

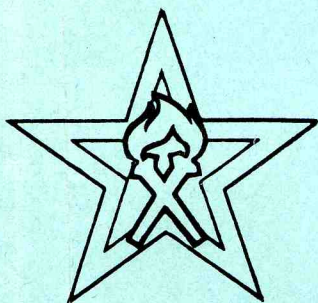
CONTAINS

NOT A SINGLE  
PERSPECTIVE.

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**The Socialist Party of Ireland**

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**REPORT**

**of the 1st National Congress**

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**Dublin,**

**1-2 December 1973**

The Socialist Party of Ireland  
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Dublin 2

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Workers of all countries, unite!

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

The 1st National Congress of the Socialist Party of Ireland was held in Dublin on 1-2 December 1973. Present at the congress were the inaugural Central Committee, delegates from party branches and other members.

The sessions of the congress were marked by the discipline, efficiency and comradely atmosphere which have come to be characteristic of all meetings of our party.

The 1st National Congress adopted the party programme (published under the title 'The Socialist Future') and the party's constitution, and adopted a number of other resolutions dealing with organisation and policy.

The congress also elected a new Central Committee of seven members. They are: Fergus Brogan; Desmond Hughes; Déirdre Uí Bhrógáin; Séamas Ó Brógáin; Eamon Ó Fearghail; Séamas Ó Reachtagáin; Fergus Quinlan.

O P E N I N G   S P E E C H

(National Chairman of the SPI, Séamas Ó Reachtagáin)

Comrade delegates, visitors,

I welcome you to this national congress of the Socialist Party of Ireland.

At a congress of a party of the working class such as ours, a congress of communists, representing the most advanced section of our class, our principal work will consist of the analysis of the results of our activity in the years just past and the working out of the main tasks of the next two years in keeping with our long-term objective of establishing socialism in Ireland.

The report of the Central Committee, the reports of the various departments, the party programme and constitution and the document of resolutions provide the guidelines for defining these tasks.

Nationalist State not Internationalist

Comrades, our country has entered a new phase in its history. Since 1 January 1973 we have been living under the rules of the EEC 'Common Market' group of Western Europe. The capitalist ruling class here hope that this development will preserve their system in Ireland and gain for them economic advantages as a result of the alleged new 'dynamism' of the EEC economy. The 50-year-old partition structure of the independent republic of Ireland and the territory of northern Ireland ruled by Britain is being modified by the bourgeois governments of Dublin and London.

The position of the capitalists is more and more coming under challenge from democratic organisations of the people who are beginning to see clearly that the monopoly system of exploitation is against their best interests, and is frantically resisting social change.

In this situation, our party must ensure that the political voice of the working class is strongly heard. The battle against monopoly must be entered on three main fronts: political, economic and ideological. A scientific, objective assessment of the current situation is a necessary first step towards formulating our ideas and identifying the specific tasks of the coming period.

In recent years the republic of Ireland has changed from being a predominantly agricultural country with little or no large industry, to an industrial-agrarian country in which the wage workers and their families now form the majority of the population. Also significant is the fact that the population of the cities and towns now exceeds that of the rural areas. The economy is weak, however, and is dominated by British monopolies which control most of the new industries established in the last decade. Concentration of wealth in the eastern part of the country, mainly in the Dublin area, has taken place at the expense of the rural areas. Agriculture has remained in a neo-colonial framework mainly concerned with the production of live cattle for export. A large part of the industrial sector of the economy is not based on native resources but on export of processed raw materials of foreign origin, and re-export of half-finished goods. It would be wrong to deduce from this, however, that the republic is an impoverished state unable to survive as an independent unit. Extensive deposits of valuable minerals have been located and are being developed throughout the country. This wealth could be used to provide an improved standard of living for the people, W.R.P.C. but at present it is in the hands of profiteers and speculators who are busily plundering it with the support of the government.

The change of government after the general election of February last, bringing to power a coalition of the bourgeois Fine Gael party and the Parliamentary Labour group, led to hopes among the working people that changes would be made in their favour. These hopes were very quickly dashed. The so-called 'Labour' leaders surrendered what socially progressive ideas they had in return for ministerial office. Now they are the most energetic apologists for capitalism in the government.

The betrayal of the working class by the Parliamentary Labour group has caused revulsion among the rank-and-file Labour supporters. The genuine socialists in that movement have now to make a choice of either continuing to give loyalty and support to the parliamentary leadership, who place a higher value on state office than on the people's interests, or joining the independent political party of the working class.

