

PERSPECTIVES ON THE FUTURE OF REPUBLICAN SOCIALISM IN IRELAND





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Notes to Readers

The material contained in this report is a retrospective study of the relationship between Britain and Ireland, revealing the destiny that the former had sought to impose on the island of Ireland. Building on that, we hope the contents of this publication will provide the reader with objective and historical facts from the past to the present day in order to contribute to the clarification of the real causes of the conflict in Ireland and offer a republican-socialist way forward for economic, social and political change. The cause of the conflict and the alternative presented to the Irish people in this document is an honest search for a political solution for an independent Irish society based on the principles of equality, social justice, economic democracy and lasting peace.

Ignoring the right of Irish people to independence and sovereignty and to determine its own economic, political and social system of governance only impedes and obstructs a sustainable, peaceful solution for positive change.

We, the collective leadership of the Irish Republican Socialist Movement (IRSM), would like to thank the individuals and organisations who have assisted us with this publication and offered us their opinions, criticisms and suggestions, all of which were taken into consideration.

IRSM Collective Leadership





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Foreword

This document has been composed with the specific aim of pulling together all of the elements of political thought that have been the subject matter of an alternative political strategy under the auspices of the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP) over the course of the last thirty-six years since its formation in 1974.

The original programme, set out and agreed at the founding conference in the Spa Hotel in Lucan on Sunday 8 December 1974, was broad in its wider outlook but limited in the strategy agreed to meet its objectives. In many cases, this has been the major problem confronting the Movement in its search for answers to the ongoing political problems facing working people throughout the country and which was most evident in the embarrassing failure of the Sinn Féin president in his televised response during the last election to address questions on the economic crisis facing the Irish people.

It is becoming gradually more evident that sloganising without substance is no longer satisfactory when addressing an increasingly politically aware population. Nor is it sufficient to expect a Southern electorate to constantly genuflect to the evident successes of republicans in the North when factories in Dublin, Waterford and Shannon are closing as a result of the global crisis. Republican socialists must be able to address these questions with a fuller and more comprehensive understanding of the complexities of the problems and avoid the dangers of becoming too Six-County centred, thus reinforcing and inadvertently contributing to the perpetuation of a partitionist culture.

And just as the ideas set out in the IRSP founding statement were products of its time, so also the ideas eloquently communicated by James Connolly were products of his time. Societal changes have taken place. The working class is still organised under the banner of the trade union movement and the emergence in the last thirty years of a vibrant 'community' movement contributes to an energetic civil society. But they also reflect the uncertainty of the working class at this point in time. Both suffer from a growing malaise in the body politic while the community movement suffers from too much dependency on the financial resources of the state. In spite of its energy, much confidence on the community movement's ability to become an agent of change is lim-

ited in spite of the several attempts to draw it together as a concrete and coherent political force.

And just as the ideas of Connolly, Costello and Power have a resonance for the continuity of republican socialism in Ireland, so also we must see them as products of their time. In the meantime, there is an intellectual gap which needs to be addressed and which takes account of the changes and developments which have taken place in Ireland – not just over the course of one and a half centuries – but even over the course of the past ten years.

The attempt at a ‘peace’ process without taking account of the failure to resolve the national question, or the endorsement of the right of the Orange institutions to coat trail their way through every country road in the Six Counties, emphasises the need to address the fundamental problems of imperialism and a recognition that whatever some republicans may feel, imperialism has not yet gone away.

The document, therefore, is constructed in such a way as to set out the political programme of the Irish Republican Socialist Movement, concentrating on seven general themes: the national question, the class question, the national economy, the global economy, women, and the cultural context of change, including the development and future of the Irish language. Each of these areas will contain several responses from the principal influences of Connolly and Costello and, where appropriate, Ta Power.

These general themes will be expanded into more detailed discussions which explore the ideological and theoretical understandings of the republican socialist movement as well as the practical political implications for its continuing development.

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 objective 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.

We realise that the future lies in a recognition of the central importance of the working class as the principal social force for change in Ireland and that subsequently, the Irish Republican Socialist Party acknowledges the key significance for fundamental change of the relationship of the national and class questions.

Connolly’s assertion in his essay on socialism and nationalism set out the argument that a fundamental part of the struggle for socialism in Ireland must be the recognition of the need to confront imperialism in all of its forms. By definition, such an assertion must contain a statement of what we understand to be the nation and why Irish forces opposed to external domination must understand its importance in the struggle for socialism. That is why he set out his ideas and why it serves as a useful starting point

in the search for a socialist programme in Ireland at the beginning of the twenty-first century. His ideas were reinforced by his view of the foundation of the Irish Socialist Republican Party (ISRP) in which he made explicit the ISRP position on the national question:

‘The establishment of an Irish Socialist Republic based on the public ownership by the Irish people of the land, and instruments of production, distribution and exchange. Agriculture to be administered as a public function, under boards of management elected by the agricultural population and responsible to them and to the nation at large. All other forms of labour necessary to the wellbeing of the community to be conducted on the same principles.’

This paper, therefore, will seek to understand the nature of republican socialism in Ireland, examine its distinctiveness and link to James Connolly and his ideas, and argue that its ideology falls within the broad republican tradition and is unique in that it argues for an understanding of the clear relationship between the national question and the struggle of the Irish working class for freedom and justice. Significantly, the republican socialist movement has set out its programme against a background of three influences – in particular, those established in 1974 when Seamus Costello announced the political programme of the IRSP in which the authors affirmed the central ideological importance of James Connolly. So, just as Connolly’s ideas are located within a particular period in time, so the issues contained in what is described as the ‘Ta Power document’ must also be read with the period in time in which they were set out as an important historical record.

In pursuit of these arguments, the paper will consider the nature of the social and economic development of the Irish nation: consider the basis on which the republican socialist movement came to exist; compare and contrast the various political developments which mark its progress and culminate in a clearer understanding of the need for a reassessment of the IRSP programme in the context of the changes which have taken place over the course of the past thirty-five years.

Republican Socialist Movement: The Formation

After persistent harassment by the Official Republican movement's leadership, the Irish Republican Socialist Party was founded on 8 December 1974 by former members of the Officials, independent socialists, and trade unionists headed by Seamus Costello. A military wing, the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA), was founded the same day, although its existence was intended to be kept hidden until such times when the INLA could operate effectively. Seamus Costello was elected as the party's first chairperson and the army's first chief of staff. Together, the IRSP and the INLA refer to themselves as the Irish Republican Socialist Movement (IRSM).

As a revolutionary party opposed to the presence of armed British troops in the six occupied counties and campaigning against the existence of the sectarian northern state, the principal anti-imperialist strategy of the IRSP was the formation of a broad front.

Recognising that British imperialist interference in Ireland constitutes 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 following demands:

- a) 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.
- b) Having specified the date for her total withdrawal from Ireland, Britain must immediately withdraw all troops to barracks, release all internees and sentenced 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.

c) 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.

It was always argued by Seamus Costello that the founding statement of the IRSP was in line with existing Official Sinn Féin policy and that his campaign within the Officials was an attempt to force the leadership to implement the democratically agreed policy and to force the Official IRA to launch an assault on the institutions and armed forces of the Northern sectarian state. Seamus Costello was subsequently expelled from the Official Irish Republican Army (OIRA) following a court-martial, and from Official Sinn Féin. Along with other activists, he was dissatisfied with the group's tactics and policies on the issues surrounding the 1972 OIRA ceasefire and the refusal of the leadership to implement democratic decisions. He was left with little alternative and the IRSM was formed. But in an attempt to destroy the new organisation, the Official IRA launched an assault on its members in Belfast and Derry. Several volunteers from the INLA and IRA were killed during this period.

Although a truce was eventually reached following meetings between the INLA and OIRA leadership in Dublin and brokered by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, Billy McMillen, Belfast Official IRA Officer Commanding in Belfast, was killed as he emerged from a shop in the Lower Falls. In the following years, the IRSP and INLA saw many members killed in attacks from both Official and Provisional IRA and state forces and loyalist paramilitaries, including leading members Miriam Daly, Ronnie Bunting and Noel Little.

In 1977, Seamus Costello was shot dead in his car by Official IRA member Jim Flynn armed with a shotgun.

Three members of the INLA died in the 1981 Hunger Strikes in HM prison Long Kesh: Patsy O'Hara, Kevin Lynch, and Michael Devine.

From the outset, members of the IRSP took part in elections, with Seamus Costello holding office in Wicklow County Council and Brigid Makowski elected as a Shannon Town Commissioner. In 1981, party members Gerry

Kelly and Sean Flynn won two seats on Belfast City Council in a joint campaign with People's Democracy, although neither councillor served a full term – one going on the run after being implicated during the supergrass trials. The founding statement made the position on participation in elections perfectly clear:

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. In keeping with this analysis, the IRSP will, in principle, participate in the electoral process when and if the objective conditions will advance the prospect of building a mass revolutionary socialist party.

But there was a need to expand on this initial declaration and to clarify any ambiguities which might have existed, particularly among more traditional republicans, who were concerned that the movement may have had reformist tendencies. This clarification emerged in a motion which was put to an IRSP Ard Fheis in 1984 and subsequently agreed.

That there is no parliamentary road to socialism, because socialism cannot be forged by merely seizing the bourgeois state apparatus by electoral ballot; nor is there a guerrilla 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.

Against that background, the IRSP won two seats on Belfast City Council and came close to winning a third. The IRSP endorsed two candidates, Kevin Lynch and Tony O'Hara, in the Free State parliamentary election as Independent Anti H-Block candidates. Neither candidate won, but Lynch came within 300 votes of winning a seat, while O'Hara garnered a respectable number of votes.

At the IRSP's inaugural convention, it became the first political party in Ireland to support the legalisation of abortion and equal rights for gays and lesbians. In 2000, it became the first Irish party to support equal rights for bisexual and transgender people.

At the IRSP's convention, a significant ideological motion was presented for discussion:

That the IRSP stands in the tradition of the Irish revolutionary and Marxist James Connolly and that the IRSP, therefore, is a revolutionary socialist organisation, and that the IRSP 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.

In addressing the burning problem of partition, the IRSP made it clear that in standing in the Connolly tradition, the issue of the relationship between the class and national questions needed further clarification. Hence:

That 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.

That 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.

In whatever way the political programme illustrates the ideological aims and objectives of the party, it will always at its base be defined as a republican socialist party in which the national and class questions are seen as inseparable.

Ireland: A Nation

‘What is a free nation? A free nation is one which possesses absolute control over all its own internal resources and powers, and which has no restriction upon its intercourse with all other nations similarly circumstanced except the restrictions placed upon it by nature. Is that the case of Ireland? To both questions the answer is: no, most emphatically, no!’ James Connolly.

In 1974, the newly formed IRSP affirmed its demand for the reunification of the island of Ireland on the basis of independence, unity and democracy.

Despite political partition, the island of Ireland continues to act as a single entity in a number of areas that transcend governmental agencies. The two jurisdictions share a transport, telecommunications and energy and water systems. With a few notable exceptions, the island as a whole is the main territorial unit for major religious, cultural and sporting organisations. The island fields a single international team in most sports. One notable exception to this is association football (although both associations continued to field international teams under the name ‘Ireland’ until the 1950s).

The IRSP regards the 1998 Belfast Agreement as yet another attempt to divert attention of the republican constituency from the aim of reunification through the claim that there would be increased political co-operation between the two jurisdictions.

The creation of a North-South Ministerial Council, established under the agreement, and an institution through which ministers from the Free State and the unionist-dominated Northern ‘Executive’ can formulate all-island policies in twelve ‘areas of co-operation’ such as agriculture, the environment and transport, but they lack sufficient powers to make them relevant. This council is nothing more than a toothless diversion which allows Sinn Féin and others an opportunity to convince the public that the stages to reunification are being met. Six of these policy areas have associated all-island ‘implementation bodies’. For example, food safety is managed by the Food Safety Promotion Board and Tourism Ireland markets the island as a whole. Although three major political parties, Sinn Féin, the Irish Green Party and, most recently, Fianna Fáil, claim to be organised on an all-island basis, only Sinn Féin has ever

seriously contested an election and held seats in both jurisdictions, although its support base in the Twenty-Six Counties is negligible, with the loss of several seats in the last general election. The object of this exercise is designed to convince the nationalist community, North and South, that partition is gradually being eroded. Nothing could be further from the truth.

However, and interestingly, despite the two jurisdictions using two distinct currencies (the euro and pound sterling), an increasing amount of commercial activity is carried out on an all-island basis. This has in part been facilitated by the two jurisdictions' shared membership of the European Union (EU). Calls for the creation of an 'all-island economy' have been made from members of the business community and policymakers so as to benefit from an increase in competitiveness. All of these point to the overwhelming case for economic reunification. The struggle must now point to the need to make the case for demographic reunification and witness the final stage of the struggle for national self-determination.

The Irish Republican Socialist Party 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. Furthermore, the IRSP believes that a democratic Ireland can only be fully realised when there is a clear distinction between Church and state.

Internationalism

The Irish Republican Socialist Party is not a nationalist party and rejects any suggestion that its republican ideological roots are formed by idiosyncratic and jingoist tendencies. International socialism is a concept based on the view that capitalism is now a global system, and therefore the working class must act as a global class if it is to defeat it. Just as Larkin encouraged Liverpool dockers to act in their own class interests by refusing to handle materials during the Dublin Lockout in 1913, workers should struggle in solidarity with their fellow workers in other countries on the basis of a common class interest.

Socialist internationalism was best expressed in the resolution presented to the Second International at Stuttgart and supported by Connolly in 1907. This asserted that: ‘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 political subjugation of the working class.’

Since the end of the Second World War, imperialism has gone through several stages of development resulting in our understanding of what we now describe as globalisation. And just as the management of profit has developed global dimensions, so also the working class must develop global strategies in defence of working-class rights.

The IRSP supports the right of other working-class people living in subjugation as a result of the control and exploitation by imperialist interests to take whatever means they deem necessary for the establishment of democracy and national self-determination. Furthermore, the IRSP will engage with other socialist political parties, including those anti-imperialist forces already occupied in struggles of resistance, to build networks of political opposition in the interests of working-class people everywhere.

Unionism

The major problem militating against reunification is the persistent demand for union with Britain by a substantial minority which for the most part are located in the northeast of Ireland, especially around Belfast. Unionism in Ireland is a conservative and reactionary ideology that favours the maintenance or strengthening of the political and cultural ties between Ireland and Great Britain. Unionists have actively supported measures to guarantee their dominance, including discrimination and sectarianism, through their power of the armed state forces – the RUC (now PSNI), B Specials, Ulster Defence Regiment and, when necessary, the British army. As a consequence, since partition, the unionists have presided over the administration of a sectarian and oppressive state.

In addition, unionism is compounded by its association with the Orange institutions which, because of their exclusivist and inherently sectarian and misogynist character, is inconsistent and incompatible with the search for an inclusive and democratic society in Ireland. The main consequence of this historic development is the hegemony of the unionist aristocracy on the unionist working class in which that section of the Northern workers have absorbed the reactionary ideologies associated with unionism.

The political relationship between Britain and Ireland dates to the twelfth century, and reached its height in the Act of Union 1800, which created the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. In 1922, the southernmost twenty-six counties of Ireland gained independence from the UK as the Irish Free State. The remaining six counties then constituted the territory of ‘Northern Ireland’ and has remained part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Unionism (Ulster Unionism as it is known today) is overwhelmingly concerned with the relationship between Northern Ireland (also referred to as the ‘North’ and the ‘Six Counties’) and Great Britain.

Unionists are associated with the community consisting of mixed Anglo-Irish or Scots-Irish descent of which the latter are descendants of settlers who migrated to Ireland during the Plantation of Ulster (1556–1620). A significant number of individuals do not fit neatly into such sets of categories (there exist both Protestant nationalists and Catholic unionists) and the distinction between a ‘pure’ native Catholic Irish population and ‘pure’ Protestant British

colonists is not consistent with the centuries-old history of cross-community intermarriage, cultural assimilation and religious conversion.

However, for purposes of historical ethnic distinction, the leadership of the two groups can be defined by two separate historical events: the Anglo-Norman conquest of Ireland under King Henry II and the Elizabethan era and Stuart succession of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries before ties with England were identified as unqualified support for Protestantism.

