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10p

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Mining and Energy

THE SINN FÉIN POLICY



Mining & Energy

Because the Republican Movement believes that the Irish people are on the verge of victory in the age-old struggle for national liberation it has shown an increasing awareness of the necessity to initiate, promote and develop political policies which can be put into action as soon as Britain declares her intention to get out of our country. The partitionist settlement of 1921, exposed as the betrayal Republicans have always held it to be, is crumbling before the inspiration of a New Ireland.

The Sinn Féin *Éire Nua* document, first published in January 1971 (some 16,000 copies have been sold to date) outlined 10 fundamental features of the Republican Social and Economic Programme. It also contained detailed policies for specific sectors in chapters dealing with Finance, Education, Industry, Agriculture, etc., outlining not only what an independent Irish government could do in the New Ireland but also setting out the specific measures which could be taken here and now to ensure that the fabric of Irish life would remain as healthy and intact as possible under the present colonial and neo-colonial conditions that prevail in the partitioned states North and South.

Many of the warnings and predictions in the chapter on *Economic Resistance* for example have proven too true even since 1971. Access to the EEC has magnified the dangers to some sectors of the native economy. But, because some of the measures recommended by Sinn Féin have been taken by organised groups of activists all over the country, several other steps on the road to economic take-over from outside have been averted.

This is particularly true where the development of co-operatives, some run by the workers of the enterprise itself, especially in the agricultural, fishing and small and craft industries is concerned, has protected the interests of the ordinary Irish people — at least for the time being. Nevertheless the fact remains that in 1973, our first year of EEC membership, non-Irish shareholdings in the top 50 companies in Ireland rose from 19% to 28%¹. If this rate continues foreigners will shortly hold a controlling interest in Ireland, and will, no doubt, be at liberty to

The reader who wants a summary of the main points in this document should go through the text and read the sentences which are printed in italics.

close the place down if it does not give a satisfactory return to its new masters!

Following the publication of *Éire Nua*, Sinn Féin went to work on expanding its policies in the fields already covered, and in other fields which had not been covered. Of particular importance was the political solution of the national issue through a federated Ireland, with strong regional government and a nine-county Dáil Uladh as a guarantee to Ulster Unionists and a solution to the problems of that province. This was proposed by the leadership of the Republican Movement in the terrible week of Faulkner's first internment swoop in August, 1971. These proposals for a New Ireland structure were outlined in detail during the Truce with the British in June, 1972.

But research and study continued in other fields and the Republican Movement developed its political policies in other areas. It has tried in particular to isolate the real issues that face us as a nation to-day, and by exposing abuses and proposing policies to solve them, it has aimed at forcing conventional politicians from their "agreed limits" of discussion and their set speeches. It has also tried to link up associated problems and to explain the connections, obvious and hidden, between the various elements of our sick society which all too frequently are tackled in isolation and/or on a short-term basis only.

The first result of this work was the pamphlet *The Quality of Life in the New Ireland* which was published in May, 1973. This dealt with the Sinn Féin attitude to Environment, Control of Technology, Pollution, Advertising and Consumer Protection and tried to show how all these issues, rarely discussed seriously by conventional politicians, were linked together in the false philosophy of the consumer society. The pamphlet, which also contained details of the proposed structure of the New Ireland and the Republican attitude to the British Constitutional proposals for Ireland, sold 2,000 copies from May to December 1973 when 3,000 further copies were printed.

In the meantime, some of the basic issues raised in the document — ignored by RTE and some other media — have been forced into the limelight, by Sinn Féin political action and also because the false assumptions on which the mass consumer society of today exists became more obvious. The oil-crisis, the increasing scarcity of basic products and a growing environmental, pollution and technological crisis, including failures in the power-supply of several countries, are the topical examples of what our policies were all about.

Despite the many varied fronts on which Republicans are at present engaged in the national struggle, work on the development of detailed and comprehensive political policies has continued. This document deals with two issues which we feel are related — the control and development of Ireland's mineral wealth and other natural resources, and the energy crisis.

The first has already become an open political issue due to recent mineral finds in Ireland and the very good prospects of further discoveries on land and around our coasts.

The second problem, energy, has become a short-term nightmare and a long-term headache even while Sinn Féin has been working on a detailed outline of its policy in this sphere.