The republic became a full member of the EEC this year, and already the deleterious effects on the economy forecast by our party during the 1972 referendum campaign are being widely felt. The immediate effect has been a massive rise in food prices following the abolition of the agricultural subsidies system. The government has tried to deceive the public by stating that food prices have increased by 19%. We have challenged this figure in our publications, and produced actual price lists of food items abstracted from official documents used by certain shops in marking price labels, which show that the real increases have averaged 60% - that is, 40% higher than the government admits! This has led to a considerable worsening of the standard of living of the working people.

Other promises of instant prosperity have failed to materialise. During the EEC referendum campaign in May 1972 the pro-market propagandists made great play with the prospect of Ireland sharing in the EEC Social Fund and Regional Fund which were allegedly going to be used to help equalise the distribution of wealth between the rich central area of the EEC and the poorer outlying areas such as Ireland and southern Italy. What is the reality in 1973? Firstly, the Social Fund itself has been reduced in size by the EEC Council of Ministers. On 21 September they cut £30m from the supplementary budget of £50m proposed by the Commission. Next, they decided not to enter any amount for the Regional Fund in the 1974 budget until the members had formally decided on regional policy. The larger countries in the EEC, notably 'friendly' Britain, are now proposing that the Regional Fund be distributed according to the population size of the member states. Under this system, Ireland would get possibly only 4% of the fund. So much for the friendly assistance of our EEC capitalist 'good neighbours'.

Commenting on this development, the National Council of the Association of Chambers of Commerce recently lamented: "Any deviation from the fundamental policy of aiding the less favoured areas ... raises serious doubts as to the achievement of an integrated European community at all". Dare we remind the chambers of commerce that such serious doubts were raised by the opposition to the EEC in the referendum campaign only to be dismissed by EEC supporters as 'wild propaganda'? The people can now judge, belatedly, on whose side the truth lay.

The Foreign Minister, Mr Fitzgerald, has hinted at the possibility of using the veto on the regional fund proposals. What is more likely is a compromise arranged to suit the larger countries which call the tune in this rich man's club.

On another aspect of EEC membership, press headlines have speculated on new moves to rationalise the 'defence' arrangements of the EEC following the expansion of the group this year, and the US government's proposals for a new 'Atlantic' charter.

While Foreign Minister Fitzgerald has been careful to rule out any immediate possibility of Ireland joining NATO, both his party and the previous government party, Fianna Fáil, have on many occasions expressed their commitment to 'defence of the community' as part of Ireland's obligations having joined the EEC. No doubt they consider the political risks of joining such an obvious creation of the outdated 'Cold War' as the US-sponsored NATO group. There are other undesirable aspects to NATO - the membership of the fascist régimes of Portugal and Greece, and the Turkish military régime, all three of which have been formally excluded from full membership of the 'democratic' EEC. Also, questions have been raised about the future of NATO following US criticism of its western European allies for not having assisted the US in its support for the latest Israeli aggression in the Middle East.

Apart from all this, there are signs that the public is being prepared for some move away from the traditional policy of neutrality of the republic of Ireland, and involvement of the state in close alliance with the imperialist countries. There has been a developing policy of having military forces of various sizes appearing in public on 'security' duties. During the visit to Dublin of British premier Heath, for instance, numbers of armoured vehicles were on the city streets on official duties, a sight not seen since the early days of the state. Heavily armed troops in large numbers supported the police activity on the same day. Joint manning of road-blocks by troops and police has become the norm, and troops were responsible for the recent fatal shooting of a traveller from Belfast, James Hughes.

Since Fine Gael came to power last February, the state army and navy have been getting wider press coverage for their activities and recruiting campaigns than ever before. The purpose of these developments seems to be twofold: firstly, as part of internal policy, to accustom the people to the use of military personnel and equipment outside their normal rôle, carrying out police duties and attempting to intimidate the extra-parliamentary opposition to the government with a display of state power; secondly, to prepare the ground for public acceptance of a 'new rôle' for the state forces as part of 'our contribution to the defence of the EEC'.