The Plantation of Ulster occurred during the Elizabethan and Stuart era conquests. This colonial settlement provided land and territory from displaced Ulster Catholics to loyal Protestants and freeholders, principally, but not entirely, settled by Scots and English of the Anglo-Scottish border region. Therefore, it is generally reckoned it was with the Scottish factor that accompanied the Plantation system that the situation changed definitively for the Protestant connection, between the Anglo-Irish and Scots-Irish on the one hand and Gaelic-Irish and Jacobite Anglo-Irish on the other. It was these ethnic distinctions which arose from the conflicts and the Plantation system that usually defined the two camps.

The creation of Northern Ireland under the Government of Ireland Act 1920 and the later creation of the Irish Free State in the remainder of the island separated Southern and Northern unionists. The exclusion of three Ulster counties, Donegal, Monaghan and Cavan, from 'Northern Ireland' left unionists there feeling isolated and betrayed. They established an association to persuade their fellow unionists to reconsider the border, but to no avail. Many assisted in the policing of the new region, serving in the B Specials while continuing to live in the Free State.

Unionists were in the majority in four counties of the new Northern Ireland (Antrim, Derry, Down and Armagh) and formed a large minority in the remaining counties of Fermanagh and Tyrone. Sir Edward Carson had expressly urged the new Northern Ireland Prime Minister, Sir James Craig, to ensure absolute equality in the treatment of Catholics so as to guarantee the stability of the new state. Discrimination, however, took place with the tacit acceptance of the unionist hierarchy, particularly in the areas of housing, employment and local-government representation. The extent of discrimination is disputed, in particular by DUP representative Gregory Campbell, who argues

that there was also widespread poverty among Protestants. But a more reliable indicator of the problem of discrimination is the book written by English academics Smith and Chambers, *Equality in Northern Ireland*, that the effects of poverty between the two communities was qualitatively different for Catholics in that their poverty was not only as an effect of economic inequality, but more importantly was also directly affected *because* they were Catholics rather than in the case of Protestants, poverty emerging as a consequence of the economic conditions at the time. Even former Ulster Unionist Party leader David Trimble has admitted that the North was a 'cold house' for Catholics for most of the twentieth century. But in the face of overwhelming evidence, many unionists, particularly in the Democratic Unionist Party, continue to deny that organised discrimination took place and attribute the poverty suffered by both communities to wider economic conditions.

Thus, as a general rule, the term *unionist* originally described supporters of the union of Britain and the Six Counties in a United Kingdom. In practice, it has been responsible for perpetuating the domination of the Catholic working-class community by the unionist parties and its quasi-military shadow, the Orange institutions. As a consequence, unionism has been guilty of maintaining a racist, sectarian state through the force of arms, the widespread use of gerrymander and the employment of a majoritarian philosophy as a means of justifying the existence of an anti-democratic state.

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.

Imperialism

An Irish republican socialist understanding of imperialism is the imposition of colonial rule by Britain and other European countries, especially the ‘scramble for Africa’, during the late nineteenth century. Given the Irish experience, imperialism has its roots in the various invasions of Ireland, in particular during the Plantation of the sixteenth century and the subsequent exploitation of the land, enforced evictions and brutal reprisals for minor uprisings. Many nineteenth- and twentieth-century commentators viewed imperialism in terms of their understanding of the motivating forces. Among these, Hobson, Luxemburg, Bukharin and especially Lenin focused on economic factors, the rational pursuit of new markets and sources of raw materials. Lenin argued, in *Imperialism: the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, that imperialism is an economic necessity of the industrialised capitalist economies, seeking to offset the declining tendency of the rate of profit by exporting capital. As a result, imperialism becomes the monopoly stage of capitalism. Following from that observation, recent experience shows the physical manifestation of imperialism in Ireland as the widespread deployment of British troops and the employment in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries of paramilitary police units such as the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC), the use of ‘loyal’ institutions as auxiliaries and, after partition, the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the notoriously sectarian B Specials.

More recently, and over the past forty years, the Catholic population has been on the sharp end of a repression which has been applied in many different ways, but mainly through the use of armed force and the legal system, especially through the Diplock courts in the North and their equivalent ‘Special Criminal’ courts in the South.

On a military level, this has involved the constant presence of as many as 30,000 members of the British army, UDR and RUC, who at their most ruthless have carried out such acts as the massacre of eleven civilians in Ballymurphy after internment in 1971: fourteen unarmed demonstrators on ‘Bloody Sunday’, January 1972; killing over a dozen people (many of them young children) with plastic bullets; and numerous undercover ‘shoot-to-kill’ ambushes aimed at ‘terrorist suspects’ (but frequently resulting in the violent execution of innocent passers-by unwittingly caught up in SAS-style stake-outs, or of teenage joy riders speeding through roadblocks).

The legal system has also played a vital role through the use, at various times, of mass internment without trial, torture and ill-treatment of suspects during interrogation, Diplock courts, conviction of defendants on the basis of uncorroborated evidence provided by supergrasses, and the sweeping measures of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA). During the years 1982–91 nearly 14,500 people in the North and mainland Britain were detained under the PTA, on ‘suspicion of terrorism’; of these, only 230 – 1.5% – have ever been *charged* with terrorist offences, let alone convicted. On top of all this, there is also the systematic and calculated everyday harassment of car drivers and pedestrians being stopped for identity checks, and the frequent invasion of Catholic areas by the army and RUC in order to carry out house-to-house searches (amounting in 1990 to an average of at least one house raid taking place every two hours).

In spite of the various Sinn Féin/DUP agreements for a power-sharing executive in Stormont, imperialism hasn’t gone away. The current focus for the imperialists, in an undignified scramble for oil, has moved to the Middle East. Now that Saddam Hussein has been executed, the imperialists are running out of excuses for invading Afghanistan: capturing Bin Laden, building democracy, establishing human rights, emancipating women, constructing a better life for the people, ending the drugs trade – all have proved to be lies. Now they are reduced, as Gordon Brown said, ‘to protecting our nation from global terrorism’. However appalled we might be at the bombing of the twin towers and other attacks on Western targets, it must be understood that they were as a direct response to the imperialists’ global onslaught, not the cause of it. They have been (and could be) planned anywhere in the world, though none have originated in Afghanistan.

US General James Jones admitted there were only about 100 Al Qaeda fighters in Afghanistan. A US intelligence report stated that 90% of the so-called Taliban are ‘a tribal localised insurgency (who) see themselves as opposing the US because it is an occupying power’, and went on to say that they have no goals beyond Afghanistan’s border.

The hypocrisy of the imperialists knows no bounds; in spite of their posturing, they are talking to the Taliban. Their opposition to fundamentalist Islam is just another hypocrisy. After all, they created and armed the mujahedeen, for anti-Soviet purposes, from whom the Taliban originated. They embraced the Taliban in the 1990s when they wanted an oil pipeline through Afghani-

stan; they cosy up to the fundamentalist régime in Saudi Arabia. But while a leaked British government document and army chief of staff Sir Jock Stirrup both agree 'we want to talk to all the people fighting us', the British prime minister hastily denies they would talk to anyone, only to those willing to lay down their arms. Meanwhile, the combined imperialist forces of NATO are prepared to bomb Afghanistan back to the Stone Age. The phrase 'bomb them back into the Stone Age' was made by US Air Force General Curtis E Lemay, who is quoted in his autobiography as saying his response to North Vietnam would be to demand that 'they've got to draw in their horns and stop their aggression, or we're going to bomb them back into the Stone Age'. The gist of that statement implied a fierce aerial attack that would have utterly destroyed its target's infrastructure, forcing its survivors to revert to primitive technology in order to survive. During the war in Vietnam, approximately 1.1 million North Vietnamese were killed as a direct result of aerial bombing. More recently, a poll conducted between 12 and 19 August 2007 estimated 1,033,000 violent deaths in the Iraq War.

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.

Furthermore, while 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.

Policing and Justice

The difficulty facing the Irish people, North and South, of how to confront and deal with armed sections of the state which have the power to inflict great damage on weakened and isolated communities, have an appalling record of abuse, torture and death, and which continue to harass members of the republican and wider nationalist community, is one which continues to pose a problem.

From a nationalist perspective, the tone was set for the police force at an early stage, when Dawson Bates in August 1922 gave the Orange Order special permission for an Orange Lodge to be formed in the RUC. In April 1923, he would speak at its first reunion; later, however, involvement in politics was 'discouraged'. But in 1924, District Inspector John Nixon was accused of making a 'fiercely unionist' speech at an Orange Order function. The attitude of the Unionist Party ensured that the force's character would be fixed. According to one commentator, they were looked upon by most Catholics as simply the 'coercive arm of the Unionist Party'. The minister with responsibility for 'Home Affairs' was an Orangeman. Until it became too embarrassing, there was a police Orange Lodge. Against that background, the RUC could scarcely be unbiased where the Unionist Party or the Orange Order were concerned. An enquiry by the British National Council for Civil Liberties in 1936 stated: 'It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the attitude of the government renders the police chary of interference with the activities of the Orange Order and its sympathisers.' Leading SDLP member Seamus Mallon, who later served as Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland, stated that the RUC was '97% Protestant and 100% unionist'.

On 1 July 1992, Human Rights Watch (HRW) issued a detailed report on RUC and paramilitary violations against children's rights during the Troubles. Children, in particular, from nationalist communities alleged regular and severe physical assault and mental harassment at the hands of RUC officers, usually conducted to force a false confession of a crime. In an accompanying statement, HRW said: 'Police officers and soldiers harass young people on the street, hitting, kicking and insulting them. Police officers in interrogation centres insult, trick and threaten youngsters and sometimes physically assault them. Children are locked up in adult detention centres

and prisons in shameful conditions. The extent of the violence inflicted on children is appalling. Helsinki Watch heard dozens of stories from children, their parents, lawyers, youth workers and political leaders of children being stopped on the street and hit, kicked and abused again and again by police and soldiers. And seventeen-year-olds told Helsinki Watch of severe beatings in detention during interrogations by police.'

If we look to the Twenty-Six Counties for examples of a more liberal approach by the state towards policing and justice, we would be severely disappointed. In recent years, one of the first charges of serious impropriety against the force rose out of the handling of the Sallins Train Robbery in 1976 when senior members of the IRSP, in particular the party General Secretary, Mick Plunkett, were seriously beaten and abused. This case eventually led to a serious miscarriage of justice and accusations of a 'Heavy Gang' operating within the force which intimidated and tortured the accused. This eventually led to a Presidential pardon for one of the accused.

In 2004, an RTÉ *Prime Time* documentary accused elements within the Garda of abusing their powers by physically assaulting people arrested. A retired Circuit Court judge (WA Murphy) suggested that some members of the force had committed perjury in criminal trials before him but later stated that he was misquoted, while a Minister of State (Dick Roche, a junior government minister) accused Gardaí in one instance of 'torture'. In the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, the Garda Commissioner accused the television programme of lacking balance.

The *Prime Time* documentary followed footage published by the Independent Media Centre Ireland showing scuffles between Gardaí and Reclaim The Streets demonstrators. One Garda shown in this footage was later convicted of common assault which is a relatively minor offence, while several other Gardaí were acquitted of all offences. Demonstrations against British involvement outside the embassy in Dublin were met with brutal force by the Gardaí, with large numbers of demonstrators beaten and hospitalised.

The family of Eddie Fullerton, a Buncrana Sinn Féin councillor killed in his home by members of the Ulster Defence Association in 1991, have criticised the Gardaí's handling of the investigation and in 2005 they started a campaign for an inquiry.

The facade of cross-community policing – masking British repression and injustice – was exposed recently in Ardoyne. When nationalist residents from Ardoyne organised a peaceful protest against the Orange Order parading in their typically sectarian and triumphalist fashion, the RUC/PSNI responded by surrounding protestors in the face of drunken loyalists singing sectarian party songs. When Ardoyne youth organised and resisted the heavy-handed tactics of the PSNI, they were attacked with baton charges, water cannon and plastic bullets. It's little wonder, then, that graffiti appeared declaring 'PSNI – 17% Catholic, 100% Unionist'.

The policing debate continues to reveal profound divisions within the republican movement. On the one hand, there is Sinn Féin, seduced by the power, status and individual gain awarded to them by British imperialism in return for their acceptance of the unionist veto and repressive police structures. Their slavish implementation of cutbacks and divergence from left republican rhetoric has disillusioned many of their supporters, North and South, and a number of councillors have already resigned.

On the other hand, there is the nationalist working class, condemned to deepening social and economic injustice. In marginalised areas like Ardoyne and the Bogside, the community refuses to support the police. Instead, these areas are self-policed by groups, like Concerned Families Against Drugs (CFAD), who perform a dual role confronting local drug pushers and highlighting the lack of jobs, youth facilities and treatment services in the area. Groups on the republican fringe, like Republican Action Against Drugs (RAAD), have taken direct action against known drug dealers. Meanwhile, the RUC/PSNI continue to recruit informers from within the marginalised youth and give drug dealers a wide berth in return for local information. Little appears to have changed.

In the meantime, working-class people marginalised and impoverished through deprivation and exploitation find their conditions and quality of life eroded even further as a result of the constant fear of drugs, domestic brutality, theft, sexual harassment and physical abuse. Against that background, and in the light of an understandable lack of resources, 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 republican socialist movement also realises the dangers in such an approach and warns the community as a whole that the downside of such contact could be the increase of police informers and 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.

In those circumstances, it is important that the republican socialist movement take every opportunity to expose the duplicitous nature of that contact while supporting the need for an open, effective and democratic policing service.

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 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 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 immediate expulsion from Ireland.

The Irish Economy

‘We hold the economic emancipation of the worker requires the conversion of the means of production into the common property of society. Translated into the current language and practice of actual politics, this teaches that the necessary road to be travelled towards the establishment of socialism requires the transference of the means of production from the hands of private owners to those of public bodies directly responsible to the entire community.’ James Connolly, *Socialism and Irish Nationalism* (1897).

Connolly set out his ideas for the transfer of political and economic power in Ireland in his ongoing debate with Irish and European socialists and in particular those who felt that the continuing subjugation and subsequent partition of Ireland by Britain was in the best interests of the Irish people. In demanding the creation of a socialist state as a means of radically addressing the economic imbalance of the class system in Ireland, the IRSP position was made clear in 1974:

That 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.

This was designed to both understand the class nature of the state as well as address the political and economic effects of partition. Connolly was deeply concerned as early as 1914, on the outbreak of the First World War, that some temporary solution which would both address the problem of Home Rule and a potentially belligerent neighbour and calm the fears of the northern working class that ‘Home Rule would mean Rome Rule’ would be imposed by the British government.

In spite of growing support for the Home Rule movement, James Connolly correctly viewed these events as a defeat for the working class. He predicted that partition would ‘mean a carnival of reaction both North and South, would set back the Irish labour movement, and paralyse all advanced movements while it endured’. It would also mean the division of the country into two unequal states and two imbalanced economies.

It would be desirable for a thirty-two-county, all-Ireland political party with an objective for the reunification of the country to be able to examine the nature of a divided-Ireland economy and consider the implications of policy which reflects the aim to seek to have it reunified. As it is, the nature of the separate economies is such that both have developed independently. An analysis, therefore, must reflect those differences and seek to make arguments which hold that a reunified Ireland would require a unified economic approach to the problems of increasing unemployment, emigration and the replacement of traditional manufacturers with branch-plant-type industries. It must also consider the long-term implications of the demographic and economic changes which have taken place as a result of the decline of agriculture.

After the War of Independence, the island of Ireland gained a limited form of independence from the United Kingdom as a dominion called the Irish Free State – with the six north-eastern counties described as ‘Northern Ireland’. In 1937, the state was re-established as the Republic of Ireland with a constitution which acknowledged the existence of an-all Ireland aspiration. There had already been a significant economic divide between the northeast and the rest of Ireland, but following partition, both regions further diverged with the unionist-controlled North becoming increasingly more dependent on British subvention.

Partition had a devastating social and economic effect on what became Ireland’s border area. County Donegal, for example, was economically separated from its natural regional economic centre of Derry. After the publication of the Beeching Report (1961), the rail network struggled to operate across two economic areas, finally closing across a vast swathe of Ireland’s border area with the only cross-border route remaining between Belfast and Dublin.