Both these problems are in turn linked to the type of issues raised in the *Quality of Life in the New Ireland* and are of course dealt with in a more general way in the *Éire Nua* document of 1971. It is proposed here to outline our general view of the situation on both these issues and also to outline the general principles on which Sinn Féin policies would be based.

It is necessary however, to point out from the beginning that Sinn Féin policy always distinguishes between what can be achieved within the limitations of the present governmental structure of this island, and the vigorous revolutionary policies which Republicans would advocate in a free New Ireland.

While Sinn Féin accepts the practicalities of economics and other factors in the development of a country, it believes that people, their ideas and ideals, are the fundamental dynamo of any community. These, quite obviously, would alter radically in a free Ireland headed by a post-revolutionary government, and this would have an important bearing on the economics, politics and development plans of a risen people. Such a flush of enthusiasm would be similar in kind to the experience of the people in the 26 Counties in the twenties and thirties when, despite a Civil War and a partition settlement which frustrated for two generations the fruits of the sacrifices of those who had fought and died for Irish freedom, they began, in a limited way, to re-assert themselves as imaginative and active human beings.

One of the problems for the Republican Movement is, however, to try to design and promote policies in the present situation which could only be fully pursued when freedom is achieved.

This is a difficult exercise, because with Irishmen in control of their own destiny for the first time for centuries, so many things will have altered fundamentally. But it is the duty of Republicans to face up to the challenge. We have to chart a real alternative for the Irish people, on the road to freedom and independence. Because of the limitations, however, our policies, while defining basic guide-lines, isolating present inadequacies and bringing the fundamental issues of the day to the fore, have to be outlined in rather general terms

IRELAND'S NATURAL RESOURCES

The first issue to be faced in this debate, only it is a more crucial one now that it appears that Irish natural resources are greater and more valuable than was heretofore imagined, is the question of ownership and exploitation in the interests of the Irish people. The basic Republican position, in this as in so many other matters, derives from the claim in the Proclamation of the Irish Republic in 1916 — “the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland” — and the Democratic Programme of the First Dáil Éireann, 1919, which quoted Pádraig Pearse :

“We declare that the nation's sovereignty extends not only to all men and women of the nation, but to all its material possessions; the nation's soil and all its resources, all the wealth and all the wealth-producing processes within the nation and with Pearse we re-affirm that all rights to private property must be subordinated to the public right and welfare.”

Sinn Féin stands not merely for the complete overthrow of English rule in Ireland but also for the setting up of a Democratic Socialist Republic. We have outlined clearly what form this federated Republic would take in our *Éire Nua* programme and have incorporated the right of the Irish people to the natural resources of the country in the first point of our ten-point summary thus:

“The wealth of Ireland belongs to the people of Ireland and is theirs to be exploited and developed in their interests”.

We realise of course that this can be achieved by various means; and the fundamental message needs to be defined in the language of today. That is why we reject “Western” liberal capitalism and the consumer society on one hand, and the state

capitalism of the “Eastern” block on the other. Our aim is to outline an *alternative third way of life* based on Irish traditions and values and adapted to the geographic and historic situation in which we find ourselves.

We also feel that what may suit in one particular sector of the economy, or even in one region of a New Ireland, may not necessarily be the best solution for another. Thus while we emphasise the growth of co-operatives in agricultural and fishing matters, we advocate state management of most major sectors of the economy and the financial and banking institutions. Some industries lend themselves to independent ownership, others to workers' control, others still to development as state corporations. But the underlying principle in each case is that the rights, welfare and prosperity of the ordinary Irish citizen are paramount and have to be protected.

In this respect, mining, because it concerns a fundamental natural resource, — a national resource not owned by anybody until it is discovered and exploited — because so many sectors of the economy can benefit from the “spin-off” of proper exploitation, and because it is an expendible, non-recurring source of wealth, is quite unique and needs to be considered as such. For this reason, we feel that *the question of compensation, which would arise say if some land were to be nationalised for whatever purpose, does not apply.*

Similarly, since whatever ore in question is lying dormant and can only be turned into productive wealth by several types of labour, we feel that it is these people, the miners and those associated with and engaged in associated industries, as well as the national exchequer which should benefit from the development, rather than speculative explorers, or the persons who are lucky enough to own the land under which the ore was found. Such land-holders, would of course, be entitled to compensation for their agricultural holding and for the costs and disturbances of having to surrender it but they are not, in our view, entitled to inflated prices anymore than do we believe that private speculators should reap the reward of other people's labours and needs when agricultural land is converted into urban building land.

