

REPUBLICAN SOCIALIST PROGRAMME FOR IRELAND



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IRSP ★

Irish Republican Socialist Party

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Foreword

It would be a rare event indeed if we were to witness both the rebirth of a political organisation and the setting out in detail of that organisation's proposals for an Ireland free from prejudice, discrimination and exploitation. Since its formation in 1974, which brought together many socialist and republican fighters, the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP) has experienced many disappointments, has felt the combined weight of the state, North and South, in an attempt to force it off the political horizon. This unprecedented assault on its members and structures was reinforced by the petty dismissal of its political ideas and strategies by both the Official and Provisional IRA in an attempt to reduce politics to a struggle over territory. And yet in spite of state and opportunist repression, the IRSP continues to have a relevance and a purpose thirty-six years after its formation.

The publication of this document is a witness to the failure of its political enemies to drive it into the ground, to ignore the fact that determined INLA prisoners not only forced the issue of opposition to the Merlyn Rees policy of criminalisation in the prisons, but led that opposition by example.

In presenting this programme of political analysis for consideration by the wider public, but more specifically by the Irish working class and its representatives, the IRSP demonstrates, again by example, that its ideas are as relevant today as they were in 1974 when its founder, Seamus Costello, recommended them for acceptance to the delegates at the founding conference in Lucan, County Dublin.

By its declaration of its faith in the Irish working class, the IRSP demonstrates the consistency of its ideas, the legitimacy of its revolutionary past and the strength of its political programme. In the tradition of James Connolly, it is a democratic, socialist and internationalist movement which is non-sectarian, anti-racist and above all presents these ideas from a working-class perspective in which each nation has the right to self-determination, freedom and justice.

Introduction

‘The cause of labour is the cause of Ireland, the cause of Ireland is the cause of labour. They cannot be dissevered. Ireland seeks freedom. Labour seeks that an Ireland free should be the sole mistress of her own destiny, supreme owner of all material things within and upon her soil. Labour seeks to make the free Irish nation the guardian of the interests of the people of Ireland, and to secure that end would vest in that free Irish nation all property rights as against the claims of the individual, with the end in view that the individual may be enriched by the nation, and not by the spoiling of his fellows.’

This statement by James Connolly in the paper *The Workers’ Republic* in 1916 in exhorting the Dublin working class to rise in opposition to British imperialism has become the bedrock of republican socialism in the twentieth century and the basis for the inaugural programme of the republican socialist movement in 1974. The following twenty-four points form the working document of the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP) and are presented as the logical development in the twenty-first century of the programme established under Connolly’s leadership by the Irish Socialist Republican Party. As such, it should be read in common with and against the background and more detailed understanding of those issues described as ‘Perspectives on the Future of Republican Socialism in Ireland’.

The Aim of the Irish Republican Socialist Party

The aim of the party would be to end imperialist rule in Ireland, and establish a thirty-two-county democratic socialist republic with the working class in control of the means of production, distribution and exchange.

Ireland: A Nation

The IRSP is an all-Ireland political party which believes that the partition of Ireland into two states in which, in the North, systematic discrimination has forced the nationalist working class to live in ghettoised areas and suffer considerable levels of unemployment and endure decades of emigration. Coupled with the ritualised posturing of sectarian Orange institutions and the majoritarianist domination of the unionist parties, the North should be viewed as an irreformable sectarian rogue state. The IRSP rejects two-nationism and believing that there is only one nation in Ireland will campaign to convince the working class as a whole that it is in their political, economic and democratic interests to have it re-established with the removal of the border.

James Connolly

It should be recognised that the IRSP stands in the tradition of the Irish revolutionary James Connolly and that the IRSP therefore is a revolutionary socialist organisation which believes that class conflict is the motivating force in human history in which the IRSP stands unreservedly and exclusively for the interests of the working class.