The establishment of the Irish Free State gave rise to the first serious attempt since the 1890s to industrialise southern Ireland, but always with scant resources. Farming became orientated around pasture rather than tillage, with the increased processing of products and the export business. The country was gradually electrified and new state-owned factories were encouraged, such as the Irish Sugar Company in Carlow. During the late 1930s, the Fianna Fáil government began a disastrous dispute with Britain over the payment of land annuities, called The Economic War. The Irish state refused to continue paying land annuities, Britain put tariffs on Irish beef, and the Free State retaliated by imposing tariffs on British consumer goods; this Economic War ended in 1938.

From 1932, Éamon de Valera abandoned free trade, pursued a protectionist policy and sought self-sufficiency, but the country was not wealthy enough to make this a success. Instead, his economic policies were rooted in a naive, idealistic appeal to the nation to adopt a ‘Brigadoon’ type of Ireland:

‘The ideal Ireland that we would have, the Ireland that we dreamed of, would be the home of a people who valued material wealth only as a basis for right living, of a people who, satisfied with frugal comfort, devoted their leisure to the things of the spirit – a land whose countryside would be bright with cosy homesteads, whose fields and villages would be joyous with the sounds of industry, with the romping of sturdy children, the contest of athletic youths and the laughter of happy maidens, whose firesides would be forums for the wisdom of serene old age. The home, in short, of a people living the life that God desires that men should live . . .’

The economic reality facing the Irish people led to the state taking control of private interests and introducing limited forms of nationalisation and monopoly creation similar to many Western countries. Many of the industries which were brought under government control at the time remain under semi-state control today; some were sold in the 1980s and 1990s while yet others were downsized or closed when the economic reality made them unsustainable.

In the 1960s, the economy expanded under the direction of Seán Lemass. Many rehousing schemes were started to clear the Dublin tenements, although those schemes were themselves to create even greater social problems. The Industrial Development Authority (IDA) refocused on high technology and foreign direct investment was encouraged, although these measures subsequently paved the way for the economic crisis of the past two years. Education was also reformed to a large extent, with the state building a Regional Technical College (RTC) system and later a National Institute of Higher Education (NIHE). University education was also reformed and expanded. Entry into the European Economic Community (EEC), the forerunner to the EU in 1973 also added to Ireland’s economic prospects. But the South’s economy continued to be dependent on Britain because of the high rate of exports to Britain which amounted to 90% of Ireland’s manufacturing capacity.

Although this period has often been described as a boom period, it did not last for long. Industrial-relations disputes, inflation from the oil crises of 1973 and 1979, overspill from the struggle taking place in the North, new capital taxes and poor management of the economy by the government took their toll in the 1970s. By the 1980s, Ireland was referred to as the 'sick man of Europe' and was far behind its European rivals. Meanwhile, the economic instability was compounded by frequent changes in government. The government, often led by the disgraced Charles Haughey, presided over a decade of high emigration, unemployment and economic mismanagement. At one point, the International Monetary Fund considered imposing strict economic measures. One observer described the sense of despair amongst many sections of the South's ruling class and increasing impoverishment for Ireland's workers:

'The 1980s in the Republic of Ireland was one of the state's bleakest times. An extremely irresponsible budget by the majority Fianna Fáil government in 1977, which included abolition of car tax and borrowing to fund current spending, combined with some global economic problems to ruin the Irish economy for most of the 1980s, causing high unemployment and mass emigration. It is generally accepted that the Charles Haughey and Garret FitzGerald governments made this bad situation much worse with more massive borrowing and tax rates as high as 60% (with one Fine Gael finance minister suggesting people were not being taxed enough). After joining the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) in 1979, Ireland was also saddled for much of the 1980s with an overvalued currency, which wasn't rectified until the 1986 devaluation. Much of the capital borrowed in the 1980s went towards propping up this overvalued currency. Foreign investment, in the form of risk capital, was discouraged by all the evident difficulties.'

This was also an era of political instability and extreme political corruption, with power alternating between Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, and some governments not even lasting a year (in one case, three elections in eighteen months). The problems were eventually dealt with starting in 1987 under a minority Fianna Fáil government but with help from the opposition led by Alan Dukes of Fine Gael under what was known as the 'Tallaght Strategy', with economic reform, tax cuts, welfare reform, more competition and a reduction in borrowing to fund current spending. This policy was largely continued by succeeding governments. Considerable support from the European Union was the only positive aspect.

In the 1990s, the South's economy began the 'Celtic Tiger' phase. High Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) rate, a low corporate tax rate, better economic management and a new social-partnership approach to industrial relations together transformed the Irish economy. The European Union had contributed over €10 billion into infrastructure. By 2000, the South had become one of the world's wealthiest nations; unemployment stabilised at 4% and income tax was almost half the 1980s levels. During this time, the Irish economy grew by 5–6% annually, dramatically raising Irish monetary incomes to equal and eventually surpass those of many states in the rest of Western Europe, including Britain.

How do these developments compare with that taking place north of the border? The tendency over the past two centuries (and in particular the period described as the Industrial Revolution) was for the pro-unionist, capitalist class to locate most of the nation's wealth in the north-eastern corner of Ireland. This inevitably led to the consolidation of economic power amongst the unionist financial elite and to the predictable sense of uneven development and the emasculation of most weaker sections of the Irish economy. It led to the unavoidable division of the country into two separate states and to the further consolidation of power among the unionist ruling class in Belfast and the systematic programme of discrimination against the minority Catholic population, in particular those in what is often described as 'West of the Bann'.

Some economists have argued that throughout the 1990s, the Northern Irish economy grew faster than the economy of Britain, due in part to the rapid growth of the Twenty-Six Counties and the so-called peace dividend. The size of the North's economy is equivalent to the size of the economy of the province of Munster with a population of only 1.2 million. Growth slowed to the pace of Britain during the downturn of the early years of the twenty-first century. In 2005, the Northern Irish economy was estimated to have grown by 3.2%, almost twice as fast as Britain, and future growth is expected to be stronger, though lower than that of the Twenty-Six Counties. As an indicator of a thriving economy, house sales provided the most telling evidence of growth. In April 2007, a Halifax survey found the North of Ireland's average house price to be one of the highest, behind London, the South East and the South West. It also found the North to have the entire top ten property 'hot spots', with the Craigavon and Newtownards areas increasing by 55%.

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment monthly Labour Market Report (January 2010) stated that the unemployment rate for the period September–November 2009 was estimated at 6.8%, down 0.3 percentage points over the quarter, but up 2.5 percentage points over the year. The number of unemployed persons was estimated at 56,000, down 1,000 over the quarter, but up 20,000 over the year. The male unemployment rate (9.1%) was more than double the female rate (4.0%) in September–November 2009, down from a peak of 17.2% in 1986. Youth unemployment and long-term unemployment have fallen most quickly. Despite low unemployment, working-age economic inactivity is 28%, which is higher than any other part of Britain. The North's economy is also characterised by considerably longer actual working hours and lower gender-income disparity. But these figures hide the reality of life in the North in which the levels of unemployment are persistently higher in the nationalist population. Meanwhile, communities are attempting to address some of these problems and contributing to the social economy through programmes of self-help and local initiative:

‘In 2007, DETI carried out a survey among 400 known social enterprises in the Six Counties. It found that they employed 6,000 people, had 5,000 volunteers and a turnover of £335 million per annum. It is estimated that there are over 1,000 social enterprises and that social-economy activity accounts for approximately 5% of economic activity.’
(Social Economy Network)

During the period of political and military resistance, the North received little foreign investment. Many economists believe this was the result of the North's portrayal as a war zone by both the British and international media. However, since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, investment has increased significantly. Most investment has been focused in Belfast and several areas of the Greater Belfast area. Major projects include the £400 million Victoria Square retail development in Belfast city centre. The city will also see the largest waterfront development in Europe with the Titanic Quarter scheme, costing over £1 billion and taking seven years to complete. The Laganside Corporation has been at the forefront of the redevelopment of the riverfront along the banks of the River Lagan; to date, the corporation has overseen the investment of over £800 million in the riverside area and the Cathedral Quarter has also seen substantial investment. On the other hand, much concern has been expressed about the failure, with some minor exceptions, to see that optimistic picture

extended to the North West and in particular to Derry. Meanwhile, there is an increase in the dependency on part-time, short-term jobs located in the community sector, which is subject to public, state and European funding.

Just as in the South over the past half-century, agriculture is heavily mechanised, thanks to high labour costs and heavy capital investment, both from private investors and the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy. In 2000, agriculture accounted for 2.4% of economic output in the North, compared to 1% in Britain, with livestock and dairy, potatoes, barley and wheat accounting for the majority of agricultural output. The introduction of the LEADER programme by the European Commission was designed to fill the gaps in the rural economy through the introduction of funded local development initiatives. Because both states were regarded as Objective One regions, the programme is operated on both sides of the border, although some structural differences exist.

Just as it was before partition, heavy industry continues to be concentrated in and around Belfast. However, as the second largest city in the North, Derry is notable for having no heavy industry and very little light areas of production; and since the disappearance of the shirt-making industry, it has witnessed a sharp decline overall. Apart from the recent introduction of call centres, investment tended to move towards the introduction of branch-plant-type industries with relatively short lifespans. Elsewhere, machinery and equipment manufacturing, food processing, and textile and electronics manufacturing are the leading industries. Other businesses such as papermaking, furniture manufacturing, aerospace and shipbuilding are also important but concentrated entirely in the Greater Belfast region.

Although its share of economic output has declined, manufacturing output in the North has remained almost unchanged over the past five years, after a period of steep manufacturing growth between 1998 and 2001. However, this suggestion of energy hides a fundamental decline in the key sectors such as shipbuilding, textile and aircraft manufacture.

Engineering is the largest manufacturing sub-sector in the North, particularly in the fields of aerospace and heavy machinery. Bombardier Aerospace is the province's largest industrial employer, with 5,400 workers at five sites in the Greater Belfast area. Other major engineering employers include Caterpillar, DuPont, Emerson Electric, Nortel, Northbrook Technology, Seagate and NACCO.

Many of these manufacturers receive British government financial backing, and enjoy close research and business links with Queen's University, Belfast (QUB), and the University of Ulster (UU), but with little, if any, real links with the UU campus at Magee in Derry.

Harland and Wolff (H&W), which in the early twentieth century was the world's biggest shipbuilder, suffered from intense international competition during the 1970s and 1980s amid a barrage of accusations of religious discrimination and harassment of Catholic workers and declined rapidly. During the 1990s, the company diversified into civil engineering and industrial fabrication, manufacturing bridges and oil platforms. The company made an unsuccessful bid to build the liner *Queen Mary II*, which it was hoped would re-stimulate the yard's shipbuilding business. The vast works on Queen's Island were downsized, with much of the land sold off for redevelopment in the 2000s as the Titanic Quarter – a new residential, commercial and high-tech industrial district. The modern, smaller yard employs only 800 people. H&W have not built a ship since 2003 but has seen workload increase through being involved in ship breaking, ship repair and conversion work. The company has also been active in the design and construction of offshore power generation equipment – both wind turbines and wave-action turbines. The Titanic Quarter is rapidly turning to tourism as the only realistic alternative.

Despite the negative image of the North held abroad on account of the Troubles, tourism is an important part of the North's economy but tends to benefit the middle-class ownership of pubs, restaurants, and accommodation providers, with little real benefit to workers in the sector who tend to be non-unionised and low paid. In 2004, tourism revenue rose 7% to £325 million, or over 1% of the economy, on the back of a rise of 4% in total visits to 2.1m in the year. Tourism is considered likely to become one of the main growth areas of the economy in the near future, with the continuation of the peace process and the normalisation of the image of the Six Counties internationally.

It is often argued that one drawback to the future of tourism is a longstanding campaign by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to replace all old country dwellings with new ones. This is done by means of a new building grant given upon agreement to demolish the older building. In the last decade particularly, much of the North's ancient buildings – in the main, two-roomed cottages – have been destroyed.

In 2008, the public sector in the North accounted for 30.8% of the total workforce. This is significantly higher than the overall UK figure of 19.5%, and also higher than Scotland, the next nearest region at 24%. Overall, the figure has fallen. In 1992 the public sector accounted for 37% of the workforce.

In total, the British government subvention totals £5,000 million, or 20% of the North's economic output. One of the arguments presented by unionists is that a United Ireland could not sustain these levels of public-sector employment, particularly as only 36% of the economy of the Twenty-Six Counties is contributed by government expenditure. Many nationalist economists in favour of a United Ireland, however, argue that it is this dependence on the public sector that dissuades potential investors, causing the North's relative poverty.

One of the more unusual anomalies is that the official currency in use in the North is the pound sterling. Paradoxically, the euro, in use in the South of Ireland, is accepted by retailing chains closer to the border, with major retailing chains in Belfast and Ballymena making special appeals for Southern customers, particularly during the Christmas festive period. Sterling, however, remains the North's legal tender and the most widely circulated currency. Even more unusual is the fact that the four Northern banks retain the right to print their own sterling-denominated banknotes: Bank of Ireland, First Trust Bank, Northern Bank and Ulster Bank. These banknotes are pounds sterling and although they are accepted in Scotland, they are not recognised in England and Wales.

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

European Union

It should be made clear that while the Irish Republican Socialist Party supports the demand for the greater reinforcement of our nation's independence and 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.

The party's opposition to the strengthening of the wider European capitalist hegemony is consistent with its position both on globalisation and imperialism and consistent also with its call for the building of relationships with working-class organisations throughout Europe and elsewhere towards a socialist society which recognises the significance and importance of our distinct national characteristics, at the same time looking to a future which promotes working-class solidarity and rejects xenophobia and narrow nationalism.

It must be recognised, however, that in spite of considerable opposition to entry to the European Union, there continues to be widespread support for continuing membership. On 1 January 1973, Ireland, together with the United Kingdom and Denmark, joined the original six Member States (Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands) as members of the European Economic Community. (Greece joined in 1981 followed by Spain and Portugal in 1986. Austria, Finland and Sweden became members of the European Union on 1 January 1995.)

By the end of 1977, following an initial transition period, all tariffs on trade with other members of the Community had been removed. The Single European Act of 1987 initiated the removal of the remaining barriers to economic activity between Member States. The Single Market was completed on 1 January 1993.

The European Union was established in November 1993 on the entry into force of the Treaty of European Union (the Maastricht Treaty). Successive governments have promoted progressive evolution to a closer union. In referenda in 1972, 1987 and 1992, the people endorsed accession and the subsequent treaties involving major steps towards European union.

The Twenty-Six Counties nominates one member of the European Commission and elects fifteen members to the European Parliament. (There are also three members from the Six Counties.) The Twenty-Six Counties has held the six-month presidency of the Council of Ministers on several occasions, most recently in 1996.

The Single Market: the most obvious economic benefit of membership of the Union has been the access it allows to a market of some 370 million people. This has in turn required an adjustment of the economy to international competition. Membership has contributed to rapid progress in a range of areas including the development of agriculture, industry and services, although such dependency on the EU has contributed in no small part to the current financial crisis.

Apart from the economic benefits, membership of the Union has had a major impact on social and cultural life. In addition, every Irish citizen is also an EU citizen. Among the rights conveyed by EU citizenship is the right to move and reside freely within the territory of other Member States, subject to certain limitations. Some of the 'limitations' suggest a more intimate relationship between the various security agencies and the 'tracking' of European citizens by the various border police bureaucracies.

Economic and Social Cohesion: the Union embodies the principle of economic and social cohesion according to which the less prosperous regions are helped to reduce disparities between their levels of development and those of the more prosperous regions. This principle was reinforced in the Single European Act and again in the Maastricht Treaty. Under the present round of structural funds, Ireland is expected to receive funding of approximately £1 billion per year.

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 in the building of a socialist Europe of independent nations.

Environment

Climate change remains one of the most serious and urgent social and economic challenges we face, both in Ireland and globally. The consequences of climatic instability are already reckoned to be causing 300,000 premature deaths and €100 billion worth of damage around the world every year. The prospect of runaway climate change – if we don't meet the necessary targets for reducing emissions – would be too horrible to contemplate and yet it is the responsibility of republican socialists to bring this issue to the attention of the population as a whole. Supporting a broad-based campaign on the problems associated with the environment will not only confirm the strategy of the broad-front approach to social change but tend also to expose the hypocrisy of the middle-class parties, including the Greens, whose interests are best expressed in their decision to enter government in a coalition with Fianna Fáil.

