

Connolly Youth Movement

A Young Voice for Socialism!

Introduction

★ History

The Connolly Youth Movement (CYM) is an all-Ireland socialist youth organisation supportive of the Communist Party of Ireland. It was originally founded in 1963 by a group of young socialist republicans inspired by the Irish Workers' Party (forerunner of the CPI) who were involved in the Dublin Housing Action Campaign.

Following the crisis in socialism in the early 90s, the CYM declined in membership. However, in 2002 it was revived. Since its refoundation it has begun building an active youth movement committed to building socialism here and abroad.

★ Influences

The CYM is inspired by the philosophy of Scientific Socialism embodied by the works of Marx, Connolly and others. We draw inspiration and example from the heroic struggles of people across time and place, from the 1913 lockout to Venezuela today and from the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 to the constant struggle of the Cuban people for their right to self-determination and independence. In addition, given Ireland's context, we look to national liberation movements throughout history for lessons to be learned.

★ Membership

The CYM draws members from across the 32 counties of Ireland and from the different religious traditions of this country. It also contains members from different countries who have settled here and contribute enormously to the cultural and material development of this nation. It combines in its ranks the radical democratic spirit and rebellious revolutionary character that have defined the greatest moments in Irish history, 1798 and 1916. As a non-sectarian and secular organisation the CYM welcomes those of no faith and all faiths to join in its struggle.

★ CP Links

It is the membership of the organisation, guided by the principles of Marxism, that determine the campaigns, activities and programme of the CYM. By definition the CYM is an independent movement with its own goals and objectives set by its members. The CYM is, however, supportive of the Communist Party of Ireland (CPI). It recognises the extreme importance to the working class movement that only a communist party can play and so works closely with the CPI for the benefit of the communist movement nationally and internationally. With similar overall goals, although having very different roles to play, the

CYM and the CPI work in close and equal co-operation, with the CYM benefiting greatly in material and political support.

★ **Aims/objectives**

The Connolly Youth Movement, it is important to note, is not a political party. It is a social organisation and movement with its roots in the radical youth of this island. It draws its inspiration from the working people and their struggles here and abroad and seeks to foster the greatest international co-operation of the working masses. It sees its overall objectives as winning over the majority of people on this island and of this world to the struggle for a fairer and freer society based upon common ownership and democracy in all areas of life—political, economic, cultural and ultimately social. It aims to do this hand in hand with other political parties, trade unions, women’s organisations, and cultural movements. The CYM strives to organise young workers and students into an educated movement for revolutionary social change. It does this through its members who subscribe to the belief in organisation, education and agitation.

Statement of Principles

★ **Partition/Unity**

The CYM understands partition, the division of this island, as imperialist-imposed under the threat of “terrible and immediate war.” Neither of the two states that arose out of this partition are the natural or democratic resolution to the struggle for national independence and sovereignty, essential for the successful building of socialism. Both states were and continue to be the “carnival of reaction” that Connolly so accurately predicted would be the fall-out from partition. The Connolly Youth sees partition as purposefully dividing the people of this nation along sectarian religious lines so as to cement the position of the elite of the northern and southern establishments.

The unity of ordinary working people of all religions, and today of all nationalities, is essential to the struggle for socialism. Division has been, and still is, a policy of the ruling elites to maintain their dominance. We must learn to resist all divisive measures such as religious sectarianism, racism, sexism and economic blackmail.

At this point in time political struggle provides the best opportunity to advance the cause of unity, freedom and independence. The CYM is taking and will continue to take all opportunities to work for working-class unity.

Socialism cannot be built inside imperialism. National liberation is essential.

★ Trade Unions

In the best tradition of working-class organisations the CYM supports trade unions as the primary defence organisations of workers. Trade Unions fight for much-needed gains in pay and conditions for working people. They also play a very important role in international solidarity and international awareness. By active participation in trade unions workers learn the importance of unity, solidarity and struggle.

The trade union movement in Ireland north and south today faces many challenges. Social Partnership has and continues to sap the strength of the trade union movement and to prevent any independent perspective on economic and social policy. Both the state and employers are using Social Partnership to cripple unions' capacity to struggle.

The concentration of trade union membership in the private sector is reaching dangerously low levels, and as this sector is constantly growing an increasing number of workers remain isolated and unorganised. Trade Union growth is a key area that needs to be addressed.