It must be clearly stated that any such involvement by this state would inevitably lead to the use of Irish troops in imperialist plans for suppressing popular demand for social change and fundamental re-distribution of wealth. It is generally accepted that NATO headquarters have plans drawn up for intervention in individual countries of the group where the capitalist system is facing internal threat from popular upheaval. Workers must oppose this development in their own long-term interest as well as that of their class brothers in other European countries. We don't want any Greek Colonels here!

The trade unions are the main economic organisations of the workers. Their effectiveness depends on their organisational strength and mutual confidence between elected leadership and rank-and-file members, and clarity of purpose within the movement as a whole. Regrettably, these factors are either too weak or absent altogether in the trade unions today. Although numerical strength has increased continuously, and we can claim to have the largest number of organised workers, in proportion to population, of all the EEC countries, this strength has not been effectively used to defend and improve the standard of living of workers.

Organisational defects, lack of democracy, and bureaucratic officials undoubtedly share the blame for this failure, but the main negative factor has been the introduction of the so-called national wage agreements (they have never been national in any sense since they excluded thousands of unorganised workers). These agreements have been strictly enforced by officials of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions who adopted the rôle of wages policemen on behalf of the employers. Employers, on the other hand, have been free to renege on the agreements as they wished. A case in point concerned the Agricultural Wages Board, a state body, which deprived 36,000 farm labourers of wage increases due to them under the 1972 wage agreement. These workers should have received £2.70 per week increase from 1 September, but the board decided to approve only a £2 increase from 5 November. These workers were also due arrears of pay from the 1970 agreement. Recently, when the bank workers were on the point of getting a slice of the excessive profits of the bank monopolies, the energetic Minister for Labour 'Control', Mr Michael O Leary, intervened to stop them with instant special legislation rushed through parliament. Mr O Leary stated that the government could not allow the wage agreement to be breached. Yet, when the Agricultural Wages Board breached the agreement, but against the workers, what has been the reaction from 'socialist' O Leary? So far, a stunning silence. It seems that the agreements can be selectively applied by the employers, at their whim, and workers' resistance to this blocked by partisan legislation.

It is quite clear that the wage agreements are detrimental to the workers' interests, and our party has consistently opposed such agreements.

The period of the two wage agreements has seen also damaging effects on the unity of the trade union movement and on labour solidarity. Although the anti-wage-agreement forces have produced better arguments and demolished their opponents' false claims regarding alleged 'gains' by workers as a result of such agreements, their best efforts have been defeated by the combined weight of the delegates of the two largest unions - the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union and the Workers' Union of Ireland - at Congress meetings. As there is considerable doubt as to whether the views of the rank-and-file members of these unions are being adequately represented by their delegates in Congress, the situation has led to frustration and anger and demands from some unions for

withdrawal from Congress. There is now a definite danger of a split in the movement. Responsibility for this state of affairs must rest with those in the ICTU Executive most influenced by capitalist ideas - notably Fintan Kennedy and Denis Larkin - who have tried to manipulate the voting in favour of their sell-out proposals for a third wage agreement.

In order to avoid a split, the unions opposed to wage agreements must withdraw their consent from the practice of allowing the Congress Executive to conduct wage negotiations. This practice was wrong from the beginning, and has led inevitably to the present situation where the ITGWU and WUI can dominate by means of their representation at ICTU conferences. In effect, these two unions are deciding the wages policy of all the others. The situation can be improved by amending the ICTU constitution so as to remove the Executive from the field of wage negotiations entirely.

Without doubt, the most damaging effect of the operation of wage agreements has been the erosion of the right to strike, long established as the workers' main weapon. This development, and the atmosphere of 'class peace' which it produces, must be challenged, fought, and resolutely rebuffed. Workers must insist on keeping the right to withdraw labour at any time, and refuse to have anything to do with works agreements, productivity deals, or any other capitalist frauds which try to restrict or abolish this right. It is no coincidence that the Kennedy-Larkin group are active in anti-strike and anti-solidarity campaigns within the unions. This follows logically from their complete subservience to the ideas of capitalist economists and their denial of the existence of class struggle.

As far as the members of the Socialist Party of Ireland are concerned, a no-holds-barred struggle will be mounted, inside and outside the unions, against the supporters of class collaboration. We serve notice on the bureaucrats that their treachery will be mercilessly exposed, and their betrayal of the trade union movement halted and defeated. Our party programme contains proposals for positive action by trade unionists in order to return the movement to the correct path of defending the interests and standard of living of the members.