A broad appeal to examine the issue of the environment should be one which takes account of issues which are in general affected by our attitude to the environment and which include the built environment such as housing, road infrastructure and the wider economy. All of these are questions which directly affect the quality of living of the working class and, by definition, become as a consequence a class issue. Inevitably, the raising of these issues tends to expose the opportunism of the middle-class parties, and in particular those such as the Greens, who seek every opportunity to enter government in the faint hope that they can influence events from within.

As evidence of their opportunism, before their entry into government, the Green Party were vocal supporters of the Shell to Sea movement, the campaign to re-route the M3 motorway away from Tara and the campaign to end United States military use of Shannon airport. Since the Green Party entered government, there has been no substantive change in government policy on these issues, which means Eamon Ryan now oversees the Corrib gas project. The Green Party insisted that an inquiry into the irregularities surrounding the project should form a precondition of government at their conference but changed their stance during post-election negotiations with Fianna Fáil. Paradoxically, the County Mayo branch of the party still supports moves to relocate the refinery.

Planning permission was initially refused by Senior Planning Inspector Kevin Moore of An Bord Pleanála. His report stated in part: 'It is my submission

that the proposed development of a large gas-processing terminal at this rural, scenic, and unserved area on a bogland hill some eight kilometres inland from the Mayo coastland landfill location, with all its site development works difficulties, public safety concerns, adverse visual, ecological and traffic impacts, and a range of other significant environmental impacts, defies any rational understanding of the term “sustainability”.’ In November 2009, An Bord Pleanála ordered Shell to redesign the pipeline and move its route away from homes, saying it posed an ‘unacceptable risk’.

To add insult to injury, the 2008 budget, announced on 6 December 2007, did not include a carbon levy on fuels such as petrol, diesel and home-heating oil, which the Green Party had sought before the election. A carbon levy is, however, included in the agreed Programme for Government and will be introduced at some stage during the lifetime of this government. The 2008 budget did include a separate carbon budget announced by Gormley, which introduced a new energy efficiency tax credit, a ban on incandescent bulbs from January 2009, a tax scheme providing incentives for the more widespread purchase of bicycles and a new scale of Vehicle Registration Tax based on carbon emissions. In short, piecemeal measures from a piecemeal and opportunist approach to government.

In Ireland, the Greens won five seats in the Dáil at the 2003 General Election and went on to win six seats in the 2007 General Election. With the ongoing controversy over Sellafield Nuclear Power Plant, environmental politics will have a greater impact in a non-nuclear country like Ireland. The environmental politics of Britain affects Ireland. In 1957 at the Windscale Nuclear Plant, an accident resulted in radioactive activity in the environment and diseases such as leukaemia and various other cancers evident in humans and animals alike. In brief, the British government’s response to this accident, under pressure primarily from environmentalists and the Irish government, was to close Windscale. The British authorities cynically renamed it Sellafield and continued production.

Ireland is principally an agricultural country with our economy directly affected by the actions of other countries. For example, countries that produce large amounts of toxic waste, no matter how far away they are, can and do affect Ireland, particularly in agriculture. This is done, for example, in the fall of acid rain.

In consequence, the Irish Republican Socialist Party supports the following demands as a first step in addressing the problems facing the environment in Ireland.

Reduce the dependency on the private motor car, thus minimising 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 IRSP calls for the exclusion of private cars from all city centres and 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 alternatives as the main source of energy. All waste should be recycled; waste of a very low toxicity that is not recycled to be used as a source of fuel. There must be a total opposition to all forms of nuclear fusion activity, power and bombs with the immediate closure of the Sellafield Nuclear Plant. The IRSP seeks the removal of all carcinogenic substances and calls for an end to the wanton destruction of the rain forests.

Housing

The Irish Republican Socialist Party believes that one of the most fundamental rights of each member of the nation is the right to a home. It fully understands that one of the principal reasons for the political explosion which took place in 1968 and before was the fact that housing was unavailable and used as a factor in the widespread practice of religious discrimination against the nationalist population in the North. In addition, it is also of the view that the responsibility for the alleviation of this problem rests with the state as the sole repository of the needs of the citizens, and however beneficial the role of the community and voluntary sector in social-housing provision, the sector can never meet those needs.

Such voluntary activity has always had a role in the delivery of social services in Ireland. This was evident in the housing sector where, at the turn of the twentieth century, there were a number of organisations providing housing services. One of the most prominent of these was established in 1890 when Sir Edward Cecil Guinness, Earl of Iveagh, set up a major philanthropic trust to provide housing and related amenities for working-class people in Dublin. Today, the Iveagh Trust is one of the larger housing associations providing rental dwellings for families and single people on low incomes.

Generally, voluntary housing associations are formed to relieve a local housing need. Many are established by existing caring or voluntary associations who provide services to vulnerable groups such as the elderly, the homeless or people with disabilities. A marked feature of the voluntary housing sector is that many associations offer non-housing and related services such as group meals, social activities and welfare advice. The small and local nature of most voluntary housing associations means that they are in a position to respond quickly to the service needs of their tenants as they arise. The voluntary housing movement has been to the fore in promoting and proactively using housing management systems that best respond to the needs of tenants and provide a decent housing service. But this tends to reinforce the view that poverty is endemic and that the vision of soup kitchens is really only just around the corner.

The development of this sector since the 1980s has been largely aided by the availability of capital funding schemes from the Department of Environment,

Heritage and Local Government. The Capital Assistance Scheme (1984) provides assistance to housing associations through the local authorities towards capital costs for accommodation, generally for one- or two-bedroom units, to meet special housing needs such as those of the elderly, disabled, homeless or smaller families.

The increasing lack of affordability in the Irish housing market at this time meant that the demand for social housing was growing. The effect of the slowdown in voluntary housing was therefore even more acute.

The previous National Development Plan, which ran from 2000 to 2006, announced that there would be a move to increase the output of the voluntary housing sector to 4,000 units per annum by 2006. This would mean a significant increase in the number of housing starts each year over the period of the Plan, but there has been a slowdown in housing completions in the voluntary housing sector since 2004.

The local authority housing strategies developed under Planning and Development Act 2000 was said to have put in place mechanisms to aid the growth and expansion of the voluntary and co-operative housing movement in its provision of social housing in Ireland. Each local authority is expected to have a housing strategy in place which informs the planning of any new provision of housing.

The White Paper on a Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and for Developing the Relationship between the State and the Community and Voluntary Sector published in September 2000 could be seen as a positive step in setting out a strategy in relation to this key issue. However, it does indicate the increasing tendency of the state to absolve itself of some of these fundamental social problems, thus drawing the community and voluntary sector closer to the mechanism of the state. This is increasingly evident in recent government publications.

The most recent policy documents have recognised and acknowledged the role that the voluntary housing sector plays in maintaining a healthy level of social housing choice for people in housing need. *Towards 2016*, the *National Development Plan 2007–13: Transforming Ireland* and the latest government housing policy statement, *Delivering Homes Sustaining Communities*, recog-

nise the value of a voluntary housing sector and set out defined targets for future voluntary housing provision.

In the North, the Housing Executive was established in 1971 by the Housing Executive Act (Northern Ireland).

The creation of the Housing Executive is linked to the civil disturbances in the North throughout the 1960s. Prior to 1971, the allocation of public housing was the responsibility of the local councils and the Northern Ireland Housing Trust. In June 1968, Dungannon Rural District Council was accused of discriminating against a Catholic family when it allocated a new council house in the Caledon area to a young single Protestant woman with links to a local unionist politician. This incident proved to be the catalyst for the ensuing civil rights marches in Dungannon and Derry that ultimately led to widespread civil disturbance.

In his Parliamentary report on the following disturbances, the British Lord Cameron concluded that there was:

‘A rising sense of continuing injustice and grievance among large sections of the Catholic population in Northern Ireland, in particular in Derry and Dungannon, in respect of (i) inadequacy of housing provision by certain local authorities (ii) unfair methods of allocation of houses built and let by such authorities, in particular; refusals and omissions to adopt a ‘points’ system in determining priorities and making allocations (iii) misuse in certain cases of discretionary powers of allocation of houses in order to perpetuate unionist control of the local authority’

A single, all-purpose housing authority for the North had been advocated as early as 1964 by the Northern Ireland Labour Party and by republicans, but it was not until British Home Secretary James Callaghan visited Stormont in the wake of the Belfast disturbances of August 1969 and pressed for a unified housing body that the Stormont régime took the idea seriously. Although the Bill was proposed by the conservative Ulster Unionist Minister Brian Faulkner, it was strongly opposed by most unionists and by followers of Ian Paisley, who recognised the central importance of the control of housing allocation in the maintenance of a régime which existed to a large

extent on its ability to discriminate against one section of the population. In spite of these historical anomalies and because the voluntary sector has been partly successful in managing the current housing stock, it is important that this massive investment in housing should be controlled by the state.

It needs to be stated that the voluntary housing movement has a record of accomplishment in innovation and modernisation in its policies and practices and has produced advances such as:

Shared equity arrangements under the co-ownership scheme allowing home buyers to buy a minimum of 50% of their home and rent the other part to be bought when the new homeowner can afford it. Rent and save; rental subsidies and self-build schemes of the mid-'60s which enabled tenants to purchase their own homes. Housing with care schemes. The Helpline facilities. Barrier-free development. Lifetime Homes.

Housing Associations are: Establishing a network of housing and care-service providers aiming to create training and employment opportunities and working at a trans-national level. Expanding into the South in County Meath or assisting in the formation of separate structures as North and West Housing Association has done in aiding the development of Northwest Housing Association in County Donegal. Piloting the development of Foyers which focus on helping disadvantaged young people aged 16–25 who are in housing need achieve the transition from dependence to independence. Foyers offer integrated access to affordable accommodation, training, guidance, personal development and job-searching facilities.

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 putting an end to Rachmanism and exploitation and resolving the nation's housing needs.

An All-Ireland Rail Network

In what could only be described as a repeat of the disastrous clearance programme of the Plantation period, the almost uncontrolled development of the countryside to provide more grazing space has had a negative effect on the landscape. The vast majority of odd, unusual features including copses, woods, raths, old stone walls and fieldstones, have been removed with diggers and chainsaws, leaving large areas devoid of feature with little refuge for wildlife.

The history of rail transport in Ireland suggests that it was more extensive and complex than that of Britain. By its peak in 1920, Ireland counted 5,500 kilometers. The current status is less than half that amount, with a large unserved area around the border area between the North and the South of Ireland.

In the wake of the Beeching recommendations in Britain, large swathes of route were closed in the South of Ireland, but evidence is still visible in the landscape as are more significant features like bridges and viaducts. Notable was the loss of the entire West Cork Railway network. Most branch lines in the Twenty-Six Counties were also closed. By and large, the main route network survived intact, with a relatively even distribution of cutbacks. The main routes from Dublin to Belfast, Sligo, Galway and the West of Ireland, Limerick, Cork and Kerry, Waterford and Wexford survived. The cross-country route from Waterford to Limerick and onwards to Sligo survived for a time, although services would later cease on the route. The North Kerry line from Limerick to Tralee survived until the 1970s. One notable closure was that of the Dublin & South Eastern Harcourt Street railway line in Dublin, despite being regarded as an important commuter artery. In 2004, some of the route reopened as part of the new Luas tram system. South of the current terminus, decisions taken by CIÉ, the transport company in the Twenty-Six Counties, and Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council to sell the trackbed through Foxrock and allow houses to be built on it near Shankill will make integrating this route into any future Metro or Luas system difficult.

In a few short years, the Ulster Transport Authority shut down a large network across Ulster, leaving only Belfast to Derry, Dublin and branches to Larne and Bangor. CIÉ had no option but to close their end of cross-border routes.

Today, a large hole remains in the island's rail network, with a distance of 210 km (130 miles) from Derry to Mullingar untouched by railways, and no rail service to large towns such as Letterkenny and Monaghan.

The combined effects of public planning, post-Beeching, and the response to increased demand for additions to the road network as a direct result of the widespread dependence on the car have had a disastrous effect on the environment as a whole. The short-sighted policy of 1961, which resulted in the destruction of the rail network on both sides of the border, contributed in no small part to the increase in greenhouse gases and to global warming as a whole. Meanwhile, Ireland became dependent on the European Commission for substantial subsidies for the modernisation and upgrading of the road system.

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.

The Effect of the Global Crisis

Over the past decade, the Irish government implemented a series of national economic programmes designed to curb inflation, ease tax burdens, reduce government spending as a percentage of GDP, increase labour-force skills, and reward foreign investment. The Twenty-Six Counties joined in launching the euro currency system in January 1999 along with eleven other European Union nations. The economy felt the impact of the global economic slowdown in 2001, particularly in the high-tech export sector; the growth rate in that area was cut by nearly half. Growth continued to be relatively robust, with a rate of about 6% in 2001 and 2002, but fell to around 2% in 2003. Little changed in the next five years. One observer reflected the growing concern:

‘During 2007, Ireland’s economic progress was again affected by a wider global economic slowdown, with the construction sector being particularly affected. During the summer of 2007, Irish residential property prices fell by over 2% and subsequently continued to fall by approximately 1% per month, leaving property prices down 9% by February 2008. This has impacted consumer spending and investment confidence across the Irish economy generally.’

In July 2008, a predicted shortfall in 2008 annual government revenues led to the announcement of a severe reduction in government spending. In September, due to continuing revenue shortfalls, the 2009 budget was advanced six weeks to October 2008 and government statistics showed that the Irish economy, with quarterly GDP falls, entered a recession at the start of 2008, the first time since 1983, becoming the first of the euro-zone economies to officially do so during the global economic crisis of 2008. On budget day, Finance Minister Brian Lenihan said that the general government deficit would be 7% of GDP in 2008, and would be kept to 6.5% in 2009.

A leading consultant at PricewaterhouseCoopers, commented that:

‘Given the sharp deterioration in the economic conditions in Ireland, it is unsurprising that confidence remains very low. The tax measures announced in the supplementary Irish budget will compound the pressures on Irish consumers and businesses in the short term. Due to the scale of the anticipated budget deficit, an upturn is likely to be export-

led. As this will rely on economic recovery elsewhere, the outlook for the Irish economy will remain negative until well into 2010.'

Was this the consequence of sitting at the edge of an imperialist economy? After all, the traditional dependence on the British market provided little more than opportunities to seek low-paid, unskilled employment opportunities on the streets of Birmingham, Manchester and Glasgow. Was Ireland facing new political and economic structures? Lenin argued in his thesis on imperialism that:

'If it were necessary to give the briefest possible definition of imperialism, we should have to say that imperialism is the monopoly stage of capitalism. Such a definition would include what is most important, for, on the one hand, finance capital is the bank capital of a few very big monopolist banks, merged with the capital of the monopolist associations of industrialists; and, on the other hand, the division of the world is the transition from a colonial policy which has extended without hindrance to territories unseized by any capitalist power, to a colonial policy of monopolist possession of the territory of the world, which has been completely divided up.'

Although Lenin was aware of the economic trends already in place when he accepted that international capital would go through various stages, at that time the term globalisation had not entered our political dictionaries. At the 1944 Bretton Woods conference, which set up the post-WW II financial system, a proposal to establish an International Trade Organisation (ITO) was voted down. This reflected the prevailing principled view that trade between nations was a prerogative of sovereign governments to determine what was in their mutual and best economic interest, and not that of either supra-national agencies, nor private multinational financial interests. Over the subsequent fifteen to twenty years, this principle continued, despite exceptions and assaults. As post-war reconstruction took place, new nations gained independence and the prospects for a vast advance in economic conditions globally were indicated in the 'Atoms for Peace' program to harness nuclear power.

The original goal of US President FD Roosevelt for a post-war International New Deal for deliberate multinational collaboration on infrastructure and rap-

id economic development was thwarted because of direct opposition through the Truman administration.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the business model termed the 'globalised' financial market came to be seen as an entity that could have more than just an economic impact on the parts of the world it touched.

Globalisation came to be seen as more than simply a way of doing business, or running financial markets, it became an irreversible process, one which had a momentum of its own. Centuries earlier in a similar manner, the techniques of industrial manufacturing led to the changes associated with the process of industrialisation as former rural workers were forced to migrate to the cramped but booming industrial cities to tend the new machines. In Ireland, it was accompanied by uncontrollable potato blights and subsequent flights to the cities and then eventually to Britain, the United States and Australia.