In this respect we disagree with the interpretation of the 26-County High Court upheld by the Supreme Court, of Article 10 (1) of the 1937 Constitution which deals with the rights of private property. While this Constitution would have no place

in a New Ireland that legal battle is important because it is indicative of the attitude to the public good and private property in the 26 Counties at the moment.

Article 10 (1) states that: "All natural resources, including the air and all forms of potential energy, within the jurisdiction of the Parliament and Government established by this Constitution and all royalties and franchises within that jurisdiction belong to the State subject to all estates and interests therein for the time being lawfully vested in any person or body".

A private mining company successfully challenged the validity of a Mineral Acquisition Order made by the Minister for Industry and Commerce under the Minerals Development Act of 1940, thus establishing the supreme position in the present Irish legal set-up of private ownership and the exploitation of mineral wealth. In our view of natural justice, *the over-riding right of the people to reap the fruits of their labours should take precedence over the considerations of speculators who make no productive contribution to the wealth that exists.* This Article of the 1937 Constitution is but one other inadequacy in a document which Republicans, for much more serious reasons, have always rejected.

THE EXTENT OF THE WEALTH

It is not intended to discuss the real extent of the wealth of Irish natural resources here. For one thing, we do not, at present, have the full information. Nor indeed, we feel, does the country. The mining development that is now taking place in Ireland is but another example of the way we have failed to exploit our own natural resources, in our own interests, over the years. The tragedy, and the danger, is that we will hand over the major part of this mining revolution to foreign concerns— and, it would seem, not even to the highest bidder!

Sinn Féin is keenly aware of the fact that some outside help may be necessary to develop our natural resources of ore and fuel. *But we must maintain control and build up the technology and the know-how as fast as possible.* This would be necessary if only to ensure that we got the best bargain assuming that we wished to sell to the highest bidder — a course to which we are opposed however. In particular we need to develop rapidly our own independent exploration and development-costs moni-

toring systems so that we really know how much wealth in fact we possess. But a state which has to rely on the British Navy to chart its coastal waters could hardly be expected to have a correct appreciation of our mineral wealth on land and of possible oil and gas resources around our coasts.

The "disagreement" (it would hardly qualify for the term "dispute" as in the case of Icelandic fishing!) about Rockall, which Sinn Féin says Ireland should claim at once, is another indication of the weak and unimaginative way in which Irish rights and interests are defended at present. *The first priority of Sinn Féin therefore is to continue to develop its own studies of the real potential of Irish natural resources North and South and to seek to defend these interests from outside take-over. Sinn Féin also calls for the establishment of a national exploration programme to monitor continuously the extent and potential of our natural mineral and energy resources in a co-ordinated and planned way.* Side by side with this there should be a vigorous and immediate effort to build up the know-how and expertise which would enable us to exploit what we already have, and what we may discover — on the same lines as electrical know-how was built up in the '20s and '30s after the first Shannon scheme.

All indications are that there is considerable mineral and perhaps oil and gas wealth in Ireland and in her waters — certainly enough to constitute an economic revolution in the present Irish context. Considerable research has been done by some voluntary and unofficial groups in this field already² and while it is possible that some of the estimates in these studies will, inevitably be inaccurate — though not all in the same direction — the overall picture is clear. Ireland has a major source of wealth which could be exploited in the interests of her people. There is every indication that this will not be done under the present feeble administrations. It is up to the Irish people to see that it is done. Sinn Féin will spear-head this drive.

The Irish people should not accept the talk of "high development costs", etc., which we have had from some foreign, and indeed native mining speculators, with reference to recent finds. Again this subject is too detailed and too involved to consider here. But the lessons of the Navan find alone are enough to put all of us on our guard. This is one of the biggest lead-zinc finds in Europe since the Second World War.