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Bourgeois propaganda, disseminated everywhere through the broadcasting and press media, attempts to shore up the rotten system of capitalism by introducing false consciousness into the workers' movement, urging workers to adopt a narrow view of their interests. Labour solidarity is attacked as unreasonable, 'holding the country up to ransom'. Workers are told to look after themselves first, reject trade unionism, and concern themselves with acquiring consumer goods, waste their income on frivolous 'entertainments', 'better' themselves 'within the system'.



Propaganda on the economy seeks to place all the blame for the raging inflation on the workers, whose 'unjustified' wage increases make life impossible for the profiteers. It is a lie to say that wage increases cause inflation. The actual figures of wages measured against production prove this. We have pointed this out time and again, and will continue to expose the wages-inflation lie. A further device in the propaganda war is the 'economic council' which allegedly brings together workers and employers 'for the common good'. The latest in this line is the 'National Economic and Social Council'. The previous thing did not have the word 'social' in its title: it has now been added as a sop to those trade union 'leaders' who seek to justify collaboration with the bosses.

The Finance Minister, Mr Richard Ryan, at the opening meeting of this council, declared: "There is no place in our community for divisive and alien doctrines of the class war". This statement is itself an action in the class war. It has long been part of bourgeois ideological defence of capitalism to try to deny the significance of classes and class struggle. Speculating on various phenomena of society, Mr Ryan carefully avoided mention of the question of ownership of the wealth produced by working people. This is a typical example of the hypocrisy of the bourgeois class. Partial and minor changes in the structure of the capitalist economy, which do not change the exploitative character of the system as a whole, are exaggerated and presented as fundamental changes. It is a fact that 5% of the population here own 75% of the wealth. It is a fact that the wage-earners' share of the wealth they produce has not increased in over 40 years. Mr Ryan's fraudulent council is designed to gloss over these facts and divert the attention of workers from the reality of exploitation. We know, and Mr Ryan knows, that the interests of capitalists and workers cannot be reconciled. To protect the interests of his class he wants class collaboration, that is, a surrender by workers of our right to challenge wage-slavery and the attendant evils of capitalism. We will not surrender this right. We will oppose vigorously all attempts to undermine it, in the political field and in the trade unions. 'Economic councils', 'Employer-Labour Conferences', 'Labour Courts' are all weapons of our class enemy. We are not deceived by smooth talk about 'concern' for workers' welfare from the leading representatives of wage-slavery. No effort will be spared by us in exposing the true character of these devices. The minority group who rob the workers of the product of their labour will be confronted at every turn by our party.

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Our attitude to the situation in northern Ireland is clearly outlined in the party programme. We have consistently put forward this sensible and progressive line.

We recognise that northern Ireland was created by British imperialism in order to retain a hold over the whole of Ireland by weakening the progressive forces and dividing the

working class. To accept either the Orange-bourgeois view of northern Ireland or the views of the southern nationalist bourgeoisie is to fall into the trap prepared by imperialism. We view the situation from the point of view of the working class. The workers' real interests demand a socialist society on the whole island. Workers' political organisations must struggle to raise the class and political consciousness of the working people and oppose the bourgeois line of orangeism or nationalism.

The immediate demand in northern Ireland is for the restoration of 'normal' politics, for guarantees of democratic rights, freedom of political association and expression. These are prerequisites for any advance towards socialism from the present situation. As yet, these demands have not been met by the British government. The new Northern Ireland Assembly is much less powerful than its predecessor at Stormont. In effect, military dictatorship remains. The Secretary of State can dissolve the Assembly at any time and proclaim martial law. Britain in fact has a veto over the democratic wishes of the northern Ireland people. A Council of Ireland will not change this fact. The Northern Ireland Constitution Act has not been studied carefully enough by those now enthusing about 'power-sharing' and 'community get-togethers'. A substantial lessening of the northern Ireland people's say in government has occurred, but has been presented as a major advance.

Our party will work for the implementation of democracy in northern Ireland and the bringing to the fore of the class issues. Only by doing this can we move away from the sterile sectarian politics of the past fifty years. Finally, it is certain that the campaigns of bombing and counter-bombing, murder and assassinations, produce only negative results which serve the interests of imperialism.

