal fishermen's co-operatives, the Bord has established a policy of calling a halt to the supply of 30 - 50 ft. boats and concentrating on boats considered by them to be large (70 - 90 ft.) in order allegedly to build up 'deep-sea' fishing, and to concentrate development on five major ports only.

This policy is based on slavish imitation and misunderstanding of the foreigners' practice; this consists in building large boats to fish other peoples' waters (mainly ours and Iceland's), their own already being well exploited by a large fleet of small locally-based boats.

Our own waters, however, are so underdeveloped by our own efforts that there is ample scope for considerable expansion of numbers of small locally-owned boats; the need to concentrate capital immediately in large boats is not evident.

The concentration policy, in fact, makes it more difficult for fishermen co-operatively to become owners of boats and favours an exploitative industrial structure, with large boats, privately owned or State owned and employing crews for wages. This favours the existing privately-owned wholesale trading and fish-processing factory network, as might be expected in view of the fact that these interests are represented on the Bord, while the interests of the fishermen are not.

The domination of the marketing structure by the private wholesalers has had the effect of fostering disunity between Six-County and 26-County fishermen, the former on occasions having become locally unpopular on the grounds that the landing of their catch at a 26-County port has depressed the price. This, however, is a consequence of the fishermen's lack of control over their market, rather than any objective conflict of interest between the two groups.

There is, therefore, scope, as an immediate objective, for a 32-County fishermen's co-operative organisation, to develop a co-operative marketing structure, with retail outlets, as well as co-operative local processing establishments (smoking, salting, pickling, canning, etc).

It would perhaps be advantageous to combine this with agricultural/horticultural co-operative developments in the West, as the seasonal character of the vegetable work might be made to interlock with fish-processing in the off-season. An interlocking of the financial aspects of the two co-operative groups would enable development funds to be allocated in a productive manner on a scale impossible for either movement separately.

While considerable possibilities exist for developing the industry by local initiative and co-operative effort within the existing

framework, such efforts, as in the case of agriculture and forestry, are liable to meet with political obstacles, due to the entrenchment of monied trade and industrial interests in the political structure. However, the maximum development of a national co-operative movement will constitute a step towards the changing of the political structure; it is therefore our policy to give the maximum support to these developments.

Ultimately a Sinn Féin Government will foster to the full the development of local fishing fleets, local processing, boat-building etc., and will recognise and give credit to all types of co-operative development. When the inshore waters are adequately exploited by small locally owned boats, a deep-sea fleet will be established, complete with factory ships, oriented towards the fish-hungry export markets of central and eastern Europe.

A Fisheries Research Institute will be established, whose task will be to keep fish populations under constant surveillance, to develop and adapt new methods of locating shoals, to look into methods of fish farming etc. A communication network will be established, so that transport and marketing facilities can be made to adapt themselves to the continually changing needs of the fishing fleets. The promotion and popularisation of sea food will be given a high priority.

All fishing rights in inland lakes and waterways and within the territorial waters of the nation will be vested in the National Government acting as trustees for the Irish people. The right to fish and use these waters will be granted to all citizens under licence. Adequate provision will be made for the protection of our territorial waters from foreign poachers.

FORESTRY, UPLAND GRAZING & PEAT FUEL PRODUCTION.

The present acreage under state forests in the 26 Counties is about 450,000 acres. Privately owned forests, which include a considerable amount of ornamental or landscape planting and shrub, brings this figure to the region of 550,000. The percentage of land planted is thus 3%, which is considerably below that of any other European country, including the Netherlands (where the area planted is 8%).

There has been a steady improvement in state planting in recent years, the average now running at 25,000 yearly. State forests planted in the Six Counties cover an additional area of 120,000 acres.

There is only slight autonomy of management of the programme within the Department of Lands, which, of course, is Civil-Service controlled. Forestry workers totalling 5,000 men, formerly among the lowest paid in the country are now somewhat better off, having for some time been placed on an incentive for output basis. There is not as much seasonal unemployment as formerly, as many of the workers are engaged on road works during the slack period. Local workers are employed where available, but this is not always possible and men from other areas are brought in, in a few cases. Three schools have been established and there is a Chair of Forestry at U.C.D.