So how does the globalised market work? It is modern communications that make it possible; for the British service sector to deal with its customers through a call centre in India, or for a sportswear manufacturer to design its products in Europe, make them in southeast Asia and sell them in North America. However, some changes are taking place within the globalised market. The sweatshops of India and China are gradually coming to a point when they have outlived their purpose, and as living conditions improve in these countries, so also do labour costs. There is some evidence that call centres are returning to Western suppliers where unfavourable labour costs are not as critical as they were.

If these practices replace domestic economic life with an economy that is heavily influenced or controlled from overseas, then the creation of a globalised economic model and the process of globalisation can also be seen as a surrender of power to the corporations, or a means of keeping poorer nations in their place.

Low-paid sweatshop workers, GM seed pressed on developing world farmers, selling off state-owned industry to qualify for IMF and World Bank loans and the increasing dominance of US and European corporate culture across the globe have come to symbolise globalisation for some of its critics.

The anti-globalisation movement is a broad-front movement, encompassing environmentalists, trade unionists, socialists, those campaigning for fair development in poorer countries and others who want to tear the whole thing down, in the same way that the original Luddites attacked mechanised spinning machines.

Some neo-conservatives argue that the spread of globalisation, free markets and free trade into the developing world is the best way to beat poverty; the only problem is that free markets and free trade do not yet truly exist. In spite of this optimism, there is no evidence that globalisation has benefited the poor or assisted in real economic development in the Third World. On the contrary, reports suggest that the gap between rich and poor has increased dramatically. Indeed, those same supporters claimed that they were unable to predict the outcome of the free-for-all enjoyed by capitalism in its search for cheaper forms of manufacture – specifically, the global scramble for even cheaper forms of labour – and the wider implications of globalisation as it had an effect on the banking industry and individual national economies.

The financial crisis of 2007–10 has been called by leading economists the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s. It contributed to the failure of key businesses, declines in consumer wealth estimated in the trillions of US dollars, substantial financial commitments incurred by governments, and a significant decline in economic activity. Many causes have been proposed, with varying weight assigned by experts. Both market-based and regulatory solutions have been implemented or are under consideration while significant risks remain for the world economy over the 2010–11 periods. Although this economic period has at times been referred to as the ‘Great Recession’, this same phrase has been used to refer to every recession of the several preceding decades. Meanwhile, the banking executives continue to pay themselves outrageous bonuses – in spite of widespread public indignation.

The collapse of a global housing bubble, which peaked in the US in 2006, caused the values of securities tied to real-estate pricing to plummet thereafter, damaging financial institutions globally. Questions regarding bank solvency, declines in credit availability, and damaged investor confidence had an impact on global stock markets, where securities suffered large losses during late 2008 and early 2009. Economies worldwide slowed during this period as credit tightened and international trade declined. Critics argued

that credit-rating agencies and investors failed to accurately price the risk involved with mortgage-related financial products, and that governments did not adjust their regulatory practices to address twenty-first-century financial markets. Governments and central banks responded with unprecedented fiscal stimulus, monetary policy expansion, and institutional bailouts.

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, 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 immediate nationalisation of all the banks and for the prosecution of those senior banking executives found to have been responsible for the collapse of the banking industry in Ireland.

Social Structure

The Ireland of Connolly at the beginning of the twentieth century is vastly different from that of the twenty-first century. Although the working class was relatively small when compared to the major industrial countries of Germany and Britain, much of the economy was rooted in agricultural production.

Clearly, dramatic changes have taken place in Ireland, North and South, since partition with regard to the economic development of both states and in particular the shape and nature of the classes and how they have responded to and been influenced by the economic boom under Lemass, membership of the European Community, the effects of globalisation on industrial development and especially the decline of Ireland as an agricultural producer.

Much of the effects of these changes have had a dramatic effect on questions related to Irish society in such a way that the Ireland of Connolly, Costello and Power is barely recognisable as we move further away from an Ireland of the nineteenth century dominated by enforced emigration, poverty and famine. In spite of the economic advances of the Lemass and Haughey/Ahern periods, Ireland of the twentieth century is still subject to outside economic and, by definition, global political forces. In presenting a programme of socialist ideas, it is important to chart and take account of those changes.

A number of studies identified factors related to social mobility in Ireland, whereas others examined mobility issues in relation to fair employment, particularly in the Six Counties. In those circumstances, it would be difficult to dismiss the tendency in Ireland, before and since partition, to locate the richest manufacturing sectors in the northeast. For example, one view of occupational differences between the two communities suggests that contemporary patterns are due to the perpetuation of past differences. Thus, it would not be regarded as unreasonable to assume that discrimination in employment in the past may account for present-day differences, even though some unionists would pretend that religious discrimination no longer plays a significant role.

One senior academic found that Catholics were under-represented in that part of the manufacturing industry which included engineering, printing, shipbuilding and metal manufacture, the areas where the percentage of skilled

and highly paid workers was highest. Catholics tended to be over-represented in domestic, mainly personal, services and in the much larger sector of industrial services (labouring) where payments were much lower. He also found that the differences in industrial distributions of the two denominations was considerable in 1901 and had increased in 1951.

The overall rate of social mobility had changed little between 1901 and 1951 and Catholic mobility was considerably lower than that of other denominations in both years. The Catholic mobility rate had not changed between 1901 and 1951, and while there had been a slight decline in Protestant mobility, the difference between the groups remained very clear.

As a whole, Ireland in the 1950s was a very closed and homogeneous society. It was homogeneous in terms of religion, with over 90% of the population being Catholic. With the high cost of travel, very few inhabitants had travelled in Europe or farther afield. Compared to its European neighbours, a very high proportion of its population lived in rural areas.

The size of the middle class in Ireland in 1951 was also exceptionally small. The business leaders of the time were drawn from a very small group in society. While the censorship of publications probably had little significant impact on the flow of ideas from abroad, it was a sign of an inward-looking society. Symptomatic of this was the experience in the literary sphere where many writers sought freedom and inspiration outside Ireland in the United States, France or further afield.

While Ireland in the period 1930–60 had a closed goods market as a result of protectionism, it was unusual in the level of flexibility of the labour market. A high proportion of the young population emigrated to find work as labourers on British roads and in the potato fields of Scotland in the first six decades of the century and the bulk of them did not return. It was only for the post-war emigrants that a relatively frequent return on holidays was a realistic possibility. While this experience of emigration may have been taken for granted in earlier generations, by the 1950s, with the post-war recovery under way in Europe and with Ireland missing out on this process, the attitude of emigrants themselves began to change. Earlier generations showed more passive acceptance of the need to emigrate, while the post-war generation showed increasing feelings of anger and betrayal. This is reflected, to

some extent, in literary work of the period, such as that of Brendan Behan and Patrick Magill. However, from the 1960s onwards, this experience of emigration has gradually changed. By the 1970s, a significant number of emigrants were beginning to return and this trend has gradually increased over the last twenty years.

Today emigration is still part of the experience of up to a quarter of each generation, but the emigrants of today are seen more as ‘homing pigeons’. The returning emigrants have brought with them experience of business and culture outside Ireland, bringing new ideas, new contacts and even additional capital to Ireland, across wide areas of Irish society, such as business and academic life.

Furthermore, the second half of the 1980s saw a big change in the educational attainment of emigrants. Up to the early 1980s, the bulk of emigrants had limited educational attainment. Over the course of that decade, the composition of emigration changed dramatically. Around a third of the emigrants had a third-level education in the late 1980s, compared to fewer than 20% in the 1960s. In the late 1980s, there was very little emigration by people with only a primary education, whereas they accounted for the bulk of emigrants in the 1960s. This latter change reflects the fact that the Irish welfare system, which was almost nonexistent in 1960, grew to be more generous than that of the UK by the late 1980s.

In spite of the changes which 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 State and Civil Society

Some observers view ‘civil society’ as the creation of a societal ideal, rather than as the combination of structures which together formed the potential for an alternative social movement. Writing from a fascist prison cell in the 1930s, Italian commentator Antonio Gramsci saw the coming together of trade unions, community-based associations and others as having the potential for social and political change in opposition to the state. Half a century earlier, Friedrich Engels made a seminal commentary on the function of the state:

‘Because the state arose from the need to hold class antagonisms in check, but because it arose, at the same time, in the midst of the conflict of these classes, it is, as a rule, the state of the most powerful, economically dominant class, which, through the medium of the state, becomes also the politically dominant class, and thus acquires new means of holding down and exploiting the oppressed class.’ Friedrich Engels (1884).

Since its formation in 1974, the Irish Republican Socialist Movement has been at the forefront of opposition to the state and all of its forms:

The objective 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.

It is often argued by revisionist historians that the divisions and arguments which took place within the socialist Internationals have little relevance to the developments, social and technological, that have occurred throughout the course of the twentieth century. The issues raised at those affairs must seem so distant in the human cultural and political consciousness that they now form a part of a dim and distant, even irrelevant, historical memory. And yet the language and rhetoric of those gatherings of socialist practitioners and theoreticians persist to this day. Since the great social experiment that was Marxism crystallised into the more tangible October revolution with its radical reforms

made redundant by the barbarous convulsion of the world at war, the vocabulary of socialism entered the mass human consciousness.

Some of the language co-opted by those arguing for more moderate approaches to social and political change, such as commune, community and communitarianism, suggested not so much an acceptance of a new and revolutionary ideology as much as a desire to draw such ideas closer to the breast of the dominant democratic order. So, for example, British former Prime Minister Tony Blair and MP Frank Field's conversion to communitarianism has more to do with a desire to recreate a society dominated by oppressive Victorian values than with an urge to advocate a communisation of human relations. The subsequent effect of this confusing appropriation of language reduced socialism to the status of being an impossible ideal and enhanced community as an instrument of social change, while socialism was rendered incompatible within the new, so-called 'inclusive' society. Meanwhile, we were all declared to be 'stakeholders' in a rediscovered, repackaged 'civil society'.

The emergence of the concept of community, especially in areas of high unemployment, has to a very large extent replaced that of the trade union movement as the instrument for localised social change. But both contribute in equal measure to the concept of a civil society as an instrument for national social change.

The Trade Union Movement

One constituent section of Irish civil society is the trade union movement. The Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), formed in 1959 by the merger of the Irish Trade Union Congress (founded in 1894) and the Congress of Irish Unions (founded in 1945), is a national trade union centre, the umbrella organisation to which trade unions in both the Twenty-Six Counties and its Six-Counties affiliate belong. The Irish Congress is the legitimate inheritor of the Connolly ideal and, in spite of obvious difficulties, remains the logical representative defender of the Irish working class.

There are currently fifty-five unions with membership of the ICTU, representing about 600,000 members in the Republic of Ireland; trade union members represent 31.5% of the Irish workforce. This is a significant decline since the 55.3% recorded in 1980 and the 38.5% reported in 2003. In the Republic of Ireland, over 60% of unionised members are mainly concentrated in the public sector. Currently, there are over 1.4m of the taxpaying workforce who are not members of unions.

However, the trade union movement has played an ambiguous role since the founding of the northern state, particularly when confronted by the growth of the civil rights movement in the Six Counties, as evidenced by the foreword to a pamphlet entitled *A Programme for Peace and Progress in Northern Ireland* published by the 'Northern Ireland' Committee of the ICTU in 1969:

'Northern Ireland is constituted as an integral part of the United Kingdom, and this position cannot be changed except by the democratic decision of the majority of the people of Northern Ireland. This is the constitutional position and all citizens, whatever their political views, should reject the use of physical force as a means of achieving political objectives. All citizens should be free to advocate change by democratic means. People should be assured that there are effective means of protecting the state and its people against the use of force from any quarter. To this end, the United Kingdom government should retain responsibility for security as long as may be necessary.'

The authors of the pamphlet set out a ten-point plan for the resolving of the problems facing the northern population, in particular those issues related to

education, housing, unemployment, local government, community relations and security. There was scant reference to religious discrimination or to the nature of the sectarian state. It was clear that any attempt by trade unionists to raise such issues would almost certainly have precipitated a massive crisis for the trade union movement in the north as a whole.

Although the IRSP recognises the pivotal role of the trade union movement in defending the interests of working people, it also understands that the unions' role can only be a limited one. However, the IRSP also realises the importance of demands which are presented as a means of defending workers' interests and consequently fully supports the Irish Congress of Trade Unions ten-point plan as only one example of the means of dealing with the national economic crisis.

Protecting Jobs and Tackling Unemployment

Our social welfare system must be radically altered and integrated with skills enhancement, education and training. In a number of European countries, unemployed workers are guaranteed incomes of 80% of salary for two years, conditional on their participation in extensive training and upskilling. Employers are also assisted to identify alternatives to redundancy, such as short-term working weeks and other arrangements.

The Banking System and the Public Interest

The Bank Recapitalisation Programme involves handing over €7 billion of public money, from the Pension Reserve Fund, to the same people who presided over the collapse. Their refusal to forgo enormous personal salaries and bonuses speaks volumes about their contempt for the taxpayer. That €7 billion must not disappear into a black hole and only one consideration – the public interest – should inform government decisions on this crucial matter. And given all that has emerged about the conduct of senior bank executives, we require a complete overhaul of corporate governance and clear indications that wrongdoing will be punished. Support for the banking system should be conditional on a) public control, either through recapitalisation or nationalisation; b) a legally enforceable obligation to provide support for innovation and development in the economy, along with credit and support for business cash flow where it can be shown that it is critical to job protection or creation; c) replacement of all top banking executives

responsible for the crisis; d) remuneration from all sources for those at the top being capped; and e) a three-year moratorium on home reposessions where people cannot pay due to redundancy or unfair dismissal.

Competitiveness

In addition to the absence of a properly functioning banking system, the most immediate threat to our competitiveness comes from the weakness of sterling, not wage rates. This accounts for about two thirds of the deterioration in recent months.

Energy prices must be reduced and the only impediment to this is the nonsensical regulatory régime that has pushed prices higher to ensure private generating companies make a profit. Coupled with the failure of our broadband infrastructure – following the privatisation of Éircom – this demonstrates the critical importance of strategic state intervention in the economy.

The Pay Agreement

Congress continues to adhere to the social-partnership agreement. The government, CIF and IBEC have now, in effect, reneged on the pay deal they negotiated in September 2008. Yet, significant numbers of private-sector companies have paid the first phase of that deal and others have committed to doing so. No credible reason has been advanced to explain why the inability-to-pay clause has not been utilised.

Fairness and Taxation

The framework agreement includes commitments to fair and progressive taxation measures. But government must spell out what this means in practice. How much of the €2 billion shortfall will be carried by the wealthiest in the country? We believe the following reforms should be introduced: a) income from all sources – capital and labour - must be taxed the same; b) tax exiles must stay away if they don't want to be taxed here; c) tax shelters without a proven economic gain should be abolished; d) a property tax should apply to property other than the principal private residence; e) the levy on high earners (above €100k) should be graded upwards significantly; f) a new rate of income tax at 48% for high-income earners; and g) abolish hospital co-location, with its generous tax breaks for developers.

The Community Movement

A second and increasingly important part of Irish civil society is the mushrooming community movement. To date, the community movement is fractured and politically weak. Unlike the trade unions, the community sector is largely unrepresentative and lacks political potential.

The dilemma facing those who have a class perspective of society (and who are involved in providing local answers to local problems) and those who have a more structural approach to social problems is how to marry both. What is interesting about some responses to the resolving of social problems at the base is the fact that they often emerge as initiatives by the state or its apologists. Insofar as they represent a 'top-down' approach, each demonstrates a particular regard for the needs of their respective administrations rather than the needs of those for whom each is responsible. Whether the issue was one of differences in ideological approach, as it was in Britain, or the specific problem of a local political agenda, the fundamental difficulty was a serious disregard for the real problem of a lack of accountability on the part of the state as well as an ongoing neglect of the obstacle of endemic and structural poverty which at root was seen as the result of unbridled capitalism. The axiom which turned the spotlight on the poor by making them responsible for their own poverty and therefore responsible for finding solutions to that poverty provided a godsend in the shape of 'self-help' and 'entrepreneurship' through the classless and inoffensive medium of community. Democratic development *through* the community became the guiding philosophy as community development became its standard.