The Broad Front

The struggle to bring all anti-imperialist forces together has been one of the defining strategies which has succeeded in exposing the opportunism of some in the wider anti-imperialist community and the inadequacy of others. The IRSP continues to acknowledge this strategy as the one capable of finally defeating the obstacles to independence, democracy and reunification. It therefore recognises that British imperialist interference in Ireland constitutes the most immediate obstacle confronting the Irish people in their struggle for national liberation and socialism, and it shall be the policy of the party to seek the formation of a broad front on the basis of the following demands:

- That Britain must immediately renounce all claims to sovereignty over any part of Ireland and its coastal waters, and should immediately specify an early date for the total withdrawal of her military and political presence from Ireland
- Having specified the date for her total withdrawal from Ireland, Britain must immediately withdraw all troops to barracks, release all republican and socialist political prisoners, grant a general amnesty for all offences arising from the military campaign against British forces or through involvement in the civil disobedience campaign, abolish all repressive legislation, grant a Bill of Rights which will allow complete freedom of political action and outlaw all discrimination whether it be on the basis of class, creed, political opinion, sex, or sexual orientation
- Britain must also agree to compensate the Irish People for the exploitation which has already occurred
- It shall be the policy of the IRSP to seek an active working alliance of all radical forces within the context of the broad front in order to ensure the ultimate success of the Irish working class in their struggle for socialism.

Internationalism

Socialist internationalism was best expressed in the resolution presented to the Second International at Stuttgart, supported by Connolly in 1907. This asserted: 'Wars between capitalist states are, as a rule, the outcome of their competition on

the world market, for each state seeks not only to secure its existing markets, but also to conquer new ones. In this, the subjugation of foreign peoples and countries plays a prominent role. These wars result furthermore from the incessant race for armaments by militarism, one of the chief instruments of ruling-class rule and of the economic and political subjugation of the working class.’

Elections

The IRSP is not an abstentionist party and will decide its attitude towards the contesting of any particular election on the basis of a thorough analysis of the conditions prevailing at the time.

Armed Struggle

There is no parliamentary road to socialism, because socialism cannot be forged by seizing the bourgeois state apparatus; nor is there a militarist road to socialism, because a social revolution requires the active participation of the masses; and therefore a socialist republic can only be established through the mass revolutionary action of the working class in the political, economic and social spheres. However, the IRSP recognises the right of the Irish people to engage in whatever form of struggle it deems appropriate.

National Liberation

Only the creation of a thirty-two-county Irish socialist republic can provide the means by which Irish national liberation can be realised; subsequently, there can be no socialism without national liberation in Ireland, nor can there be national liberation without socialism.

Socialism

Socialism must be administered democratically by the working class itself through working-class institutions created to permit the greatest degree of political freedom for all working people.

Imperialism

Recognising that British imperialist interference in Ireland continues to be the most immediate obstacle confronting the Irish people in their struggle for democracy, national liberation and socialism, it shall be the policy of the party to seek the formation of a broad front on the basis of the demand that Britain must immediately renounce all claims to sovereignty over any part of Ireland and its coastal waters, and should immediately specify an early date for the total withdrawal of her military and political presence from Ireland.

Whilst recognising that anti-imperialist war carried out by democratic forces engaged in an attempt to liberate national territory from invading forces is justified, the IRSP does not offer unqualified support to political/religious movements such as the Taliban, whose record of the abuse of human rights is unacceptable and barbaric. The IRSP is opposed to political solutions which are imposed by force of foreign imperialist aggression and calls for their immediate withdrawal from Iraqi and Afghan territory. However, it supports the right of the population of both nations to find democratic solutions without interference from both the Taliban and the Western powers.

Unionism and Orangeism

The Irish Republican Socialist Party advocates the reunification of the nation as the most positive means of establishing a fully democratic society in Ireland and views the continuation of unionism and Orangeism as inconsistent with that objective. Consequently, the IRSP views unionism and Orangeism, and by definition loyalism in Ireland, as a reactionary, racist and anti-democratic ideology which must be opposed at every opportunity. Furthermore, the IRSP views the attempt by the unionists to insist on the Orange Order's right to parade 'the Queen's highway' regardless of the rights of the residents' groups as an affront to local democratic rights and that there is no right to march which reinforces sectarian, misogynist and racist posturing. The IRSP appeals to the unionist workers to reject conservative ideologies and join with their brothers in the struggle to create a fair and equitable all-Ireland society.