Because of the unflexible nature of Civil-Service control, the felling and marketing of timber has gone into the hands of private enterprises.

The cost of imports of timber, cork and cardboard, into the 26 Counties is considerable. The State here hopes eventually to make a yearly profit of £15 million from forest sales when its target of one million acres is reached. (If the target was doubled to two million acres the income would eventually double also to £30 million at present values).

Turf fuel production commenced under State control in 1934 and almost £30 million have been invested in it. With the use of peat fuel for electric power production the output has increased substantially; the greater part is consumed by the E.S.B. and there is also briquette production. The number of workers employed is 6,400 (including 400 administrative) but about 1,000 workers are laid off during the off-peak period.

Upland grazing, turbarry and sheep commonage rights are important factors in the rural economy, especially in mountain areas. Sheep production is considered wasteful, by grassland experts, unless the hill slopes are cultivated and protected for the purpose - which generally they are not.

Afforestation, improvement of upland grazing, and peat fuel production are complementary to one another; they will be brought under the control of a semi-State Authority. By means of such rationalisation and other means, seasonal unemployment would be entirely eliminated, and a high level of output and income per worker achieved. While mobility of up to 25 miles radius would be attained the higher degree of unemployment in a given area could permit the permanent settlement in urban villages created for the purpose or in accretions on existing towns of the workers maintained by the Authority.

The workers in such an Authority will be established in a Trade Union, and will be considered as and paid to be skilled operatives as planners, engineers, machine operatives, foresters, and office and administrative staff. There will be a basic wage scale, a system of

incentives and a built-in social security scheme. Housing will be provided.

The Authority will plan and control afforestation, peat production and upland grazing in all areas of the 32 Counties. It will be possible to have a satisfactory interchange of unsuitable land with suitable land, and to establish a long-term sequence of peat production followed by afforestation or drainage for normal land use where the case requires it. The Authority will have in its ownership or under its control almost five million acres of bog, mountain, and underdeveloped land. It will be its responsibility to bring it rapidly to a state of production under whatever manner possible to create direct employment for 150,000 men, who in themselves would constitute a valuable increase in the non-food producing cadre of wage earners.

The Authority's head office will be in a major provincial area. It will maintain workshops, planning departments, and sales offices.

The afforestation programme will be planned to create a minimum of 2,000,000 acres of commercial forestry apart from privately controlled plantations. Major emphasis will be in northern, western and Gaeltacht areas. Planting with a view to rapid industrial development and enlarged employment will be an important aspect in all Gaeltacht regions. Careful planning for the different needs of lumber forestry and chemical forestry will be foremost, with a major place given to future requirements for building, furnishing, and the new uses of timber engineering on the one hand with the heavy demands of a paper pulp, cellulose, plastic, alcohol, and chemical industry on the other.

The planting programme calls for the creation of 50,000 acres of new forestry annually. This difficult target can be met only by the transposing of large areas at present used for sheep grazing to forest uses, and by the improvement of suitable uplands to multiply the amount of sheep cropping upon it. The corps of skilled foresters and engineers would be permanently based in each production area to meet the three needs of forestry, peat and grazing cultivation. These teams would be available to work with local agricultural co-operatives in these enterprises, and to assist them in planting a limited acreage for themselves and in laying down shelter belts. Private planting as such would be encouraged, and higher grants, together with full technical assistance made available.

There would be a considerable reduction in the quota of foreign imported hardwoods, except where these were imported for processing as veneers, blockboards and laminates. The Authority would, where necessary, establish under its control all industries, including a paper mill, necessary to consume the entire output, and together with the State agency would enter the export sales market in a major way.

The management of forest parks and mountain areas will be a minor but nonetheless important aspect especially in the field of tourism.