Trade Unions are increasingly coming under attack from two sides. Elements of the "left" argue that they have become overly bureaucratic, while the right say they are unnecessary and a hindrance to Ireland's new economy. Workers need to understand the extreme importance of unions but also their limitations. The gains made over the years have been won by hard struggle and union activism. However, unions are by definition reformist and sadly more often than not defensive organisations. Their leadership will only reflect the level of politics of their membership; it is this area that needs to be fundamentally addressed.

The Connolly Youth Movement will continue to help organise workers into unions and support the demands of unionised workers.

★ Women's Struggle

The struggle for female emancipation and freedom, the struggle for equality, is part of the larger struggle for democracy and socialism. It is no coincidence that the women's movement was most militant and successful when allied to, and part of, the industrial labour movement. The success of the women's movement of over a century ago won the basis for many of today's reforms. This success was largely due to the leadership shown by socialist women like Pankhurst, Luxemburg and Zetkin. Women and feminists must never forget that the basis of International Women's Day is the working-class struggle for gender, economic and political freedom. Unity, in this broad movement, was achieved through working-class leadership.

Today what claims to be feminism or women's liberation makes a mockery of the lives and sacrifice of those who went before us. The class basis of gender discrimination is no longer discussed. Gender politics is often confused with sexuality politics, and "feminists" are those women who make it in a man's world, like Margaret Thatcher or Condoleezza Rice,

but do nothing to combat the structural oppression that exists.

While women in the “west” certainly have achieved a lot they are still paid less than men for the same job, they are still underrepresented in politics and they still carry the burden of the “double day.” Worldwide, the link between gender discrimination and imperialism is more obvious. Women remain countless nameless victims of war brought upon them by the US, Britain, the EU, NATO, and many more. Sexual slavery and trafficking affect more women than ever before and is a multi-billion dollar business for imperialism and its lackeys. Women globally are far from free.

The CYM believe that a real women’s movement is needed in this country and abroad, a movement led by working-class women for the emancipation of all women globally. The Connolly Youth is committed to combating the cultural and ideological oppression, whether in the form of oppressive religions or “popular culture,” that enslave minds and perpetuate the suffering worldwide. Women must fight to free themselves. Socialism can provide the basis for this freedom.

★ **European Union**

From its conception and birth the European Union and its preceding institutions have been about economic and political concentration in the hands of European business and political elites. It has from day one eroded national sovereignty and democracy, and continues to do so. It is closer and closer to becoming a superstate or a “United States of Europe” against the expressed wishes of the people and against the rhetoric of mainstream politicians. The true nature of the EU, that of an imperialist bloc, is always kept hidden. However, it is getting harder and harder to hide.

At the time of approval of this document by the CYM’s congress the Imperialist process of centralisation and integration of the European Union had been dealt a severe blow by the Irish people. Faced with the Lisbon Treaty, a Treaty developed to further undermine democracy in the nation-state and further economic privatisation and militarisation, the Irish people voted No. This latest rejection, following the Dutch and French no votes, is exposing Imperialism’s “Achilles heel,” that of democracy. Their arrogant response and contempt for the Irish voice is awakening people, especially young people, to the real nature and political aims of the Union. It is unclear, at the time of approval, what the EU’s tactics will be but no doubt they will not stop at this, and people must be vigilant and continue to campaign.

Progressive legislation coming from Brussels was in part driven by the existence of the USSR and the European elite’s fear of socialism. Without an organised labour movement the EU is free to trample upon its people as it searches for profits and markets around the globe. It is time we faced up to what we are a part of. The free movement of people is really the free movement of labour for capital’s exploitation. We can see that as plain as day here in Ireland today.

The battle against the European Union must be fought on the grounds of national democracy and sovereignty and fought hand-in-hand internationally. The CYM, with its fraternal organisations, fights for national democracy around Europe and for a Europe of people's co-operation, not capital's exploitation.

★ **Imperialism and War**

For those who argue that imperialism as a dominant global force is a thing of the past, take a look around you today. The invasions of Afghanistan, Iraq and Lebanon, the attempted coup in Venezuela, the posturing to Iran, the brutal oppression of the Palestinian people, the support for paramilitaries in Colombia and the constant intervention both verbally and militarily around the world by western states prove one thing: imperialism is as much a dominant and aggressive force today as it was 100 or 200 years ago. Things have changed, granted, but the capitalist powers today still dominate this world and its people politically, economically, militarily, culturally and socially. It is only a small minority of people through a number of states, companies and international institutions that benefit from this. These few people dictate the terms of life to the vast majority.