The public estimate of Tara Mines Ltd. for Navan is £22m

yearly. On the basis of a 20-year life span they calculate a revenue of £440m. But Tara's Chief Executive has already estimated a possible 30-year life span, while the Canadian publication *The Northern Miner* (23/9/'73) estimates, on drilling to date, that Navan contains nearly 77 million tons grading approximately 2.63 per cent lead and 10.9 per cent zinc. On the basis of these concentrations the metal yields would be 1.66 million tons of lead and 7.55 million tons of zinc. World prices for zinc are estimated to rise to £250 per ton over the next decade in some cases. Conservative projections put the price of lead at £160 per ton but both of these — as we argue later — may rise even higher as the new international power-game of scarcity in basic raw materials heats up.

However, these figures still give a *conservative* gross metal value of the Navan ores of about £2,154.11m — a staggering figure by the standards of our present weak economy. There have been, as we stated, suggestions of "high initial capitalisation costs" by those who wish to hide the real potential of Navan from the Irish public. Yet power stations and refineries of comparable cost to mining and smelting plants are going up in many parts of the country! Sinn Féin challenges the mining companies to come clean in this matter and severely criticises the Dublin administration for being, quite literally, unable to do its own homework on these matters — due to the neglect of developing our own expertise over the years.

THE "SPIN-OFF"

The contribution of Irish mining to the national balance of payments, and its contribution to the tax intake of a government which had the guts to face this challenge is obvious. The recent decision to tax mining companies is only a sop by the Fine Gael conservatives to the slightly more radical voices of some Labour members within the coalition.

Tax profits of mining companies are always a difficult matter and the ability to evade taxation by showing small profits, if not losses, on mining balance sheets is common knowledge. Moreover, this method of collecting revenue carries with it, each time the public purse feels it should be getting more, a threat by the foreign exploiters to pull out or to reduce employment.

Even the modest Keating proposals already produced the sorry sight of miners from Tynagh in Co. Galway marching on Leinster House to ask that an even higher proportion of the wealth they extract from the ground be sent abroad. This was matched only by the even more vulgar picture of Fianna Fáil opposition deputies supporting the miners, playing on their fears, and abusing the privilege of their opposition position to attack this pale-hearted attempt to ensure that at least some of the wealth of Ireland would remain in the country.

Sinn Féin feels, however, that *taxation of mining companies* — in the case where mines are in private hands — should not be related to company profits but *should be tied to a direct levy on each ton of ore taken from the earth, related to the actual metal content.*

In considering the "spin-off" effect of mining Sinn Féin feels that obvious considerations like increased local employment are not as important a consideration as the central role these ores can play in developing smelting and other plants, as well as two types of side industries. One type is the service industries which are necessary to carry on the mining operation itself. The others are industries that are built up around the ore itself and the various uses to which it can be put.

While we do not hold to have the final word in the matter, what information we have been able to obtain abroad, in countries of similar scale like Norway, suggests that if the ores are smelted in Ireland the potential wealth of the mining operation is doubled. If the ores are fabricated into pure metal products in this country, then the value to the national economy could be multiplied eight times. No less an organisation than OECD, reporting through a survey team of distinguished scientists has argued that we should aim at the development of "predominantly Irish-owned industries, with both a local raw material and an indigenous research and development base". Sinn Féin fully supports that view.

The OECD team suggests food processing as the first obvious field for such a plan. Mineral extraction and processing industries, they held, was the second obvious choice.

Sinn Féin supports the call for an Irish-based smelter financed from public funds if necessary. It also calls for opposition to IDA moves to give grants to foreign concerns which are trying to move in to service and sub-contract mining in places like

Navan. Such contracts can be filled by Irish companies and they should be given priority in every case. Similar considerations should apply in any proposed "spin-off" industries, arising from processing the ores in the Irish smelter we propose.

SINN FÉIN'S APPROACH

Sinn Féin holds that it is vitally necessary that the development of mining and oil and gas resources within Ireland and around her coasts should take place in the interests of the Irish people. There must be national control of all these resources and valuable national sources of wealth, though not outright nationalisation in each case. This is because *in certain cases a link with international companies is necessary to gain the best marketing and other outlets*. Also, we must face the fact that the decades of neglect mean that we do not have the expertise and the know-how *here and now* where some of the skills related to the development of these industries are concerned.

There is no Irish mining Bord na Móna, developing native skills and techniques, which, in the case of peat production, we not only developed but in fact passed on to countries such as the USSR at a later date.

The first priority is to set up an Irish mining exploration and research department which would provide the information we need in any deals that have to be done with the multi-national companies. Such a national body would not only engage in research however but would develop as many new resource discoveries as our technical resources would permit.