Subject to increased rationalisation on the lines required to enable stable and satisfactory employment to be maintained, no major change is envisaged in the programme already laid down for Bord na Mona. As its success must lie in the degree of liaison maintained between it and the Electricity Supply Board, close contact would be maintained to meet the power supply needs of the latter. The maintenance of peat production for electrical supply will eventually end and the Authority must plan what diversification is necessary to ensure employment in the transitional period.

Increased research into chemical production from peat is urgent, and must be undertaken as a profitable sideline. A marginal improvement

in peat moss sales for export should be possible with the new sales team.

Despite the reduction of mountain grazing available, due to the increased afforestation programme, it is envisaged that as a result of measures outlined for afforestation the production of sheep in upland areas could be trebled.

T R A N S P O R T.

The main features of all types of transport are dominated by the strength of the link with Britain. Land routes converge towards Dublin or Belfast, where large populations have grown up on the basis of local orientation towards trade with Britain. The domination of the nation by one or two large centres is a feature of imperialism; it is not a necessary consequence of national economic development.

Land transport is bedevilled by competition between road and rail, public and private sectors. The total capital tied up in transport is high; overall utilisation is low, therefore costs are high. This is a consequence of the uneven demand for transport; a high proportion of the business is due to tourist and emigrant traffic.

The relative insolvency of the public sector is due to the fact that the cream of the bulk traffic is handled privately, while the public sector caters for holiday peak traffic and small occasional consignments of freight which inflate the manual handling and clerical costs. Some socially desirable services are of course provided, some of them free.

The cost of individual passenger transport by private vehicle is higher than is seen by the operator. Having bought the car, he sees only the cost of the fuel as proportional to distance, as he has to pay the prime cost whether he travels or not. It therefore often appears cheaper to go a long journey by road rather than by rail, despite the increasing physical danger and waste of his time.

The decline of public transport services in outlying areas is one of the negative factors in rural economics. Dwellers in outlying areas are forced to tie up capital in private transport rather than in any other productive investment. Thus, the viability of the depressed areas is still further reduced and the drift into emigration augmented. Further, the type of transport to which the small farmer turns is dictated by what is available on the second-hand market. This is rarely of the type suitable as a farm transport vehicle. The 'land-rover' type of utility vehicle, capable of carrying a load on rough ground, is reserved for farmers rich enough to buy them new.

The growth of private car ownership in urban areas has resulted in increasingly unstable traffic conditions arising from traffic congestion. This has resulted in the disorganisation of the schedules of the public transport services and has made public transport relatively unattractive thus increasing further the demand for more private transport, which, in turn, only adds to the problem.

There is no need for us as a nation to repeat the costly mistakes made by other nations who have allowed unplanned development of individual transport to dominate men's lives.

The Sinn Féin Government would develop transport services, in such a way as to reverse the trends described above, which are inevitable only if the state chooses to ignore its social responsibility.

The main principle would be to provide a subsidised public transport service, so that traffic would be attracted back by low fares and good services. The bulk of inter-urban business traffic would be catered for by fast, frequent rail services. There is evidence that drastic cuts in passenger rail fares are possible without subsidy; the Canadian National Railways have introduced 50% fare cuts and have observed revenue increases. With modification in track, signalling equipment and better motive power speeds of 100 m.p.h. on main lines are technically possible, with safety unapproachable on any road system. Car-hire services would be associated with local rail terminals; local

bus services would connect.

The subsidy necessary would decrease in proportion as local industrial areas built up, providing a business base-load of inter-urban traffic. The interim transport subsidy would be regarded as part of the investment necessary for the development of local industry. Fares would be so low that the drift to private transport would be postponed, so that steps may be taken rationally over a lengthy period to allow private transport to develop without destroying all other amenities.

Public transport in rural areas would be provided by small buses running frequently, single-manned, and with low fares. Rural housing developments would be grouped in order to facilitate the provision of services. This would facilitate the provision of transport to the local town; rural public transport would fit in better with the village-type community rather than with the isolated farmhouse.