Imperialism today uses every opportunity to forward its agenda of privatisation and free trade. Crisis and catastrophes as varied as the 11 September 2001 attacks, the tsunamis in South-East Asia and Hurricane Katrina in the US are seized upon by right-wing think tanks, the IMF, the World Bank and Imperialist governments to forward their political and economic control. The confusion and disarray that follow these tragic events are exactly what is needed to implement unpopular economic decisions and also provide the conditions to clamp down upon the ensuing resistance. Aid, "development" and the "human rights" agenda are unfortunately increasingly tied to the imperial system we suffer under.

However, there is hope, for it is the very nature of imperialism that gives life to anti-imperialist democratic forces that are essential to this world's survival. It is the class contradictions created and exacerbated by imperialism at a national and international level that are creating militant resistance, from Ireland to Vietnam, Greece to Australia, Venezuela to the United States. The CYM, as a member of the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY), is part of the organised resistance. Imperialism also creates violent extremist movements of all kinds that often, sadly, misdirect their anger and alienation and do more harm than good. However, out of imperialism, out of its wars, out of its destructive march come great forces and great hope. The CYM will continue to be part of this resistance.

★ **Socialism or Barbarism**

Early in the twentieth century Rosa Luxemburg posed the question of "Socialism or Barbarism" as the path humanity could take. Never before has this been so relevant and so

obvious. The environmental destruction wrought by imperialist use of technology and production has brought us to the brink of global catastrophe.

It is currently estimated (recent UN report on climate change) that 50% of all living species will be killed off this century if capitalism continues to dominate. It is critical that we face the facts of what the current method of production has done to the environment.

The “greenhouse effect” caused by gases given off by fossil fuels combined with the destruction of carbon-dioxide-absorbing forests is causing what is commonly known as climate change. Acid rain, again a product of dependence and support for fossil fuel use, is destroying lakes and vegetation. When we combine this with the continued destruction of topsoils and expansion of deserts, fouling of land and surface waters by industrial dumping and excessive use of chemicals and of course pollution of the oceans we have a clearer picture of the destruction capitalism is leading against our natural environment.

It is the industrial imperial powers that are driving pollution. It is the establishment in these countries that is most resistant to change. It is this class that profits from polluting and from cleaning up spills and accidents. Yet it is not this class that suffers the gravest consequences. Instead it is the most vulnerable, as seen in South-East Asia and New Orleans. Nature may not discriminate against its victims but the infrastructure to withstand, survive and deal with life after it certainly favours the wealthy.

Individual acts such as reducing your carbon count or recycling, while a positive lifestyle change, have little impact on the trend we face. Individual acts will not satisfactorily tackle any of the above identified problems. It is simply not an option to ask, beg or cajole capitalism to respect the environment. The destruction of our planet in the pursuit of ever more difficult profits is a fact of capitalism. It is part of its make-up of survival. Nor is it an option to beg the leading industrialists to change their ways; besides being a desperate and pathetic act of the powerless, if they change someone will take their place in destroying the planet for short-term profits. Structural changes that run counter and in opposition to capitalism, like regulations, planning, and co-operation, not competition, need to be sought and enforced.

All people of progress and democracy must side with the international working-class movement as the only class that can liberate humankind. It is the only class whose interests are tied to democracy and common ownership. It is the working masses around this globe who are the future. The Connolly Youth Movement is part of this movement and part of the onward march to socialism, democracy and survival.

Actions and Struggle

★ Know Your Rights

For the last few years Connolly Youth has been engaged in a “Know Your Rights” campaign.

The increasingly grotesque nature of exploitation, abuse and oppression obvious around the country has asked serious questions of unions and their level of organisation. The Connolly Youth have felt it very important to play a role in creating awareness of workers' rights in Ireland. The growing migrant population, always vulnerable to the worst abuses, as many Irish when overseas, have made this campaign even more necessary and relevant.

The CYM has produced appropriate materials for this campaign and distributed them around this island. The membership has made itself available to act in many individual cases of gross exploitation and will continue to work to expose the system.

This campaign is only starting, and more action is needed. The CYM is committed to building information and advice centres to help workers and students. But more fundamentally, workers need to get involved in unions and demand a fighting union. Workers also need to know and fight the source of their problems, the capitalist social system.