There was a belief among some community workers that as the problem of poverty became more of a crisis for those on the receiving end, it became less of a problem for those in government. This became especially clear when it was stated by a British minister in 1956 that, 'We have now reached the point where further redistribution would make little difference to the standard of living of the masses; to make the rich less rich would not make the poor significantly less poor.' This acknowledgement of the impotence or, more accurately, reluctance of the state to address the problem, to some extent established the pattern for subsequent Labour administrations and allowed succeeding Tory administrations to get off the hook of spiralling social-security expenditures. Arguably, it also laid the foundations for the arguments of Thatcher and her

myopic vision of a self-contained Britain. In her wake came Blair and Gordon Brown, who make the same arguments. Nine years later and the problem was brought back into focus after the publication of Abel-Smith and Townsend's work *The Poor and the Poorest*, which made the startling claim that in 1960, a mere four years after Crosland's statement, the estimation of those living in or around the poverty line was seven and a half million. Yet another publication which undermined the case against welfarism was that produced by one prominent academic who argued, 'It was assumed too readily after 1948 that all the answers had been found to the problems of health, education, social welfare and housing, and that what was little more than an administrative tidying up of social-security provisions represented a social revolution.' The great problem in examining the case *for* welfarism in the context of an examination of community development is that many advocates see their projects acting as substitutes for the deficiencies of the welfare state.

A less cynical observer might suggest that in the circumstances it would not be difficult to recognise that the state sees the promotion of the community-development approach as one way of releasing the pressures on the civil service to deal with other issues. 'Let the poor manage their own poverty' is one way in which the issue might be described by what Gaffikin and Morrissey also described as 'privatising poverty'.

What conclusions could we come to about the nature of community development in what could be described as two entirely different social, economic and political settings? The two areas in which the separate projects were located in Britain and the North of Ireland were different in two material aspects: their economic condition and political autonomy. The North was heavily dependent on British subvention and after 1969 was becoming increasingly unstable because of the gathering political conflict. Meanwhile, spiralling poverty was becoming increasingly unmanageable.

Was the problem of poverty one which could be addressed at the level of the individual or could it only be addressed at the level of the structures? These were dilemmas faced by many involved in the poverty and community-development 'industry'. There was a clear and unmistakable reluctance or refusal to consider more fundamental solutions which addressed the problem of poverty as one over which the structure has an influence. In the United States, a number of senior researchers specifically pinpointed the source when

they commented that ‘capitalism everywhere generates wealth at one pole and poverty at the other’.

The problem, therefore, of community development in which social marginalisation was addressed, without reference to the class basis of such deprivation, created an insurmountable barrier to those who argued for a community-development strategy as a means of addressing those social inadequacies.

The notional view of community development as having the potential to straddle all sections of society and to cross international boundaries is presented as an argument in favour of it being used as a strategy for change. The numerous definitions emphasising the involvement of people in a partnership of co-operation are underpinned not only by the recognition of ‘community’ as its ideological ‘touchstone’, but in reality also by the supervision of the state. As such, the implied centrality of community is both symptomatic of a rejection of class as a vehicle for change and as an attempt by some of its advocates to strike new colours against the frustration of past failures.

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 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. It follows, of course, that in the light of the high levels of involvement and commitment to local development of community workers that such commitment should be recognised and acknowledged by increased funding which will allow community workers to enjoy permanent security of tenure.

The Education System

The Irish Republican Socialist Party takes as its historical reference point in the search for educational models the proposals by Patrick Pearse that the educational system in Ireland in the earlier part of the twentieth century was akin to what he described as a 'Murder Machine'. In spite of the tendency amongst some republicans to dismiss Pearse as a romanticist, it is the IRSP view that Pearse's educational thought and work was informed by his view of progressivism and predated the work of later radical educationists such as AS Neill (1883–1973), founder of Summerhill school. Pearse's work is identified as belonging to the child-centred movement of the late nineteenth-century and his life at St Enda's reflected his arguments for an enlightened educational methodology. Pearse developed a unique conceptualisation of schooling as a radical form of political and cultural dissent in pre-partitioned Ireland and that, in doing so, pre-empted the work of seminal thinkers such as Paulo Freire (1921–1997).

The difficulties facing Sinn Féin in its attempt to introduce reforms in the Eleven Plus system is indicative of the need for an understanding of educational structures on both sides of the border and the need to replace the currently divisive systems with all-Ireland structures which meet the needs of the country as a whole. To enable an informed debate to commence on this vital issue, it is important to have a clearer understanding of the structures as they currently stand.

In the Twenty-Six Counties, the Primary School Curriculum (1999) is taught in all schools. Recent studies prepared by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment indicate that Church authorities (usually the Catholic Church but not universally) were delegated the mandate for the formulation and implementation of the religious curriculum in the schools they control.

The Primary Certificate Examination (1929–67) was the principal examination at this level until the first primary school curriculum, *Curaclam na Bunscoile* (1971), was introduced, though informal standardised tests are still performed. The primary school system consists of eight years: Junior and Senior Infants (kindergarten), and First to Sixth Classes. Most children attend primary school between the ages of four and twelve, although it is not compulsory until the age of six. A minority of children start school at the age of three.

Primary education is generally completed at a multidenominational National School, a *Gaelscoil* or a preparatory school.

National Schools date back to the introduction of state primary education in the mid-nineteenth century. They are usually controlled by a board of management under diocesan patronage and often include a local clergyman. The term 'National School' has become partly synonymous with primary school in some parts. Recently, there have been calls from many sides for fresh thinking in the areas of funding and governance for such schools, with many in the teachers' unions wanting them to be fully secularised.

Gaelscoileanna are a very recent movement, started only late in the twentieth century and driven to some extent by the revival in the North. The Irish language is the working language in these schools and they can now be found countrywide. They differ from Irish-language National Schools in that most are under the patronage of a voluntary organisation rather than a diocesan patronage. Nearly 10% of all school children attend *Gaelscoileanna* with 368 schools across the country making it the fastest growing education sector. Multidenominational schools are another innovation. They are often opened due to parental demand.

Preparatory schools are independent, fee-paying primary schools that are not dependent on the state for funding. These typically serve to prepare children for entry to fee-paying independent or voluntary secondary schools. Most are under the patronage of a religious order.

Most students attend and complete secondary education, with approximately 90% of school leavers taking the Leaving Certificate. Secondary education is generally completed at one of three types of school:

- 1) Voluntary secondary schools are owned and managed by religious communities or private organisations. The state funds 90% of teachers' salaries and 95% of other costs. Such schools cater for 57% of secondary pupils.
- 2) Vocational schools are owned and managed by Vocational Education Committees, with 93% of their costs met by the state. These schools educate 28% of secondary pupils.

3) Comprehensive schools or community schools were established in the 1960s, often by amalgamating voluntary secondary and vocational schools. They are fully funded by the state and run by local boards of management. Nearly 15% of secondary pupils attend such schools.

In urban areas, there is a greater freedom in choosing the type of school the child will attend. The system attempts to prepare the individual for society and further education or work. This is similar to the education system in Scotland. Most students enter secondary school aged 12–13 and complete their Leaving Certificate Examination aged 17–19.

The document *Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools*, published by the Department of Education and Science, sets out the minimum standards of education required at this level. Examinations are overseen by the State Examinations Commission.

The Junior Cycle builds on the education received at primary level and culminates with the Junior Certificate Examination. Students usually begin this at the age of twelve or thirteen. The Junior Certificate Examination is taken after three years of study and not before fourteen years of age. It consists of exams in English, Irish, maths and civil, social and political education as well as a number of chosen subjects. These typically consist of one or both of history and geography and a selection from subjects including science, home economics, materials technology (woodwork), metalwork, music, religious education, German, French, Spanish, Italian, business studies, environmental and social studies, technology, Latin, classical studies and ancient Greek. Most students take around ten examined subjects altogether.

The Transition Year (TY) is a one-year informal course which is taken by an increasing number of students usually aged fifteen or sixteen. The content of this is left to the school to model on the local needs. It is compulsory in some schools, optional in others and some schools do not have it. Students may attend structured classes but do not cover material relevant to the Senior Cycle or the Leaving Certificate exams; therefore, students who choose not to do this year are in no way academically disadvantaged when entering the Senior Cycle. The range of activities in Transition Year or Fourth Year differs greatly from school to school, but many include activities such as work-experience placements, project work, international trips or exchanges

and excursions. Students may participate in courses such as creative writing, sailing, film making, public speaking and so on, or enter competitions in science, fashion, motor sport and others which would normally be too time consuming for a full-time student. Proponents of TY believe that it allows students an extra year to mature, engage in self-directed learning, explore career options and to choose subjects for Senior Cycle. Some critics believe that a year away from traditional study and the classroom environment can distract students and cause problems when they return to the Senior Cycle. They also believe that the activities undertaken in Transition Year prevent some students from enrolling in this year, as they can be costly.

The Senior Cycle builds on the Junior Cycle and culminates with the Leaving Certificate Examination. Students normally begin this aged 15–17 in the year following the completion of the Junior Cycle or Transition Year. The Leaving Certificate Examination is taken after two years of study at the ages 16–19.

Therefore, a typical secondary school will consist of First to Third Year (with the Junior Certificate at the end of Third), the usually optional Transition Year (though compulsory in some schools), and Fifth and Sixth Year (with the Leaving Cert at the end of Sixth).

The vast majority of students continue from lower level to senior level, with only 12.3% leaving after the Junior Certificate. This is lower than the EU average of 15.2%.

Ireland's secondary students rank above average in terms of academic performance in both the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and EU, having literacy, numeracy and science test scores better than average. Ireland has the second-best literacy scores for teenagers in the EU (after Finland).

Higher (third-level) education awards in Ireland are conferred by more than thirty-eight Higher Education Institutions including University of Dublin (Trinity College), Dublin City University, Dublin Institute of Technology, Higher Education and Training Awards Council, National University of Ireland, Waterford Institute of Technology and University of Limerick, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick and Letterkenny Institute of Technology. These are the degree-awarding authorities approved by the Irish government

and can grant awards at all academic levels, including in most cases Doctor of Philosophy. The King's Inns of Dublin has a limited role in education specialising in the preparation of candidates for the degree of barrister-at-law to practise as barristers.

Some colleges are 'constituent' or 'linked' colleges of universities, whereas others are designated institutions of the Higher Education and Training Awards Council. The latter includes the Institutes of Technology, Colleges of Education, and other independent colleges. Some colleges have 'delegated authority' from the Higher Education and Training Awards Council; this allows them to confer and validate awards in their own name.

Some institutions, such as the University of Limerick and Dublin City University, have completed a process of modularising their courses (others are still in a transition phase).

The Marks and Standards document, offered by most institutions, can be consulted for information on the range and criteria set down for awards, while programme specifications offer additional information. In contrast to practice in the rest of the education system, entry tends to be highly competitive for school leavers – the so-called Points Race. In 2001, the percentage of school leavers transferring to third level exceeded 50% for the first time; as of 2005, it is in excess of 55% and expected to grow at approximately 1% per annum for the next decade.

Under the 'Free Fees Initiative', the exchequer will pay the tuition fees of students who meet relevant course, nationality and residence requirements as set down under the initiative. A 'registration fee' of approximately £1,500 (billed at the start of the academic year) is payable on most courses; this fee is intended to cover student examinations, registration and services.

All but two of the seven universities in the Twenty-Six Counties offer 'open' Bachelor of Arts degrees where the student can choose their specialisation after their first year of study. The two universities that do not offer open arts degrees (Trinity College, Dublin, and Dublin City University) do still offer Bachelor of Arts degrees in specific areas of study such as Drama Studies, Journalism, Latin, History, Japanese and International Relations. In one, Trinity College, Dublin, the student wishing to do an arts degree must apply to the college naming a

viable combination of two 'arts' subjects, such as French and Philosophy, and in the final year the student must choose one of the two on which to focus. Dublin City University's entry arts degree is offered by St Patrick's College of Education (a college of DCU) and is titled 'BA in Humanities'.

Ireland also has 0.747 of the world's top 500 universities per capita, which ranks the country in eighth place in the world. There are seven establishments of higher education in the South of Ireland which are ranked amongst the top 500 universities worldwide by the *Times Higher Education Supplement*.

Entry into universities is normally done through the Central Applications Office (CAO), a clearing house similar to that in Britain, the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). In this way, students wishing to enter university apply to the CAO rather than the individual university. Places in courses are usually awarded based on results in the Leaving Certificate Examination or any international equivalent. Each university has a minimum entry requirement, usually requiring a pass grade in either English or Irish, as well as maths. Some also require a pass grade in a modern continental European language (French, German, Spanish or Italian). Each individual course has further entry requirements: for example, science courses usually require a certain grade in one or two sciences. The student must also achieve the number of points required for the course under the points system. However, universities also have systems in place for accepting mature students, and students who have successfully completed a post-Leaving Certificate course.

Entry into third level is generally very high in Ireland, and among young adults (those aged 25–34), 41.6% of them have attained third-level degrees – the second-highest level in the EU (after Cyprus) and substantially ahead of the average of 29.1%.

Further education was for many years the 'poor relation' of the education system. There were many different, often poorly defined, awards offered by a multitude of bodies, both ad-hoc and statutory. Typical areas included apprenticeships, childcare, farming, retail, and tourism. These are typically areas of the economy that do not depend on multinational investment and recognition.

The Further Education and Training Awards Council confers awards in the extra-university system. Further education has expanded immensely in recent

years, helped by the institutions, and because of this, the type and range of these awards have been formalised to restore confidence.

In spite of the optimistic picture described above, there is a darker side to education in Ireland. In 1982, Eileen Flynn was sacked from her teaching post for being pregnant while unmarried. And in 2002, Tomás Ó Dulaing, the headmaster of Gaelscoil Thúlach na nÓg in Dunboyne, County Meath, was dismissed after a controversy over religious education in the school. The school is interdenominational, with education in both Catholic and Church of Ireland faiths. Tomás Ó Dulaing arranged for religious education classes to take place outside regular school hours, after consulting with parents and management, but the school's patron body objected and the board of management sacked him. He was sacked for misconduct following his unauthorised letter sent to parents of the children. His dismissal was upheld by the labour court after he withdrew his appeal.

Finally, in 2007, controversy broke when a school in Balbriggan was reported to have only black pupils, all Irish-born, leading to accusations of de facto segregation in the school system. Some claimed it was an unintended consequence of the school enrolment policies; others blamed the state failing to plan for growth in the area. Because of the shortage of school places, an Educate Together school that was planned to open in 2008 was opened a year ahead of schedule.

In the North, the Northern Ireland Executive's Department of Education (DE) is responsible for the country's education policy except for the higher- and further-education sector for which the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) retains responsibility.

The Department of Education's main areas of responsibility cover pre-school, primary, post-primary and special education; the youth service; the promotion of community relations within and between schools; and teacher education and salaries. Its primary statutory duty is to promote the education of the people of the North and to ensure the effective implementation of education policy.

Education at a local level in the Six Counties is administered by five education and library boards covering different geographical areas. The role of the

boards is to ensure that high-quality education and youth and library support services exist throughout their areas. Each board is allocated resources by the Department of Education.

The majority of examinations sat, and education plans followed, in Northern Irish schools are set by the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations & Assessment (CCEA). All schools follow the Northern Ireland Curriculum, which is based on the National Curriculum used in England and Wales. At age eleven, on entering secondary education, all pupils study a broad base of subjects which include geography, English, mathematics, science, physical education, music and modern languages. Currently, there are proposals to reform the curriculum to make its emphasis more skills based under which, in addition to those mentioned, home economics, local and global citizenship and personal, social and health education would become compulsory subjects.

At age fourteen, pupils select which subjects to continue to study for General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations. At present, it is compulsory to study English, mathematics, science, a modern language and religious studies, although a full GCSE course does not have to be studied for the latter. In addition, pupils usually elect to continue with other subjects and many study for eight or nine GCSEs and sometimes up to ten or eleven. GCSEs mark the end of compulsory education in the North of Ireland.

At age sixteen, some pupils stay at school and choose to study Advanced Level, AS and A2-level subjects or more vocational qualifications such as Applied Advanced Levels. Those choosing AS and A2 levels normally pick three or four subjects and success in these can determine acceptance into higher-education courses at university.