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Our party welcomes the new climate of stable peaceful relations between states which has developed during the past year. The constructive foreign policy of the Soviet Union has made the greatest contribution to the establishment of an enduring peace based on mutual respect for sovereignty of states and non-interference by states in each other's internal affairs. The Soviet/Federal Republic of Germany treaty has ended the cold war in Europe. The Soviet-American agreements make peaceful co-existence between the two great powers into a principle of state law, and prevention of nuclear war a joint responsibility of the two countries. Further normalisation of the European situation should result from the current sessions of the European Security Conference in Geneva. Entry of the two German states to the United Nations is a positive step towards consolidating peace. The consistent peace policy of the German Democratic Republic, the German workers' state, has been vindicated.

However, some events have occurred which go against the world demand for peace. The latest Israeli aggression in the Middle East precipitated an international crisis. Israeli

expansionist policy, trampling on the rights of the Palestinian people, the occupation of the territories of Egypt and Syria, keeps tension at a high level and prevents the coming of peace to this area of the world. In common with the majority of world opinion, we condemn the Israeli aggression and support the demand of the United Nations for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Arab lands. Lasting peace in the Middle East can only come about when the rights of all peoples in the area, including the Palestinians, are guaranteed and secure.

We learned with great regret this year of the brutal suppression of the Chilean people's democratic rights, the overthrow of their elected government and the murder of President Allende, leader of the Chilean revolution. The lessons of Chile are clear. No chance must be given to the bourgeoisie to restore their rule once the workers have gained a hold on state power. Experience has proved that a situation of doubt about the irreversibility of the socialist revolution must not be allowed to arise. The workers' power must be consolidated and extended.

In Africa, the South African racist régime continues to challenge world opinion and the will of the United Nations. The vicious apartheid policy remains as a danger to peace on the continent. Our party has joined in the efforts of the anti-apartheid movement in this country to inform our people of the anti-human character of the South African state and help organise opposition to its propaganda and diplomatic activity here.

On the broad field of international affairs there is no doubt that the tide of history now decisively favours the countries of established socialism. Allied with them, the international workers' movement in the capitalist countries forms a mighty force of peace and progress which must be taken into account by the imperialists. Our party will play a full part in strengthening this alliance whose policies are in the interests of all the peoples of the world.

## CENTRAL COMMITTEE REPORT (abridged)

(General Secretary of the SPI, Séamas Ó Brógáin)

Comrades,

As this is the first National Congress of our party, it is the duty of the inaugural Central Committee to put on record the circumstances which gave rise to the founding of the party, and to report on its development and activity since that time.

In order to consider the important question of the size and influence of our party, it is necessary to refer to the question of how, in a relatively developed capitalist country, a revolutionary workers' party came to be founded as late as the year 1971.

We must refer to the existence of the organisation called the 'Communist Party of Ireland', because it is as a direct consequence of its failure that two parties exist claiming revolutionary leadership of the Irish working class.

The most obvious fault of the CPI - and the one which ensures that it will never gain mass support - is its capitulation, ideologically and organisationally, to Sinn Féin. The 'official' Sinn Féin organisation, with which the CPI is in permanent alliance, is an unstable mixture of petty-bourgeois radicals, nationalists, and ultraleftists. It was, however, at one time the only organisation which was prepared to co-operate with the CPI, and the latter seized the opportunity to use Sinn Féin as an umbrella under which they could operate. Their need to do this arose from their inability or unwillingness to organise independently, itself the result of weakness, lack of determination, and a lack of confidence in themselves and in the working class. The price they paid for this opportunism was abandonment of the philosophy of Marxism-Leninism, to which they had at least paid lip-service, and its replacement by their own concoction which they choose to call 'socialist republicanism'.

*Perfective?*

We must make it clear that our difference with the CPI is not just on their attitude to the national question. The truth is that the CPI lacks not just one but many - one might almost say all - of the characteristics of a communist party: and the logical and inevitable result of its vague philosophy, its loose structure and its lack of discipline and unity is its imminent collapse into opposing factions, which points to the absolute necessity for a new organisation.

The 'Communist Party of Ireland' is not made up exclusively of bunglers, bourgeois intellectuals and opportunists; and among its younger members in particular are a number of sincere communists who believe that despite the many and obvious faults of the CPI, of which they freely speak, their membership of it is the best way to work for socialism at the present time. This position is fundamentally wrong, and will lead only to a dead-end and frustration. The CPI's failure is total, and any time spent in trying to convert it into something better is so much time wasted.