★ **Shell to Sea**

In 2005 five farmers from Mayo were jailed for protesting against the construction of a dangerous pipeline through their community. A business consortium, made up mainly of Shell, Statoil and Marathon, were gifted a contract by the southern state to exploit Ireland's natural gas found off the west coast. For the sake of greed and profit these companies, backed forcibly by the state, will destroy a community and risk lives. Independent research has proved the validity of people's fears, but this is rarely cited in the media; instead an ugly smear campaign has dominated coverage.

Rarely have battle lines been so clearly drawn: big business, the government, the police force, the army and the media all serving and protecting profit at the expense of people and their environment.

The CYM has chosen its side in the battle and actively works in campaigning groups to fight the enormous power of capitalism.

★ **Working Class School of Politics**

The CYM runs a school every fortnight in political education. It is not an ordinary school with ordinary teachers. It is a revolutionary school designed to foster and liberate rather than dictate and oppress. The classes and programme are designed specially to introduce working people to political philosophy, economics, culture, and history. The school is open to the public and the members are the teachers. The class, since its inception in March 2007, has been very successful and has attracted members from different political organisations as well as none.

On top of classes, the school fosters and encourages the exchange of ideas over the internet and is constantly looking to expand and use new ways to encourage working-class

consciousness and activism. Education and criticism are key to the development of ideas and key to the emancipation of humankind. The Working Class School of Politics works towards these ends.

★ ***Forward* magazine**

The production and distribution of ideas are essential in the struggle to win people over to the side of socialism. Newspapers and magazines play a key role in this area. The mainstream media are entirely wrapped up in the hands of the elites, as a study of the US or Italian media display. It is capital that controls what is reported upon and how it is reported upon. A brief viewing of the billionaire Murdoch's Sky News is enough to show the subordinate role the media play to capital and its political leaders. The CYM produces *Forward* magazine to combat the biased and politically controlled media and to bring the truth to another generation.

Named after the newspaper Connolly wrote regularly for, the CYM believes *Forward* continues the tradition of powerful intellectual working-class analysis with constant cries for action and agitation. *Forward* is produced four times a year, with writers from all over the world. It reflects the struggles of workers and students in Ireland and across the globe. It is open to letters and encourages debate and involvement from organisations outside. *Forward* is an important part of the work of the Connolly Youth Movement.

★ **Rising Youth**

The CYM believes strongly in uniting left forces around this country and, unlike some groups, they do not just preach this. The Connolly Youth puts this into practice every day of its existence. Unity and co-operation have been and remain key to the Irish struggle for freedom and democracy. 1916 is evidence of this.

To this end the Connolly Youth played a leading role in the establishment of Rising Youth, a broad umbrella organisation of republicans, communists and trade unionists from across the left political spectrum. It is attached to no political party and is independent in thought and action, reflecting the politics and activities of its members.

Rising Youth are constantly engaged in activities connecting the goals, aims and objectives of 1916 to Ireland today. They work tirelessly to show the imperialist and reactionary nature of both states, southern and northern, and expose their contradictions with regard to the legacy of 1916.

To this day the CYM remains a guiding force within Rising Youth and for unity of all progressive forces.

★ **International Solidarity**

Connolly Youth, in the best socialist tradition, engages in international solidarity with

struggling people all over the world. It responds to changing international situations and demands for solidarity from around the world. As part of the WFDY it engages in and builds an international radical youth movement.

In particular the CYM plays an active role in Ireland's anti-war movements and campaigns for an independent and neutral foreign policy. The Connolly Youth work with and within the Ireland-Palestine Solidarity Campaign to promote and work for a Palestinian State with a government elected by the Palestinian people.

The CYM, since its foundation in the 1960s, has actively supported the building of socialism in Cuba and stood against the violent attacks upon its sovereignty and people. Cuba remains a beacon of light to the oppressed people of this world and stands out as an example of what can be achieved by a committed people and revolution. The CYM will continue to organise events and campaigns and educate to help the Cuban people in their heroic struggle.

Get Involved

★ Organise, Educate, and Agitate

The CYM is firmly rooted in the struggle for freedom and socialism, and the organisation believes it is only through struggle that these goals can ever be achieved. History tells us that progress for humanity must be won, it is never granted. This progress often comes at great costs but the CYM will strive to fight for it and stop at nothing to achieve it.

Connolly Youth will continue to organise young workers and students, educate and be educated by young workers and students and agitate for our demands and the demands of humanity.

Start up a CYM branch in your community today and join the struggle for a better life, for socialism.