Policing

The Irish Republican Socialist Party views the cosmetic exercise of changing the name of the RUC, the replacement of the cap badge with one designed to reflect all so-called 'traditions', the establishment of so-called 'District Policing Partnerships' and the strategy of engaging with local communities as a cynical exercise to normalise a discredited and unpopular armed paramilitary force. The IRSP rejects the attempt to force this unpopular arm of the state on the wider community and calls for the establishment of an unarmed all-Ireland police service subject to democratic control. The republican socialist movement fully accepts and understands that there may be circumstances when contact with the RUC/PSNI is an inevitable consequence of the unsatisfactory nature of the society in which we live. However, the IRSP warns the community as a whole that the downside of such contact could be the increase of police informers with the RUC/PSNI attempting to make the policing institution more acceptable through a normalising of relations by their involvement in day-to-day community activities.

The IRSP recognises the dangers of believing that there is such a thing as an 'independent' judiciary, or an objective judicial system. It needs to be clearly understood that the judiciary North and South presides over the laws which were enacted by partitionist governments and as the state is the state of the ruling class, by definition, the judiciary is also viewed as representing the interests of the ruling class.

The IRSP also notes with concern the continued presence of the extra-judicial MI5 in the North and calls for an immediate cessation of their activities in Ireland and their expulsion from Ireland.

Human Rights

Having specified the date for her total withdrawal from Ireland, Britain must immediately withdraw all troops to barracks, release all republican political prisoners, grant a general amnesty for all offences arising from the military campaign against British forces or through involvement in the civil disobedience campaign, abolish all repressive legislation, grant a Bill of Rights which will allow complete freedom of political action and outlaw all discrimination whether it be on the basis of class, creed, political opinion or sex. Britain must also agree to compensate the Irish people for the exploitation which has already occurred.

Trade Union Movement

The Irish Republican Socialist Movement provides critical support for any measures which seek to alleviate poverty, discrimination and exploitation. Republican socialists have to learn how to work with union leaders and bureaucracy when they move in the right direction and how to combat them when they vacillate or sell out. This involves not only supporting the trade union struggle and working in the unions as a whole, but also building within the unions networks of rank and file activists able to put pressure on the leaders and act independently of them when necessary.

The Community Movement

The Irish Republican Socialist Movement provides critical support for any measures which seek to alleviate poverty, discrimination and exploitation. However, it also recognises the limitations of such an approach as one which opens the prospect of the state exploiting opportunities for control. On the other hand, involvement in community-based activities does present an opportunity to provide leadership and build local alliances. The Irish Republican Socialist Movement seeks to build alliances with all social movements and views the

coming together of the trade unions and community sector as desirable in the long-term interests of the Irish working class. To this end, the IRSP supports any attempts to unionise community workers and to initiate wage-bargaining and working-conditions structures.

Socialist Economics

Socialism means the ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange collectively by the entire working class, with an end to wage labour, an end to production for profit and its replacement by a system of production based on human need.

An All-Ireland Economic System

The Irish Republican Socialist Party believes that the separation of our country following partition has militated against economic stability North and South and contributed in no small part to the continuation of discrimination and exploitation and that a commission be established consisting of all representatives of the organised working class to examine ways and means to establish an all-Ireland economic system.

European Union

The Irish Republican Socialist Party supports the demand for the greater strengthening of our nation's independence and although it understands the widespread support for the benefits brought as a result of Ireland's membership of the European Union, the IRSP also notes the problems associated with that membership as inconsistent with the need for a socialist society. Consequently, the Irish Republican Socialist Party supports moves towards greater co-operation between European socialist political organisations.

Environment

Reduce the dependency on the private motor car thus reducing the amount of harmful emissions into the atmosphere. This can only be done if an alternative mode of transport is put in its place. The exclusion of private cars from all city centres. The banning of chemicals which are harmful to the environment, used simply because they are profitable. The prosecution of a policy aimed at reducing our dependency on non-renewable sources of energy, both domestic and industrial, and a clear commitment to using renewable sources of energy as the main source of energy. All waste should be recycled with waste of a very low toxicity which is not recycled to be used as a source of fuel. There must be a total opposition to all forms of nuclear activity, power and bombs with

the immediate closure of the Sellafield nuclear plant. Seek the removal of all carcinogenic substances and seek an end to the wanton destruction of the rain forests.