The North remains the largest area in the UK which still operates grammar schools. In the last year of primary school, children sit the Eleven Plus transfer test, and the results determine which school they will go to. In 2001, a decision was made to abolish the system and to replace it with separate exams that each grammar school will set for prospective primary students, which took effect in 2009. Successive ministers of education have chosen not to turn grammar schools into comprehensive schools, as once thought, due to other UK government systems failing to meet expectations with their introduction of comprehensive schools. Controlled schools (nursery, primary, special, sec-

ondary modern and grammar schools) are under the management of school boards of governors and the employing authorities are the five education and library boards. Although open to those of all faiths and none, many of these schools were originally Church schools whose control was transferred to the state in the first half of the twentieth century. The three largest Protestant churches (Presbyterian, Church of Ireland and Methodist), known as the transferors, maintain a link with the schools through Church representation on controlled school boards of governors.

This statutory representational role on boards of governors is set out in schedules 4 and 5 of the Education & Library Board (Northern Ireland) Order 1986. Under this order, for example, transferor governors comprise four out of nine members on a controlled primary school. This right of representation on controlled schools is being re-examined under the Review of Public Administration (RPA).

The RPA has proposed the removal of this statutory role for transferors on the ground that it purportedly contravenes the equality requirements of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The Transferors' Representative Council, speaking on behalf of the three Churches, argues that this proposal will remove the Christian ethos as of right from the controlled sector of education.

There are 547 Roman Catholic-managed schools in the North. According to figures from the Department of Education for 2006/2007, the number of pupils registered at school was 329,583. The number of pupils attending Catholic-managed schools was 148,225. Approximately 45% of children in the North are educated in Catholic-managed schools.

The Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) is the advocate for the Catholic maintained schools sector in the North. CCMS represents trustees, schools and governors on issues such as raising and maintaining standards, the school estate and teacher employment. As the largest employer of teachers in the North (8,500 teachers), CCMS plays a central role in supporting teachers, whether through its welfare service or, for example, in working parties such as the Independent Inquiry into Teacher Pay and Conditions of Service.

CCMS supports trustees in the provision of school buildings and governors and principals in the effective management and control of schools. CCMS

also has a wider role within the education sector and contributes with education partners to policy on a wide range of issues such as curriculum review, selection, pre-school education, pastoral care and leadership.

There are thirty-six council members who oversee and authorise the strategic and operational policies and practices of CCMS. Council members are appointed for the duration of each council period for four years. Membership to the council is by appointment and recommendation. Council members receive payment for travelling and incurred costs only. There are four categories of Council members:

- Department of Education representatives – membership is advertised through the press for these positions
- Trustee representatives – members are recommended by the Northern bishops
- Parents' representatives – members are drawn from local community on a voluntary basis
- Teachers' representatives – members are drawn from the teaching profession on a voluntary basis.

Established under the auspices of the 1989 Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order, the Council's primary purpose is the provision of an upper tier of management for the Catholic Maintained Sector with the primary objective of raising standards in Catholic maintained schools.

The main activities of the Council are set out in the 1989 Education Reform (NI) Order and are to:

- Employ all such teachers as are required on the staffs of Catholic maintained schools
- Advise the Department or a board on such matters relating to Catholic maintained schools as the Department or board may refer to the Council or as the Council may see fit
- Promote and co-ordinate, in consultation with the trustees of Catholic maintained schools, the planning of the effective provision of such schools
- Promote the effective management and control of Catholic maintained schools by the boards of governors of such schools

- Provide or secure, with the approval of the Department, the provision of such advice and information to the trustees, boards of governors, principal and staff of Catholic maintained schools as appears to the Council to be appropriate in connection with the Council's duty
- Exercise such other functions as are conferred on it by the education orders.

The Council for Catholic Maintained Schools continues to promote the philosophy and vision articulated in Building Peace, Shaping the Future and is committed to ensuring that through a process of managing through influence, there is a healthy respect for diversity throughout the Catholic maintained school system.

Although integrated education is expanding, the North has a highly segregated education system, with 95% of pupils attending either a maintained (Catholic) school or a controlled (mostly Protestant) school. Controlled schools are open to children of all faiths and none, as are Catholic schools (Catholic describes the way the school is run, but the students do not have to be Roman Catholic to attend). Teaching a balanced view of some subjects (especially regional history) is difficult in these conditions. The Churches in the North have not been involved in the development of integrated schools. The schools have been established by the voluntary efforts of parents. The Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE), a voluntary organisation, promotes, develops and supports integrated education in the North.

The Integrated Education Fund (IEF) is a financial foundation for the development and growth of integrated education in the North in response to parental demand. The IEF seeks to bridge the financial gap between starting integrated schools and securing full government funding and support.

It was established in 1992 with money from EU Structural Funds, the Department of Education NI, the Nuffield Foundation and the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust as a financial foundation for the development and growth of integrated education. The fund financially supports the establishment of new schools, the growth of existing schools and those schools seeking to become integrated through the transformation process. Funding is generally seed corn and projects are 'pump primed' with the objective of eventually securing full government funding and support.

The Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 placed a duty on the Department of Education, similar to that already in existence in relation to integrated education through the 1989 Education Reform Order, 'to encourage and facilitate the development of Irish-medium education'. Irish language-medium schools are able to achieve grant-aided status under the same procedures as other schools by applying for voluntary maintained status. In addition to free-standing schools, Irish language-medium education can be provided through units in existing schools. Unit arrangements permit Irish language-medium education to be supported where a free-standing school would not be viable. A unit may operate as a self-contained provision under the management of a host English-medium school and usually on the same site.

Note that although the Department of Education uses *Year 8 to Year 14* for secondary education, the traditional *First–Fifth Form*, *Lower Sixth* and *Upper Sixth* are still used, at least informally, by some schools.

Provision in higher education is located principally in the two universities, Queen's University, Belfast, and the University of Ulster, located in four separate campuses in Belfast, Jordanstown, Coleraine and Derry. Current debate surrounds the continuing concern for the Derry-based Magee campus. Historically, the Magee campus represents much what is bad for third-level education in the North in that it remains as a testimony to the ongoing problem of political patronage and religious discrimination.

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. Furthermore, believing that the current processes of selection are inherently unfair, the IRSP calls for a fundamental review of the selection system.

Accordingly, 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, discriminates against working-class families and against the interests of the wider community 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.

Furthermore, the IRSP calls for the creation of a third university to be established in Derry with formal links created between Magee and the Letterkenny Institute of Higher Education as consistent with the need for wider choice, representing the needs of the Derry and North West community. The IRSP demands the scrapping of the current student loans system and the reintroduction of maintenance grants on the basic principle of free education for all.

Health

Just as it is with education and the economy, there are strong current arguments for an all-Ireland approach to the question of health. The Irish Republican Socialist Party will set out to demonstrate that the current situation of two separate systems is unsustainable in that, instead of meeting the needs especially of those living on either side of the border, the system is unwieldy, inadequate and fails to provide for the vast majority of people who require hospital services close to where they reside. Furthermore, the systems tend to depend increasingly on voluntary provision, with community groups taking responsibility for care of the elderly and for childcare provision.

The public health-care system of the Twenty-Six Counties is governed by the Health Act 2004, which established a new body to be responsible for providing health and personal social services to everyone living in Ireland – the Health Service Executive (HSE). The new national health service came into being officially on 1 January 2005; however, the new structures are currently in the process of being established as the reform programme continues. In addition to the public sector, there is also a large, private health-care market.

All persons resident in Ireland are entitled to receive health care through the public health-care system, which is managed by the Health Service Executive and funded by general taxation. A person may be required to pay a subsidised fee for certain health care received; this depends on income, age, illness or disability. All child health and maternity services are provided free of charge, as is emergency care.

Everyone living in the country, and visitors to Ireland who hold a European Health Insurance Card, are entitled to free maintenance and treatment in public beds in Health Service Executive and voluntary hospitals. Outpatient services are also provided for free. However, the majority of patients on median incomes or above are required to pay subsidised hospital charges.

The Medical Card – which entitles holders to free hospital care, GP visits, dental services, optical services, aural services, prescription drugs and medical appliances – is available to those receiving welfare payments, low earners, those with certain long-term or severe illnesses and in certain other cases. Many political parties support extending the availability of the Medical Card

to eventually cover everyone resident in Ireland – they currently cover 31.9% of the population. Those on slightly higher incomes are eligible for a GP Visit Card, which entitles the holder to free general practitioner visits. For persons over 70 years who are not entitled to the Medical Card or GP Visit Card, they instead receive an annual cash grant of €400 up to a certain income.

People who are not entitled to the Medical Card (68.1% of the population) must pay fees for certain health-care services. There is a €100 A&E charge for those who attend an accident and emergency department without a referral letter from a family doctor (a visit to which usually costs €50–75). Hospital charges (for inpatients) are a flat fee of €100 per day up to a maximum of €1,000 in any twelve-month period, irrespective of the actual care received. Specialist assessments and diagnostic assessments (X-rays, laboratory tests, physiotherapy, etc) are provided free. If a person cannot afford to pay hospital charges, the HSE will provide the services free of charge.

Many hospitals in Ireland, such as James Connolly Memorial Hospital, are operated directly by the HSE; there are also hospitals run on a voluntary basis by organisations. Some are teaching hospitals (such as University College Hospital, Galway) operated in conjunction with a university. There are also many private hospitals. Hospitals in Ireland generally offer a range of health care including accident and emergency services.

The public health system, despite massive expenditure in recent years, has some problems. An ongoing issue is the ‘waiting lists’ for those requiring, in some cases, serious operations.

In 2007, 76% of inpatients were admitted to hospital for operations immediately, 11% had to wait up to one month, 4% had to wait up to three months, 1% had to wait up to six months and 4% had to wait for over six months for operations.

For outpatients, 23% were seen on time, 44% were seen within thirty minutes, 18% waited more than an hour and 7% waited two hours.

The National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) was set up in 2002 for those waiting over three months for an operation or procedure. The NTPF involves government paying for public patients to be treated free of charge in a private

hospital in Ireland, or sometimes abroad if necessary. The NTPF has reduced waiting times for procedures to an average of between two and five months (with the average in 2009 being 2.4 months), compared to between two and five years in 2002.

While there are obvious similarities between the health services provision on both sides of the border, the administrative procedures are clearly quite different.

Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland (HSC) is the publicly funded service responsible for the administration of public-health and other social-care services in the North. The Northern Ireland Executive, through its health department, is responsible for the funding of the service. It is free of charge to all citizens of the North and the rest of the United Kingdom. For services such as A&E, patients simply walk in, state their name and date of birth, are given treatment and then leave. Patients are unaware of costs incurred by them using the service. It is often called the NHS, as in Scotland, England and Wales, but differs in that it provides not only health care but social care, too. In Britain, the three NHS services only provide health care. Social services are provided by local councils. The Northern Ireland Health and Social Care Service was created by the Northern Ireland Office after the publication of the Beveridge Report (1942).

Following the power-sharing arrangement after the Good Friday Agreement on 29 September 2008, unionist health minister Michael McGimpsey announced that prescription charges were to be phased out by April 2010, being first reduced to £3.00 in January 2009. This was widely accepted by the four main parties of the Six-Counties Executive plus the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland. The move brought the North into line with the Welsh system, which has already abolished charges, and Scotland, which plans to do the same.

To meet the increasing demand for health care and to deliver better-quality care, the *Health Service Executive (2008) Review: Towards an Integrated Health Service* recommends that Ireland develops an Integrated Health System (also known as the Preferred Health System). With this approach, it is argued that health services (within and between hospital and community) are connected together. Some of the practices that the review recommends should operate in all public hospitals include:

- Reductions in the average length of time people stay in hospital (excessively long hospital stays currently use 900 acute inpatient beds)
- Increases in the number of day cases (the average in Ireland is 12% below the OECD average and ranges between 15% and 69%)
- More discharge planning (currently no discharge date planned for 83% of patients)
- Bringing patients into hospital on the day of their surgery – rather than 1–3 days earlier (currently less than 50% are admitted on their day of surgery).
- Treating patients in more appropriate settings (currently 39% of inpatients could be treated in an alternative to an acute hospital – many in their own homes).

A review of how public hospitals admit, treat and discharge patients has found that patients would spend less time in hospital and receive a better service if all public hospitals adopted practices that are the norm in other advanced health systems. It also set out the case for an integrated health service for Ireland as a whole. The review found that many patients are unnecessarily admitted or being kept in hospital for too long. It says that with practice and process changes, existing hospital facilities would be able to deliver care to far more patients – which could reduce waiting times.

It also points out that to meet the 60% increase in demand for health care expected during the next twelve years, Ireland must tackle these process issues and reduce its over-reliance on acute hospitals, which is out of step with international best practice. Ireland must also rebalance its spending in favour of expanding community-based services so that the public can access care more conveniently and closer to home.

Professor Brendan Drumm, CEO of the HSE, said that modernising hospital practices was essential: ‘To develop a world-class health system, we have to replace outdated practices with modern ways of doing things that reflect the needs of patients.’ He said that clinicians (doctors, consultants, nurses and therapists) would play an essential role in leading this change.

The review emphasises that hospital stays should be minimised, as they can be disruptive to families, inconvenient for patients, increase the risk of infec-

tion, and they can impact on important social networks and delay recovery, especially for elderly people.

The HSE commissioned PA Consulting Group to undertake a review of acute hospital-bed capacity up to 2020. It involved a comprehensive stakeholder consultation exercise, including over 120 Irish and 20 international health experts. The review outlines the options, opportunities and challenges in developing the right balance for patients between inpatient, day-case and community-based care and sets out what it calls the Integrated Health System. The concept of the Integrated Health System as set out in the review is consistent with the HSE's current strategy to make it easier for people to access services, building up primary, community and long-term care services and developing services for chronic disease management.

With an Integrated Health System, patients should get in, through, and out of the health service more quickly. The majority of care should be provided through community-based facilities and appropriate day-case procedures. People spend less time in hospital and more time being cared for in their communities or at home. With an Integrated Health System, patients are more likely to receive the care they need in the right location provided by the right professional when they need it. This approach also promotes greater accountability, transparency and value for money.

According to the review, in addition to delivering better service, better outcomes and better value, the development of a fully Integrated Health System would impact on the demand for public patient beds by 2020. There are currently 11,660 public beds in public hospitals. In addition, there are nearly 4,400 private beds (2,461 in public hospitals and 1,926 in private hospitals).

If the modern hospital practices and processes which already operate in some Irish hospitals, and are the norm in health services around the world, operated in all Irish hospitals, patients could get a better service with less public patient beds than currently exist. For example, countries such as Australia, Britain, Finland, Denmark and Canada could treat the same number of patients as Ireland treats today with between 2,000 and 5,000 fewer public patient beds.

However, because the Integrated Health System does not yet operate universally in Ireland, there are stresses on the existing public health system. To meet these stresses, based on current practices and processes, a further 1,118 hospital beds are required today. The Programme for Government includes a commitment to provide 1,500 extra acute beds over the next few years through the co-location initiative (approximately 1,000 beds) and the HSE capital plan (approximately 450 beds).

If current practices and processes continue and there is not the appropriate investment in community-based facilities, the demand for public patient hospital beds would reach nearly 20,000 by 2020. This would require capital investment of around €4 billion on new hospitals. Ireland would need to open a new 600-bed hospital (similar in size to some of our largest hospitals such as Tallaght Hospital, University College Hospital, Galway and Cork University Hospital) every year for the next twelve years. Even with this unprecedented investment, patients would not receive the best care or outcomes and taxpayers would not be getting the best return for their health investment. The review highlights that:

- The average length of stay in an Irish hospital is comparatively long – some 37% of total inpatient beds are used by patients who would no longer be expected to be in hospital
- Irish hospitals still predominantly operate Monday to Friday, discharging three times more patients on these days rather than on Saturday or Sunday
- More than half of surgical inpatients are admitted the day before surgery – the practice in most countries is admission on the day of surgery
- Delays in accessing tests result in bottlenecks throughout the hospitals, with many patients admitted for tests that they could have had as outpatients.

Ireland's day-case rate is 12% below the OECD average and less than half that of Canada. If Ireland performed as well as Canada, some 338,000 more patients could be treated as day patients. The absence of discharge planning in line with normal practice in advanced health-care systems unnecessarily extends hospital stays.