The second aim of this national body would be to co-ordinate the mining and energy developments in the country and to maintain strict control on any multi-national companies that would be interested in developing any particular sectors of the wealth. In this respect an attitude similar to the present policy of Norway would be adopted. Thus while the Irish tax rate on profits from exploration at about 50% is rather similar to the profits tax imposed in Norway, Sinn Féin would also insist, as Norway does, that the state company have a share in the development and that a permanent royalty be paid where a successful strike was made.

Before any natural oil or gas was found off the coast, the Norwegian government was quite liberal with its licence issuing. But even then there was never any question of granting tax-free holidays or capital gains to the exploring companies.

Now that it has been established that there is considerable wealth in Norwegian waters, the government is demanding 50 per cent of the equity in companies; they have fixed a royalty of some 10-12½% of the value of the gas or oil produced and they have levied normal profits of about 50 per cent of the value of what is produced. Sinn Féin holds that we should take a similar stand if it is necessary in any particular case to negotiate with international companies.

There is ample evidence that the multi-nationals are prepared to strike a hard bargain, if the national government in question has the courage and the guts to make one. The Arab states have shown in the case of oil, the Icelandic government in the case of fisheries, even Malta in the military-base context, that the metal of the national government, supported by a self-reliant people, is more important in such situations than any short-term lack of technical know-how, etc.

Bargaining about natural resources is fundamentally different from the coal-cattle bargaining of the Economic War of the '30s. If we have valuable natural resources, (and if we can develop the Irish ability to estimate accurately their value) then we can be sure that international demand will pay the right price.³

Joint ventures, once the owners rights are boldly asserted and established, have been and are being worked out in several parts of the world today. Moreover, the Arab oil situation has revealed to all the underdeveloped, primary-product-producing countries of the world the weak link in the chain which can be used to ensure that the natural resources of small weak economies benefit to the maximum the owners and producers and not the major industrial giants.

The Arabs have realised that the best thing they can do with their oil in the present situation is to leave it in the ground. In fact, the more they leave underground, the more they are paid for the diminishing amount they sell. They stand to gain from the increase in value which less abundant supplies and inflation will bring and continue to gain friends on the international political stage at the same time. Moreover, and this is the lesson for Ireland where her newly-discovered natural

wealth is concerned, *there is no point in expending these resources as rapidly as possible for money if the scale of the native economy is not sufficient to absorb the rapid growth. There must be planned exploitation of our resources geared to the level of the Irish economy.*

If this in fact means that some of our mines go on producing for a decade later than anticipated, so much the better. Not only will there probably be a continuous improvement in ordinary money terms, but we will be extending the strength these resources give our economy for another generation.

We are not advocating that we should adopt the attitude of some Arab rulers, which is too close to blackmail to be regarded as enlightened and just. No nation has a right to hold the international community to ransom or semi-ransom — as some of the “developed” nations have done in the past. But the Arab experience has highlighted what the third world, and the producers of primary products — the “underdeveloped” countries which have more in common with us than is frequently realised — can do to break down the present basically unjust world economic structure, once they begin to think and act in a revolutionary fashion.

IRELAND'S ENERGY SUPPLIES

Ireland, for better or worse, has tended to throw in its lot with the ex-colonial exploiting nations of Western Europe. We have slowed down the effort to make ourselves self-sufficient as far as possible, from native fuel supplies, and are in fact more dependent on oil than most European countries. We must try to get ourselves out of this situation as quickly as possible not only because we are being forced in that direction but also because it is the right thing to do.

We must look on possible oil and gas finds around our coasts in present circumstances as an extremely lucky advantage and an opportunity which must not be missed. The one major obstacle to this, apart from our own failure to protect our own interests, is our membership of the EEC. It is worth recalling that one of the reasons why Norway is now able to operate such an enlightened fuel and mineral policy is due to the fact that she refused to join the EEC in the 1972 referendum.

THE EEC

Sinn Féin opposed EEC membership from the beginning and led the campaign against membership in the difficult circumstances of 1972. We warned people of the consequences for prices, employment, for Irish control of our own affairs, etc. Nothing that has happened since has disproved our basic stand, while most of the rosy predictions of pro-marketeers have failed to materialise. Sinn Féin still stands against the basic philosophy of the Treaty of Rome and is committed to re-negotiating a trading association with Brussels in a New Ireland.