Housing

The IRSP believes that an all-Ireland approach to housing need in which the experience and resources of all currently responsible for social housing delivery are brought to bear in a search for solutions to the current housing crisis. The IRSP calls for the establishment of a housing commission consisting of representatives of the housing industry and trade unions, North and South, tasked with the sole aim of resolving the nation's housing needs.

All-Ireland Rail Network

As a matter of urgency, the IRSP calls for the establishment of a national commission of enquiry to establish the most effective means of re-establishing the national rail network. Recognising the urgency of the environmental crisis, the IRSP calls for the establishment of a fully resourced programme of public works with statutory planning powers to acquire land to enable the re-establishing of the rail network throughout the island of Ireland.

Globalisation

The Irish Republican Socialist Party is resolutely opposed to the process of economic development described as globalisation, as it favours the free movement of capital and tends to place an emphasis on the exploitation of the poor and the needy in the search for the maximising of profit. The party is in favour of unqualified support for the anti-globalisation movement and calls on the trade union movement to issue a boycott of those multinational corporations with a record of exploitation of people in the Third World. Furthermore, and in the light of the current recession, the IRSP calls for the nationalisation of all the major banks and for the prosecution of those senior banking executives found to have been responsible for the collapse of the banking industry in Ireland.

Equality

In spite of the changes that have taken place in Ireland as a whole, the fundamental structure of the class-driven society has remained unaltered. The Irish Republican Socialist Party recognises that the working class in Ireland continues to be the driving force in building and strengthening the Irish economy North and South and that this should be reflected in a more equal distribution of the nation's wealth and resources.

The Education System

The Irish Republican Socialist Party believes that the domination of the education system by sectarian and state interests following partition has militated against the building of a fair and equitable education system North and South and contributed in no small part to the continuation of discrimination and exploitation. Consequently, the IRSP calls for the formation of a commission consisting of all representatives of the organised working class, including the academic community, to examine ways and means for the establishing of an all-Ireland education system.

The IRSP views the attempt to resist the replacement of the Eleven Plus by unionists and some sections of the Catholic academic community as elitist, conservative, narrow, representative of middle-class interests and against the interests of the wider community. It supports the position taken by primary-school principals and calls for the immediate abandonment of this outmoded and divisive selection process and its replacement by a system of fair and equitable transfer of children from the primary to the secondary sector.

Health

The Irish Republican Socialist Party calls for a major review of health-service provision North and South with an emphasis on the creation of one single health service for the island as a whole, with greater resources being made available for the upgrading of hospitals close to the border such as Altnagelvin and Letterkenny. The IRSP further supports calls for greater resources to be made available for research, especially in those teaching hospitals in Belfast, Dublin and Galway.

Women and Socialism

The republican socialist movement calls for the immediate introduction of legislation to redress the historic imbalance between men and women, to outlaw any form of gender discrimination, recognise the right of women to choose, strengthen laws against exploitation and introduce free universal access to childcare facilities.

Irish Culture

The Irish Republican Socialist Party recognises and acknowledges the cultural changes taking place within twenty-first-century Ireland and welcomes any attempts to integrate all newcomers as consistent with the need to build a multicultural modern Ireland. It does, however, recognise the importance of

maintaining traditional cultural forms and supports the revival of the Irish language and promotes calls for greater resources to be made available in the promotion of Gaelic games and the Irish language and encourages an all-Ireland approach to the promotion of Irish culture. Arts councils, North and South, should work for better co-operation in project co-ordination and strategic development; community arts provide individual development and community empowerment and should be given a special designation within arts and culture policy and budgeted accordingly. Irish-language newspapers should be expanded with the support of government funding. All public authorities and public buildings should operate a bilingual policy but with the clear understanding that Irish-language speakers are not to receive preferential treatment, or that public-service jobs do not require an Irish-language qualification for appointments or advancements.