We call on the sincere communists in the CPI and the Connolly Youth Movement to realise - as some have already done - that they need not waste any more valuable time in demoralising failure, and that there is an alternative.

*Not ruled out!*

The Central Committee believe that the political unity of the working-class movement is not only desirable but also inevitable. The chances of this arising as a result of a merger between the two existing parties is extremely slight, for we can fairly accurately predict that the CPI leadership would not accept what we would regard as the minimum conditions for such a merger. But however remote the possibility of a merger might appear to be, it cannot be dogmatically ruled out, and so both options must be left open. This can be done by maximum co-operation on agreed issues, at the same time reserving the right to criticise the CPI for incorrect policies or activity. Because of their

attitude, however, and their reluctance to acknowledge our existence, the number of issues on which we have in fact been able to co-operate has been extremely small.

*Why cooperate then.*

The attitude of the CPI to our party from the beginning has been that it should not have been formed in the first place, and that having been formed, it should be ignored. And this is what they have done - but not always. An indication of the basic insincerity of the CPI leadership is the manner in which our support has been sought and relied upon in activities where our discipline and organising ability have helped to cover up their own incompetence - but we are ignored again when any activity arises in which they have the opportunity of co-operating more closely with Sinn Féin.

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The Socialist Party of Ireland was formed in Dublin on the 13th of December 1970.

The founding members appointed a Central Committee, which drew up a manifesto and a constitution. The manifesto announcing the formation of the party was published on the 19th of January 1971.

The Central Committee set about recruiting members, organising political education, and setting up branches as the necessary number of members became available.

The membership of our party is small - we are without doubt the smallest workers' party in the world. This is a fact, and no useful purpose could be served by disguising it. Unlike other organisations, however, which have various reasons for claiming greater membership or support than they actually have, we know the reasons for our small size and influence, we are working consistently at changing that situation, and are confident of our ability to do so. *what we say*

*Not perfect*

We have managed to make an impact on society out of proportion to our numbers, mainly as a result of our principal weapon - organisation. We can never afford to lose sight of the paramount importance of democratic centralism, of discipline and unity, as these are the methods whereby we can continue to derive maximum benefit from our present limited resources.

On the 29th of December 1972 the first of the party's recruiting campaigns began. This was a conscious effort to go out and talk to the people at their doorsteps, about their problems, and about the need to change society; and it was the first time such a campaign was organised by any party in Ireland. The aim of the recruiting campaigns, which are continuing, is to approach people directly about membership of the party, rather than wait until they decide to take the first steps towards joining the party as a result of reading its publications.

There have not been a great number of applications for membership as a result of the campaigns held so far, nor did we expect them. There has, however, been an increase of interest in the party in the areas which have been covered:

more people in these areas will buy the party's publications, and this in itself is a great step forward. At the same time, the number of applications will certainly increase as time goes by if the same high level of activity is maintained. And there can be no doubt that one of the top priorities for the branches in 1974 will be to continue the recruiting campaigns in all the working-class districts in each area.

The minimum membership target for the next two years will have to be, as in the past, to double the total membership each year. This can be done by concentrating on individual recruitment of workmates, which remains the principal source of new members, as well as on increased paper sales and the local recruiting campaigns.

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The campaign of opposition to full membership of the EEC in 1972 was one of the most important activities in which we took part since the formation of the party. This was an issue in which consistent pressure from the workers, under the influence of the Left parties, had forced the leadership of the unions and the Labour Party to oppose in principle EEC membership. This was one of the rare occasions on which political opinion in the republic divided more or less exactly on class lines: on the one hand big-business, the FUE and IFA, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, and the media; on the other hand, the Labour Party, the unions and other mass organisations, and the Left parties.

Two circumstances combined to ensure our defeat: the alliance of the two big bourgeois parties, and their control of the mass media, and therefore of public opinion; and, more significant, the absence of a single organisation as the centre for the opposition campaign. The right-wing leadership of the Labour Party and the unions insisted on fighting their own campaign (if 'fighting' is the word) without contamination by the Left; the CPI and Sinn Féin, on the other hand, divided their resources between the National Anti-EEC Action Committee, which was intended to co-ordinate the activity of the local anti-EEC committees, and the Common Market Defence Campaign, a bourgeois-nationalist group which is now the Irish Sovereignty Movement.