The immediate effects of the Rome Treaty on our natural resources and energy situation are that we are prevented from using the wealth of Ireland in the interests of the Irish people. This may be described as a “parochial” or a “narrow nationalist” attitude, but the absolute failure of the EEC heads of state to stand by Holland on the oil embargo, and the decisions of Britain and France to sell arms to Arab states in return for a more favourable treatment in the purchase of oil, in private deals, has exposed the myth of “European unity” for what it is.

Ireland's first priority should be to reduce her dependence on oil from the Middle East, and to develop all sources of native energy This may mean the development, as quickly as possible, of whatever gas and oil resources are in the seas around our coast. Sinn Féin does not accept that such plans should be dictated by the ex-imperial nations in the EEC who have themselves disregarded everything, apart from their own national interests, in the present oil-crisis.

Sinn Féin holds that we should immediately contest Britain's claim to Rockall and claim the territorial waters around this rock.

Sinn Féin supports the sentiments of Dr. Seán O'Donnell, a scientist attached to Edinburgh University, when he warned in a talk in Castleblayney, Co. Monaghan on 4th January, 1974 that “there was a general lack of appreciation of the importance of our off-shore possessions. Scientific progress has made them from the point of view of oil and minerals, as important as land territory.”

According to a report of the O'Donnell lecture⁴
“He stressed the need for a strong representation of Ireland at the May conference on the law of the sea, in Venezuela. He

warned of the clash of interests between Ireland and France in the Atlantic and Ireland and Britain in deciding the median line in the Irish Sea. Dr. O'Donnell said Ireland's claim should be extended one thousand miles into the Atlantic at this conference. When the question of the EEC common energy policy arose, it would be a tragedy if, after all Ireland's struggles, just when she was reaching real importance and wealth, she should have to share it with others. The longer the implementation of a common energy policy was delayed, the better for Ireland. Regard should be had for Ireland's off-shore potential in all future agreements and deals made with other countries, and the mistakes in the past, in giving away oil and mining concessions should be avoided."

Whatever faint hopes we would have that Ireland's case would be properly presented in Venezuela by the Dublin government in the past, we feel that the EEC link, in this as in other matters, will prove a major extra obstacle. We reject that in pursuing a vigorous independent line in these matters we would be acting differently from other EEC countries. The EEC arrangements generally and the "common energy policy" in particular have not only got nothing to do with being "good Europeans" or "improving the lot of the underdeveloped nations". They are in fact good examples of a structure devised to allow the big ex-imperial nations to continue their economic imperialism under a new guise.

THE "ENERGY CRISIS"

The mines controversy and developments since we joined the EEC are, in several ways, connected with the whole "Energy Crisis" question which has become acute in recent months.

Viewed from the international point of view the "crisis" arose from the political involvement of the super-powers in the Arab-Israeli conflict in the middle-east. The economic lessons for all poor countries which have been exploited to date by the rich Western nations, are being quickly learned by more than the Arabs. But the "crisis" has also focussed attention on the whole set of false assumptions on which the "glossy consumerism" of the wasteful affluent society is based.

Ireland has been hit by the crisis to the degree to which we

have adopted the trappings of the consumer society in a neo-colonial situation. The immediate reaction has been to question the assumptions on which our development policies have been based, particularly since the Whitaker departure of 1958, and to take another look at the Sinn Féin philosophy of national self-reliance. The general lines of this philosophy were outlined in a Sinn Féin Press-statement on December 29, 1973, which, among other things, stated:

"The present energy crisis illustrates the folly of depending on foreign sources of energy. Not only is 65% of our electricity generated from oil, but our agriculture and transport are almost completely dependent on oil also. This is the result of short-sighted policies and means that our country can be brought to an almost complete standstill by factors which are entirely beyond our control".

The statement went on to say that in the matter of energy, the country should be as self-supporting as possible. "The exploitation of our peat and water resources by Bord na Móna and the ESB was of great national significance and Sinn Féin has always said so. The pity is that this policy was not carried further instead of placing ourselves at the mercy of the multinational oil companies."

Sinn Féin went on to outline some of the more obvious ways in which the crisis could be tackled, e.g.