Areas in the north-west of the country whose economic life has been particularly hindered by partition will receive special attention as regards re-integration into the national transport system. The development of Derry in conjunction with Donegal and Sligo with Fermanagh will make possible the provision of transport services on a substantial scale in that region, including the re-laying of certain rail links as part of the fast inter-urban network of the future, serving major provincial cities of 100,000 or more where there are at present only declining rural towns.

City traffic problems will be tackled and the operation of private vehicles discouraged and, if necessary, restricted. City development will be so ordered as to avoid central congestion; cities will be regionalised. Industrialisation involving bulk traffic will, as a matter of policy, be developed, making the maximum use of rail links, to mechanised local storage and distribution centres, for local distribution by road.

Technical developments in freight handling will be introduced; mechanical handling, container traffic, automatic processing of information by computer etc. The U.S. railroads are fighting a strong battle along these lines; railroads are far from obsolete, as some economists suggest.

Road developments will be made a national rather than local responsibility. The road development programme will be co-ordinated with the work of the National Development Authority and with the Town and City Development Authority. The basic principle will be how to combine speed, safety and accessibility with the need to keep through traffic away from population centres, so that the latter may be served by public transport and made safe for pedestrians.

The provision of Motorways becomes an economic proposition once the heavy bulk traffic is kept off. The cost per mile is very sharply dependent on the maximum allowable load. It will, therefore, be desirable to link the major population centres by motorway at an early date. This is not in contradiction to the policy of encouraging fast inter-urban rail transport; there will be room for both types of service; to some extent they complement each other.

Sea transport is completely in the hands of foreign shipping companies, with the exception of some of the long-haul freight trade which is carried by Irish Shipping Ltd., and the B. & I. Steam Packet Co., both state owned. Irish Shipping spends most of its time carrying foreign freight between foreign ports, however. Even coastal traffic is under monopoly control, Coast Lines Ltd., being the dominant firm. This is a privately owned British firm, which explains the abnormally high level of cross-channel freight rates. This holds for both parts of the country; it was adversely commented upon by Isles and Cuthbert in their

... / ...

1956 report on the Six-County economy.

The harbour facilities are largely owned by the foreign shipping companies, which refuse to do business with anyone not playing the game their way.

A Sinn Fein Government would build up the share of Irish trade carried in Irish (built and owned) ships to an equitable 50%. This would involve building up our own cross-channel fleet, investing in port facilities abroad where necessary, and nationalising those at home.

Direct links would be established for all long-distance trade at present going via London or Liverpool. An Insurance co-operative will be initiated in collaboration with other small seafaring nations.

In the 26 Counties, Air Transport is at present in the hands of a state company; some foreign carriers are licensed also. The service is adequate, profitable and contributes substantially to the economy. Its profitability would be much greater if it were catering for the needs of the whole 32 Counties. However, an unhealthy trend of looking for foreign development capital has developed.

Foreign trade links by air freight, centred on Shannon, have begun to develop. The type of industry involved, however, has weak roots within the economy.

It will be the policy of the Sinn Féin Government to develop air transport both passenger and freight, as much as possible and economically desirable, using our own financial resources and keeping control within the state.

The question of the relation of the national aircraft factory to the national airline would arise. This would be the subject of serious study; it is possible that a mutually beneficial arrangement might be worked out whereby part at least of the aircraft used by the national airline would be produced at home. The main future of the aircraft industry will be to diversify into industrial automation equipment, as well as developing utilitarian rather than prestige or military type aircraft for the underdeveloped nations. The economics of the national airline will not be put in jeopardy by any doctrinaire constraints as to what type of aircraft it will employ; nor will this question be considered in isolation, any more than the economics of the rest of the transport system. Nationalised transport will be expected to serve the economy first, not merely to balance its books.

The possibility exists that bulk transport by waterway for certain commodities may again become economic, this being European experience. In the meantime, the waterways will be developed as a recreation amenity, including the Shannon-Erne link.

PLANNING AND BUILDING.