In conclusion, that while hospitals, for example in the counties of Derry and Donegal, do make occasional use of services on both sides of the border, the tendency in the Twenty-Six Counties for more serious patients to be transferred to hospitals in Dublin is an unsatisfactory practice.

The Irish Republican Socialist Party calls for a major review of health-service provision North and South with an emphasis on the creation of a single health service for the island as a whole with greater resources being made available for the upgrading of hospitals on both sides of the border. Provision for elderly and childcare should be the responsibility of the state.

Irish Culture

The Irish Republican Socialist Party takes as its understanding of culture the sum of attitudes, customs and beliefs that distinguishes one nation from another. Culture is transmitted through language, material objects, ritual, institutions and art from one generation to the next. The culture of Ireland refers to the distinctive cultural norms of Ireland and the Irish people as a whole. Although the culture of the people living in the island of Ireland is far from exclusivist, due to various population movements down through the centuries, it has evolved into one which is diverse, increasingly cosmopolitan and multi-ethnic. In spite of these modernising influences, there are anomalies. Notable cultural divides exist between the rural community and urban dwellers, between the Catholic and Protestant people of Ireland as a whole, between the Irish-speaking people inside and outside the Gaeltacht regions and the English-speaking majority population, increasingly between new immigrants and the native population, and most strikingly, between the traveller population and settled population throughout the island. The culture of Ireland is not time constrained, is subject to adjustment and change consisting of the eighteenth-century emergence of the Orange Order as well as the nineteenth-century revival of the Irish language, arts and sports, but when taken as a whole, can be described as the culture of Ireland. Just as there is only one nation, in spite of claims to the contrary, there can only be one culture, one which incorporates the nationalist and unionist traditions and includes the modernising influences of the arts, literature, music and sport.

But just as the varying political influences of Gaelicism and Orangeism appear to represent two sides of a cultural/political dichotomy, it needs to be emphasised that whereas the Gaelic can accurately be described as pluralist and non-sectarian, the other, Orangeism, and the sectarian promotion of 'Ulster-Scots' is exclusivist and sectarian. One, therefore, could be described as progressive, whereas the other is intransigent and reactionary.

One of the principal advocates of the search for an Irish culture which had been suppressed over the course of several centuries, Conradh na Gaeilge was founded in Dublin on 31 July 1893 by Douglas Hyde, a Protestant

from County Roscommon with the aid of Eugene O'Growney, Eoin Mac Neill, Luke K Walsh and others. The organisation developed from Ulick Bourke's earlier Gaelic Union and became the leading institution promoting the Gaelic Revival. The Gaelic League's first newspaper was *An Claidheamh Soluis* (*The Sword of Light*) and its most noted editor was Patrick Pearse.

Though apolitical, the organisation attracted many Irish nationalists of different persuasions, much like the Gaelic Athletic Association. It was through the League that many future political leaders and rebels first met, laying the foundation for groups such as the Irish Volunteers (1913). However, Conradh na Gaeilge did not commit itself entirely to the national movement until 1915, causing the resignation of Douglas Hyde, who felt that the culture of language should be above politics. Most of the signatories of the 1916 Proclamation were members.

After the foundation of the Irish Free State in 1922, the organisation had a less prominent role in public life as Irish was made a compulsory subject in state-funded schools. The organisation successfully campaigned for the enactment of the Official Languages Act, 2003, which gave greater statutory protection to Irish speakers and created the position of *An Coimisinéir Teanga* (The Languages Commissioner).

Conradh na Gaeilge was among the principal organisations responsible for co-ordinating the successful campaign to make Irish an official language of the European Union.

Most recently, the organisation has become embroiled in a dispute with Irish political party Fine Gael over the party's policy to end the status of Irish as a compulsory subject for the Leaving Certificate. Conradh na Gaeilge has responded by asking voters in the next general election to vote only for candidates who are in favour of Irish's required position remaining.

The organisation has branches in several parts of Ireland and is closely involved in the development of the annual cultural festival, Oireachtas na Gaeilge, as well as the annual Seachtain na Gaeilge promotional campaign. Conradh na Gaeilge has recently opened free legal advice centres in Dublin and Galway.

Most recently, the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Éamon Ó Cuív, has announced that he is to move the organisation out of its headquarters in central Dublin and relocate the organisation to the heart of the *Ráth Cairn Gaeltacht* in Meath. He cited the reason that not many people are using the building.

The Irish language was spoken over the entire island of Ireland prior to the Plantation; subsequently the language was displaced by English, its use was illegal, and it was dubbed the language of poverty and the uneducated. It was pushed into a few small pockets on the western coast of Ireland. Following the declaration of the Irish Free State, Irish was made an official language. Areas where the language was spoken were called Gaeltachtaí, and the use of English minimised. Irish became a compulsory subject in government-funded education, and various laws and legislation were enacted to encourage its use. A number of organisations, government and private, continue this revival, through music, literature, film and television. Statistics compiled from a national census of 2006 indicate that 46% of Irish nationals usually resident in Ireland state that they are able to speak the language, and that 9% of non-Irish nationals resident in Ireland state they are able to speak the language. However, these statistics are based on responses to the question ‘Can you speak Irish?’ asked in Irish and English, without any test to validate the responses. The same census found that only 4% of Irish nationals living in Ireland stated that they do actually speak the language daily or weekly.

In the South, the last time a census asked people to specify their religion was 2006. The result was 86.8% Roman Catholic, 3% Church of Ireland (Anglican), 0.8% Islam, 0.6% Presbyterian, 0.3% Methodist, fewer than 0.05% Jewish, approximately 1.4% other religious groupings and 4.4% ticked the ‘no religion’ box. About 2% failed to answer.

In the Six Counties in 2001, the population was 40.3% Roman Catholic, 20.7% Presbyterian, 15.3% Church of Ireland (Anglican), 3.5% Methodist, 6.1% other Christian, 0.3% other religion and philosophy, and 13.9% religion not stated. Among the Twenty-Six Counties’ Roman Catholics, weekly church attendance dropped from 87% in 1981 to 60% in 1998, though this remained one of the highest attendance rates in Europe.

The Irish Republican Socialist Party supports the promotion of a cultural industry in the context of economic regeneration and promotes and 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. But the IRSP views with concern the domination of the growing Irish-language movement by Sinn Féin and calls for greater attempts to make it more inclusivist and democratic. Irish-language newspapers should be expanded with 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.

Women and Socialism

Women's rights refer to freedoms and entitlements of women of all ages. These rights may or may not be institutionalised, ignored or suppressed by law, local custom or behaviour in a particular society. These liberties are grouped together and differentiated from broader notions of human rights because they often differ from the freedoms inherently possessed by or recognised for men, and because activists for this issue claim an inherent historical and traditional bias against the exercise of rights by women and girls.

Issues commonly associated with notions of women's rights include, though are not limited to, the right to bodily integrity and autonomy; to vote (suffrage); to hold public office; to work; to fair wages or equal pay; to own property; to education; to serve in the military or be conscripted; to enter into legal contracts; and to have marital, parental and religious rights. Women and their supporters have campaigned and in some places continue to campaign for the same rights as men.

Despite the introduction of equal pay, affirmative action, equal employment opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation, women's average weekly earnings are now only 66% of men's. The workforce participation rate of women in Ireland is now lower than any comparable industrialised country and the proportion of women with full-time and/or permanent (as opposed to casual) employment is falling. Some 70% of all part-time jobs are held by women, but 22% of women working part time would like more hours. Meanwhile, 30% of male workers are working more than fifty hours a week and more than half of them would like fewer hours.

Large numbers of women are excluded from participation in the labour market due to lack of childcare. Support for women's services is less now than it was a decade ago, despite a steady increase in the number of women and children living below the poverty line.

A woman with dependent children has her welfare payments cut if she partners with a man – whether or not she wants to be economically dependent on him, and whether or not he can or does support her and her children. Larger numbers of women in marriage or relationships suffered domestic violence.

The rate of sexual assaults reported has increased by around 9% per year over the last few years.

Abortion in Ireland is illegal unless the pregnancy is in danger of imperilling the life of the woman through continuation of the pregnancy. The 1967 Act does not apply to the North of Ireland, where the 1861 Act and the Criminal Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 1945 are the defining principles. Abortion in the Six Counties is only legal in cases where the child cannot be born alive or when it is done in order to preserve the health of the mother. Opposition from the Social Democratic and Labour Party, Sinn Féin, the Ulster Unionist Party, the Roman Catholic Church and the Democratic Unionist Party stands against the extension of abortion along similar lines to that in Britain.

As sexist images of women flourish in the mass media, eating disorders and the deaths that result from them are increasing among young women.

As measures to redress the historic imbalance, the IRSP demands:

- Real equal pay for work of equal or comparable value
- Increase the minimum wage to a level that recognises that many workers, women and men, are solely responsible for supporting family members
- Enterprise bargaining and individual contracts disadvantage women workers, who are more often in less organised sectors, so we call for all wage increases and improvements in working conditions to be automatically generalised across each industry
- Extend full-time and permanent employee entitlements (sick leave, annual leave, etc) to all part-time and casual workers on a pro-rata basis
- Legislate for and enforce programmes in both the private and public sector to encourage and assist more women to be trained and employed in non-traditional jobs
- Twelve months' parenting leave fully paid by employer contributions to a publicly managed scheme; the right to return to the same job; and generous paid leave to allow parents to take time off work to care for sick children and attend school activities
- Enforce anti-discrimination and affirmative action legislation.

For independence and equality in family life the IRSP demands:

- A living wage – which enables a decent quality of life, not just survival – for all welfare recipients and their dependants, and automatic indexation of all welfare benefits to cover real cost of living increases
- Reproduction is a woman's right to choose, and IVF should be available safely, free of charge and on demand through the public health system. Just like abortion, free IVF on demand should be a woman's right to choose. Women in prison must be able to use contraception and have access to pregnancy or abortion care if necessary
- Abolish all taxation measures that penalise families in which women are engaged in waged work
- Reverse the privatisation of all utilities and other essential services, which has disproportionately and adversely affected women and children
- Expand affordable, good-quality, secure public housing so child-raising can take place in a stable environment.

For women's control of their own bodies:

- Legislate to make abortion available, free of charge and on demand through the National Health Services in both health-care systems
- Make safe, reliable contraceptives freely available to both women and men and make the 'morning after' pill available free of charge
- No discrimination based on age, sexual preference or marital status for access to reproductive technologies. Women in prison to be permitted to use contraception, and have access to pregnancy or abortion care if needed
- Improve availability of women-centred pregnancy care, including state funding and insurance for community-based midwifery and birth centres.

For an end to sexual violence and exploitation:

- Strengthen and strictly enforce laws against sexual harassment
- Restore and increase funding for women's services to ensure ready

access to health centres, rape crisis centres, women's refuges and counselling services for all women and their dependants who need them

- Launch a community-education campaign in the media, schools and all other public institutions to promote positive, non-stereotyped, anti-sexist images of women in all areas of social activity
- Repeal all laws against prostitution in order to end the criminalisation and victimisation of sex workers, and publicly fund comprehensive health care, legal and personal support services, and alternative employment opportunities, for sex workers
- Prosecute anyone who profits from the international sex trade and prostitution, and give full protection and rights to victims of the sex trade in Ireland.

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, for women's control of their own bodies, recognise the right of women to choose, strengthen laws against exploitation and introduce free universal access to childcare facilities. For an end to sexual violence and exploitation.

APPENDIX

Irish Republican Socialist Party Founding Statement

Páirtí Poblachtach Sóisialach Na Éireann Press Statement, 13 December 1974.

At a meeting held in Dublin on Sunday 8 December 1974, a decision was made to form a new political party, to be known as the Irish Republican Socialist Party. The inaugural meeting was attended by approximately eighty delegates from Belfast, Armagh, County Derry, Derry City, Donegal, Dublin, Wicklow, Cork, Clare, Limerick and Tipperary.

It was unanimously agreed that the objective 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'.

To this end, it was agreed that the party would launch a vigorous campaign of political agitation and education, North and South, on the following issues:

Six Counties

1) Recognising that British imperialist interference in Ireland constitutes 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 following demands:

a) 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.

b) Having specified the date for her total withdrawal from Ireland, Britain must immediately withdraw all troops to barracks, release all internees and sentenced 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.

c) 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.

d) It will be an immediate objective of the party to launch an intensive campaign of opposition to EEC membership. We, therefore, intend to play an active part in the EEC referendum in the Six Counties and through our support groups in Britain.

e) Recognising that sectarianism and the present campaign of sectarian assassinations arise as a direct result of British manipulation of the most reactionary elements of Irish society, we shall seek to end this campaign on the basis of united action by the Catholic and Protestant working class against British imperialism in Ireland.

Twenty-Six Counties

1) We will seek to have a united campaign of all democratic forces against repressive legislation in the South, and against the policy of blatant collaboration with British imperialism, which is now being pursued by the Twenty-Six Counties administration.

2) The IRSP is totally opposed to the exploitation of our natural resources by multinational corporations. It shall, therefore, be our policy to give active and sustained support to the present campaign for the nationalisation of these resources.

3) Recognising that the rapidly increasing cost of living and rising unemployment are to a large extent a direct result of our EEC membership, it shall be the policy of the IRSP to actively support the formation of people's organisations to combat rising prices and unemployment.

Elections

The IRSP is not an abstentionist party; it 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. In keeping with this attitude, we have decided, in principle, to contest the forthcoming Convention elections in the Six Counties.

As the vast majority of those involved in the formation of the IRSP are people who have recently resigned from Sinn Féin (Gardiner Place), we feel it may be necessary to give a brief outline of the reasons for our resignations. They are as follows:

- 1) The refusal of the Sinn Féin Ard Comhairle to implement the democratically decided policies on the National Question as laid down at the 1972 and 1973 Ard Fheiseanna.
- 2) The lack of internal democracy within Sinn Féin. This became particularly noticeable during the course of the past year when many dedicated members were purged from the organisation because they dared to question the reformist approach of the Ard Comhairle on many vital questions. This purge culminated in attempts by members of the Ard Comhairle to intimidate delegates to the recent Ard Fheis, when many of them were threatened with expulsion if they did not vote in accordance with the wishes of the leadership.
- 3) The decision of the Ard Comhairle to contest the Six Counties Assembly elections, when it was perfectly obvious that the elections were clearly designed to re-establish a British-controlled puppet parliament for the Six Counties. In our view, this particular decision was indicative of the reformist and counter-revolutionary attitudes which prevail at Ard Comhairle level in Sinn Féin, Gardiner Place.
- 4) The unprincipled betrayal of the internees arising from the decision to take seats on local councils in the North. This decision was made despite the fact that the Ard Comhairle had made repeated statements attacking the treachery of the SDLP for taking their seats.

We are of course aware that the vast majority of rank-and-file members are completely opposed to this decision. We urge the ordinary members of Sinn Féin to refuse to accept this unprincipled attitude on the part of the Ard Comhairle. We call on all Republican Club councillors to stand by the internees by upholding the people's pledge which they signed before their election.

5) The general drift towards almost exclusive participation in reformist activity, and the total abandonment of agitationary political action in pursuit of their objectives. Under its present leadership, Sinn Féin has been reduced to a position of almost total irrelevance in the context of the present political situation.

Organisation

We are at present engaged in an intensive recruiting drive and will organise a full-delegate national conference at the earliest possible date. A permanent national executive will be elected at the annual conference.

In conclusion, the IRSP extends its support to all peoples struggling for democracy, national liberation and socialism. In Ireland, we appeal to all of those who are genuinely interested in the establishment of a socialist republic to re-examine their present position and give their support to the IRSP.

Those elected to the temporary National Executive are as follows:

Sean Flynn (Belfast)
Manuel McIlroy (Belfast)
John McAlea (Belfast)
Charlie Craig (Belfast)
Seamus O'Kane (County Derry)
Terry Robson (Derry City)
Joe Sweeney (Derry City)
Bernadette McAliskey (Tyrone)
Johnny White (Donegal)
Seamus Costello (Wicklow)
Thomas McCourt (Wicklow)
Theresa Gallagher (Dublin)
Anne Webb (Dublin)

Mick Plunkett (Dublin)
John Lynch (Cork)
Stella Makowski (Clare)
Joe Quinn (Limerick)
Tony Quinn (Tipperary)