- * *Harnessing the wind, and the tides in particular to generate electricity.*
- * *Development of methods to generate energy from the disposal of human and animal waste.⁵*
- * *An intensification of development on our peat-lands.⁶*

The statement also advocated the re-opening of coalmines in parts of Ireland, the reduction of tax on oil for necessary and productive purposes, transferring them to taxes on profits, capital gains and luxuries as a short term relief and pointed out that if we were more independent in our international policies we would be in a better position to negotiate oil supplies from Libya, Algeria and other friendly countries.⁷

In this respect Ireland's participation in the United Nations force intervening in the Arab-Israeli conflict places her in a particularly sensitive position, especially since Ireland, unlike the '50s and '60s is no longer outside the West European EEC bloc.

While Sinn Féin advocates these as immediate measures to tackle the short-term problem, it realises that there is an urgent need for long-term planning as well. It is possible that some extra hydro-electric stations on our smaller rivers would now be economic propositions in view of the increasing oil costs. There certainly should be a national approach to oil-refining (see note 7).

Ireland should negotiate independently of the EEC ex-colonial nations, directly with the Arab oil states and this effort to establish independent lines with the world in oil should mark the beginning of a drive to free other contacts with the international community — e.g. in telecommunications, shipping etc. — from British domination.

But the “energy crisis” goes deeper than this, spotlighting as it does, the trends which were examined in Sinn Féin’s *The Quality of Life in the New Ireland*. In short the bubble of the “affluent consumer society”, has burst as it was based on false assumptions from the start. We are not in a doomsday situation. But we will have to change our life-style and return to the more basically human way of life which has always formed the base of the Sinn Féin national self-reliance philosophy.

The consumer society is based on the exploitation of the vast majority of mankind in the under-developed third world. It is based on the economic manipulation of the vast majority of ordinary workers in the “developed” economies, enticing them by high-powered advertising to consume more and more, to pursue more and more superficial goals — mainly through brainwashing them into acquiring material gadgets which in many cases are quite irrelevant to a happy human life.

Side by side with these trends goes an increasing centralisation of power, an increasing imbalance between “rural” and “urban” life, a continuing deterioration in the environment and quality of life, due to this imbalance, an increasing accumulation of mass-media pressures to conform, while at the same time genuine opportunities to participate in what is termed the “democratic process” are reduced. In short, conformity is the vogue of the age and human values, the right to be different, and respect for cultural diversity are all undermined. Even at a purely environmental and ecological level, the “mass consumer” society is extremely wasteful and cannot go on indefinitely. It has only functioned to date because it was possible to exploit

half of humanity and to manipulate third world markets for primary products.

The oil crisis has not only called a halt. It marks the beginning of an end, and the first example of many shortages in basic materials which the wastefulness of “Western” production processes inevitably had to cause sometime. Thus there is a shortage of woodpulp already, because the false “competition” between various newspaper groups, as well as the large demands for advertising in these papers, combined with a failure to utilise newsprint in a re-cycling process and this has led to a situation where the demand has outpaced the natural growth-span of trees.

The oil shortage — politically motivated but inevitable in any case — has hit most sectors of industry. Apart from energy and transport considerations, plastics, petro-chemicals and several other related fields are feeling the pinch. *A very large part of these difficulties could be overcome with better planning, the elimination of waste and superficiality in the production of our economies, and a rejection of the philosophy which says that material goods are the main source of happiness and the main function of human endeavours.* In short, Sinn Féin questions the emphasis placed by fashionable economists and commentators on GNP and growth rates. We accept the need for the increase in real wealth, and we appreciate the benefits which technology, properly used and controlled, can bestow on all of us. But it must be real growth, real “progress”. It must not be wasteful, and the *entire consequences* of any particular process, on the environment and on the human situation, must be calculated.

Those who would describe the call for a return to basic Sinn Féin thinking as “isolationist”, “backward”, etc., should consider again our approach to mining and our other natural resources and compare it with what we are allowing the international manipulators to do with our basic wealth. They should also consider how little protection the “link with Britain” or EEC membership really gives us in such situations.

THE REAL COST

One of the main points in our policy on technology and environmental matters is that economic endeavour in any direction

must be geared to the real needs of the community as a community and that the real costs, and not just the immediate profit and loss considerations, of any course of action should be taken into account.