We concentrated our efforts on supporting the National Anti-EEC Action Committee and, so far as possible, the local committees. As usual, the bungling and stupidity of Sinn Féin and the CPI, combined with their divided loyalty in relation to the Common Market Defence Campaign, ensured that these activities also had minimum impact on the people.

Despite our extremely meagre resources, we were able, under our own name, to publish a number of posters, some thousands of copies of a variety of leaflets, and a substantial booklet outlining the reasons for our campaign.

Since its formation, our party has placed the greatest emphasis on activity within the unions and other mass organisations. A high priority has been to bring union organisation to those workplaces which had been unorganised, and the party has to its credit a number of victories in this field. The fact that there still exist large enterprises with no union organisation is a reflection on the priorities of those who guide the destinies of the trade union movement at the present time, and who apparently do not regard it as part of their job to go out and organise.

As well as organising workers into the unions, we also have the task - an even bigger one - of forcing the unions, against the wishes of their leaders, to return to their original rôle of defending their members' interests. The full-time officials of the unions have so completely swallowed the bourgeois ideology of the Irish Management Institute and the College of Industrial Relations, that they regard their organisations as 'go-betweens' or mediators between the workers, who pay their wages, and the bosses. The acceptance by the unions of the national wage agreements, and the call by the ICTU leaders to strikers to give up their demands and go back to work, are, however objectionable, only to be expected from people with their outlook. Our job now is not only to defeat these policies, but also to see that their originators are ejected from the trade union movement.

Although there is little to show for it at the moment, the effort put into this task by our members - and in particular those members who are on the national executives of their unions, and in the Dublin Trades Council - is not wasted, and will bear fruit in time.

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At the time of the International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties in 1969, our party did not exist, and Ireland was represented at that meeting by the two groups which subsequently merged to form the 'Communist Party of Ireland'.

Objectively, our party is, and from its foundation has regarded itself as, a part of the international communist movement; and one of the first decisions of the inaugural Central Committee was to endorse the documents approved by that meeting, and to regard them as guidelines for our own policy, both national and international. In particular, we subscribe to the agreement that relations between the communist parties should be on the basis of complete equality, and non-interference in each other's affairs. At the same time, we believe that particular importance attaches to the wealth of revolutionary theory and experience accumulated by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the ruling parties of the other socialist countries.

Our party believes that the unity of the international communist movement is of the utmost importance, and we will do everything in our power to further reinforce that unity.

A particular task for our party in this respect is, of course, to bring about the political unity of the working-class movement in Ireland, which we have already referred to. And, however small our voice, we add it to those who take a firm stand in opposition to the anti-communist ideology of Maoism, which is now the main weapon used by the imperialists in their attempt to divide the communist movement, as well as other splitting tendencies based on the opportunist elevating of national peculiarities over Marxism-Leninism.

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When we examine the conditions under which we operate, we see that socialist ideas are not widely accepted among the people; there is virtually no tradition of working-class political organisation; and class-consciousness and awareness are extremely low. A number of main reasons for this situation can be isolated: the influence of nationalism; the subservience of the union leadership to bourgeois ideology; and, in the south, the influence of the right-wing Catholic hierarchy and clergy.

This situation is changing for the better, with people in Ireland, as elsewhere throughout the world, becoming more and more interested in the ideas of socialism. The changes are extremely slow, however, and we will have to continue to give the same high priority to ideological propaganda, in opposition to bourgeois-nationalism, class collaboration, and superstition, and also in publicising socialist theory and the achievements of established socialism.

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Finally, we look to the future.

The importance of building the party has already been stressed. Many of the things we would like to do, and which we otherwise could do - mainly in the sphere of publicity - are just not possible with the number of members available.

But this should not be cause for despair. However slowly, the party's size and influence are increasing. We have the satisfaction of knowing that what we are doing is right, and that we are fulfilling our duty to society in the best possible way. Building an entirely new party from the beginning has one advantage (though only one, unfortunately) in that we can plan its development in the light of the experience of other countries and parties, and consciously avoid the pitfalls into which others have fallen.

The attitude we should take away with us from this meeting is one of confidence in the party and its programme. And of course it is the duty of each member to study the party programme, become familiar with it, and spread its ideas in all possible ways and on all possible occasions.

This is the one thing we must bear in mind more than anything over the next two years: building the party - more members, more publicity, and more influence among the people.

NOT A SINGLE PERSPECTIVE