It is accepted in all countries that planning and construction are interlocked. Detailed planning must precede the construction of any building, but in addition, a nation must undertake comprehensive planning of its physical environment if the best use is to be made of natural resources. Natural resources include visual amenity; in other words, the landscape which must be safeguarded for the enjoyment of the citizens as a whole.

In Ireland, the need for physical planning has been grudgingly accepted under the name of 'town planning', owing to the complexity of modern living. Dublin has benefited from the planning which took place in the 18th century, to the extent that the street network laid down then is still usable. Had proper planning been imposed a hundred years ago, our rail system would be of greater use to us. Instead, military and strategic considerations dominated its layout. If we fail to plan properly now, our roads and industries will be wrongly located in relation to our needs in 20 years time, and our housing will be obsolete. The obsolescence period of houses and buildings is reducing; it is now regarded as about 60 years. Thus, towns can be expected to be continually in a process of change and much wastage will result if far-sighted planning methods are not adopted.

As a people, we have not an outstanding tradition in building, despite an early and promising start in pre-invasion times. History has since dominated the picture as symbolised by its visible remains. We should not feel ashamed of them. Whether these buildings were owned by the foreigner or not, they were built by Irishmen and in every worthy case we should try to preserve them.

The Irish building industry employs, North and South, about 100,000 men and is organised in about 500 firms, mostly small, but dominated by about six giant firms. There are also a large number of sub-contracting specialist firms for steelwork, flooring, asphaltting, painting etc. The latter are more stable than the small general contractors. In recent years, a number of firms specialising in civil engineering and harbour works have come into being; these are off-shoots of the big building firms.

Only the largest firms employ a complete range of craftsmen. Traditionally, these are employed and sacked as contracts are secured and completed. On average, building workers receive only eight months pay per annum; holidays are usually unpaid owing to the short service period. Conditions on sites are often primitive.

The boss in a small firm is sometime himself a worker on the site. At all times he must be on close call. Much time is wasted by lack of continuity of contracts. Sometimes in order to keep going a small man will undertake work at cost. The bankruptcy rate is, therefore, the highest of any industry. The average net profit does not exceed 6%.

Quality of work is variable in both small and large firms. In prosperous times, quality suffers.

In the 32-County Republic the building industry will be re-organised with the following objectives:-

(a) Establishment of a central Planning and Building Authority responsible for all building and construction work.

(b) To meet the social and economic objectives of the developing Irish economy.

(c) To provide secure employment and proper working conditions for those engaged in it.

These objectives may be obtained by the following means:-

(a) An alive top-level and long-term direction; building needs should be programmed for ten years and projected in broad terms for another five, investment in it being planned accordingly.

(b) Re-organisation within the industry permitting the introduction of state owned and co-operative firms alongside those which still choose to operate as members of the private sector. The policy of the state firms will be to think in terms of the industry as a co-operative enterprise for which they will bear the major responsibility. They will employ a full range of trades.

(c) An extension of schemes of education for those planning to enter the industry, and development of the apprenticeship system in conjunction with education in such a way as to raise the general level of skill.

(d) Constant employment at a high basic wage supported by productivity incentives; dry site conditions, mobile kitchens and toilet facilities.

(e) Democratic re-organisation of professional, management and workers' unions and institutes in order to achieve a common goal; more diversification of the professional groupings to be encouraged with a trend towards formation of schools of design.

(f) Maximum development of mechanisation and pre-fabrication, with use of standard modules and a computer control of scheduling, material allocation, and stocking.

(g) Encouragement of craft work where a particular standard or a one-off type building is involved.

The industrialisation of building will proceed rapidly, making use of the potentialities of the Belfast shipyard and aircraft industry, where skills exist easily adaptable to this end. Building raw materials will come increasingly under State control (cement and steel already are in part) in order to ensure co-ordinated expansion of the industry. The metric system will be adopted throughout and fittings will be standardised.