Thus the design of houses (many have been built without chimneys by local authorities in recent years), the closing of railway lines, the disposal of waste, the establishment of "dirty" industries all need to be evaluated in terms of their total effect on the community and their contribution to the Irish community at its present level of development. A massive national effort to eliminate waste in any form needs to be undertaken. Decisions to substitute mass-production for human skills and crafts will have to be taken more carefully. Many of the mistakes of planning and environment, which are borrowed from the Anglo-American world and thus have little relevance to Irish conditions, are taken by provincially-minded "experts" or by "outside consultants" brought in in the first place because of a lack of self-confidence in our own abilities.

Sinn Féin feels that much of the unreality which goes with this situation would be eliminated in a decentralised, federated Ireland. Not only would decisions be taken nearer the ordinary people in such a structure, but the idea of the one true and uniform solution for the whole country emanating from Belfast, Dublin or London, would no longer be valid.

Sinn Féin believes, for example, that the generation of electricity might be fruitfully decentralised — geographically and between the various processes used in its production. This would be particularly true if it were now decided to harness smaller rivers for hydro production or to utilise the tides.

ENVIRONMENT

There is a grave danger in the present situation that the threat to energy supplies on the model which we have been used to for the past decade, will now be used to justify the establishment of oil refineries and possibly other power-producing plants with less restrictions and safeguards than might otherwise be sought. This argument must be resisted. Most of the problems we suffer from in the environmental field are a result of the system we have been

operating and the types of "development" for private profit to which we have become accustomed. There is no doomsday situation. In fact the present crisis may in the long term be seen as the factor which prevented Ireland from making the same mistakes, e.g. in urban traffic, uncontrolled tourism and the "throw away" philosophy of waste disposal, as have been made by the other "developed" economies.

But the crisis does, very clearly, pinpoint the futility of some of the policies at present being pursued in Ireland, e.g. the development of foreign, non-indigenous branch factories in the less developed parts of the country (where cheap oil to overcome distance disadvantages from overseas markets rather than growth based on local natural advantages has been crucial) and clearly demonstrates the realism of the Sinn Féin self-reliance approach to development and progress.

NOTES

- 1 See article by Andrew Whittaker in the *Irish Times*, 4/1/'74
- 2 Those wishing to study the details of these estimates will find much useful food for thought in
 - i. "Irish Mining — The Need for Action" published by the Resources Study Group, T.C.D., Dublin 2.
 - ii. "Navan and Irish Mining" published by the same organisation and
 - iii. "What's Mined is Ours!" published by the Union of Students in Ireland, 113 St. Stephen's Green, Dublin 2.
- 3 See, for example, letter in *Business & Finance* (3/1/'74) (page 13) from Mr. R. B. Ludt, Chairman and President of the International Energy Corporation, New York in which he writes:

"In the judgement of many people in the international oil industry, Ireland's offshore areas offer the opportunity not only to supply Ireland's energy needs but perhaps to also make Ireland a net exporter and thus contribute to the solution of this very serious problem facing the western world.

"Would this therefore not be an appropriate time for Ireland to speedily finalise its offshore petroleum explor-

ation legislation and invite applications from the oil companies for exclusive licences so that we can assist Ireland in finding a speedy solution to the problem".

- 4 See report in the *Irish Times* (7/1/'74).
- 5 See article "Waste into Fertility" by Deasún Ó Fathaigh on page 6 of *An Phoblacht* (Deireadh Fómhair/October 1970)
- 6 See report, "Peatlands contain neglected wealth", on a submission by the Agricultural Science Association (*Irish Times* 5/1/'74)

Since this pamphlet was written Bord na Móna has announced a plan to invest an additional £20m. in peat development and in two new peat-fired generating stations, something which should have been done long ago and which indicates once again the way the Dublin government generally reacts to events, rather than planning for the future in a way which would benefit Irish interests and the Irish economy and ensure maximum control over our own destiny rather than over-dependence on outside influences. Long before the oil crisis Sinn Féin constantly advocated this approach.

- 7 Twenty-Six County oil supplies during the present scarcity are linked directly to the situation in Britain, of which we are supposed to get "our fair share". Oil, from Bantry, is shipped to England and then what London considers "a fair share" is shipped back! Also, the multi-national corporations, Esso, Shell and Texaco, not only dominate our oil supply; they control the State's only oil refinery at Whitegate, Co. Cork!