The State owned firms will operate mainly on major works and on export building. It is estimated that at present money value we could export in the form of materials, system buildings, and site constructed building and heavy engineering work to the value of £30 million.

Co-operatives of building worker firms will be encouraged. Private firms will also be encouraged on condition that they conform to national rates and standards.

The existing trade union structure is not adapted to defend its members' security in the face of advancing techniques, without the introduction of power tools, dry building techniques and other methods, trades become redundant, new trades emerge, while the skill required of the so-called 'labourer' is increasing. This latter category, once considered the lowest element in the industry is now often a trained machinery operator or an expert in the technology of concrete. It will, therefore, be necessary to initiate the re-organisation of the building trade unions, with the maximum of democratic discussion and participation of the membership, into a single union covering all trades and professions. The improved apprenticeship scheme will be integrated with the educational system, which will include Schools of Building Technology in the four major cities. These will be of university status and will be

linked with a building materials research Institute. The ordinary trained building worker would enjoy an educational level equivalent to the present product of the secondary educational system. Thus, the building trade unionist of the future will be a highly skilled and versatile technician and will need an organisation of a rather different nature than those which have grown up historically; the objective of the Union will, of course, be unchanged, but it will be considerably easier to attain it.

The higher grade of building professional would include within his scope the present-day architects, specialist engineer and surveyor qualifications, but he would be given opportunity to develop his talents beyond the design of individual buildings.

The schools of Building Technology will be linked with a Building Materials and Methods Research Institute, the objective of which will be continually to improve the quality of buildings and to reduce their cost in terms of human labour. By a system of refresher courses, all workers would be kept up to date on building technology.

Building land at present is subject to speculative purchase and sale and ground rents constitute an increasing fraction of the cost of new housing developments.

Under the Sinn Fein Government, building land will not be the means of enrichment of private individuals. It will instead be the subject of compulsory purchase by the State or the municipality concerned, at a price related to its agricultural value. The land will then be transferred by the state to the individual or body developing it. The owner will be compensated or given an option on an equivalent holding elsewhere. Ground Rent will be abolished.

In accordance with the policy of using the interest rate on capital as a social planning device, the rate for capital invested in housing developments will be set at a maximum of 5%. Instead of the occupier of a house paying 50% of his outgoings in the form of interest on a loan from a building society, local loan fund, or insurance group, he will now pay only a small fraction of that sum.

It will be open to anyone to build his own house on land purchased from the state or municipality.

The national housing programme will be planned in such a way as to create traffic-free environments where amenity is conserved and essential facilities conveniently placed. Village, small-town, city-central and city-suburban areas will be approached differently. Common to all will be the idea of a Community; a unit which provides the maximum of all types of amenity within convenient distance. Thus, farm houses and buildings will be grouped in hamlets sharing all services; rural towns will be encouraged to develop a communal and square structure rather than the present straggle of houses along one or two roads; cities will consist of noise-free and traffic-free groups of communities, served by adequate highways and rapid urban public transportation.

High-rise flats of adequate area with lifts will form the basis of central city renewal. The creation of linked parklands in valleys and along river banks will be a natural corollary of such planning. Standard flat and house plans of a sufficient number of types to cater for community needs will be developed and built on a large scale using layouts prepared in competition by young urbanists. Standard buildings and all types including outbuildings would be available for setting on free professional advice in rural areas.

Floor space areas inside houses will be increased; houses will be fully fitted with built-in storage and equipment including cookers and refrigerators. They will be planned for easy extension; for

... / ...

flexibility in room use to meet the changing needs of growing families.

Industry will be located with the intention of creating convenient and functional factories and other major structures as places of employment, to meet transportation needs as part of an export building programme.

Rational planning of industry will ensure the fullest development of port towns - especially those on our western coastline - and major inland towns. As far as possible export industries will be located in port towns.

Industrial building will be supported financially by the National Development Authority which will maintain staff competent to uphold environmental and planning standards.

Title: Sinn Féin Social and Economic Programme

Organisation: Sinn Féin

Date: 1971

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.