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Federalism is no Solution!

Carolán has written a series of articles in SO arguing for a "federal" solution in Ireland. I want to argue against this and at the same time show that he is projecting a reformist position. It is not wrong to argue for reforms, but it is wrong to argue for a reformist solution to the Irish struggle.

The British government laid the basis for the division of Ireland in December 1919. The resources to maintain that division through armed force was provided by the British government. Thus from the beginning it was clear that the Loyalists had the backing of British imperialism. It was also clear that the vast majority of the Irish people wanted the British out. This, however, was completely unacceptable to the British ruling class. They were concerned not only with Ireland, but were trying to stave off the decolonisation of the empire.

Thus in the 1921/22 negotiations, the British government stuck on two principles: (1) that the Protestants of Ulster should have the right to form a separate state and (2) that the southern Irish parliament should still be required to swear an oath of allegiance to the king.

For its part, the Southern Irish bourgeoisie was both negotiating for independence and looking over its shoulder at the strength of the working class and the freedom fighters. Thus when the British threatened to send 200,000 troops to enforce their control, the Irish negotiators - particularly Griffiths and Collins - caved in and agreed to the "Treaty". (The oath was finally removed, but the Northern state remained).

De Valera had opposed the Treaty. His opposition however faded out, and he withdrew his document. His problem was that it was very difficult to tell the difference between his proposals and the terms of the "Treaty". He had proposed a "federal solution" - that within a united Ireland the Loyalists would have a defined area with local control. This involved persuading the Protestants of the North to accept a united Ireland. At various times, De Valera resurrected his proposal for a federal solution, but was each time rebuffed.

It is worth noting that his proposal in 1921/22 involved a negotiated settlement with the British government. He was opposed to the continuation of the struggle for a united Ireland. True he did, in a half-hearted way, join the anti-Treaty rebellion, but he was more or less forced into it by the complete sell-out.

The possibility of a federal solution was raised again by the Provisional IRA in 1972, a position which they held until 1982. It was raised at a time when they thought they could reach a negotiated settlement with the British government. They also raised a nine-county Ulster, which they also saw as a means of persuading the loyalists to work with them. This was not a class solution. It was a federal solution in which the loyalists would control some counties, and the Provisionals the others.

It is worth making these points to show that federalism is not a new idea, but has been raised previously by the bourgeois or petty-bourgeois nationalists. This does not necessarily make it wrong, but we would have to differentiate ourselves from these forces if we were to adopt it.

So should we adopt it as a solution? A comrade at the Summer School asked Carolán exactly what he meant by a Federal solution! He put it this way: the problem with federalism comes when you try to define exactly what it means. How much control would the loyalists have in their area? Would they control the police for example - with the history of the B Specials - surely not! Would they control housing, with the loyalist record on that issue - surely not! But the question of control was crucial. Surely a federal solution would either give control to the Protestants and therefore be oppressive to the Catholics, or it would give no real control to the Protestants, and would therefore be unacceptable to them.

This question was never answered. In a later session, Carolán said the details were still not worked out. But we have to insist on an answer - Comrade Carolán always talks about being realistic, but would the loyalists accept anything which did not give them control and the ability to oppress nationalist people? In a previous EC meeting, Carolán had said a bit more about it. Then, he argued that British imperialism did not really want to be in Ireland, since it was costing

them a lot of money. However they could not withdraw since it would result in civil war.

He went on to argue that a federal solution was now possible, since the communities had unravelled during the war and it was now possible to draw a new border which would exclude almost all of the nationalist population. Asked how a federal solution would then be achieved, he said it would be through negotiations between the representatives of the two communities in the North, the British government and the government of the Republic.

But who is the representative of the loyalists - Paisley? If such negotiations did come about, it would strengthen British imperialism by legitimising its rule. It would also strengthen the likes of Paisley, and it would say to the loyalist workers that we recognise the right of such people to speak for them. It would also mean that we recognised them as a separate community defined by their Protestantism. Such a division would strengthen the Catholic church in the same way, since it would be the formal acceptance of the creation of a Catholic state.

There is another question to consider in a federal solution - the relatively privileged position that the Protestant population, including the workers, have - as a result of the Orange state. The loyalists have held the privileged position for a long time. It is the material basis of their unity and their loyalism. They see British imperialism as defending their privileges. In any federal solution they will ask if they are to preserve their privileges - if they are, then that would imply a separate state or at least complete control by the loyalists and the continued oppression of the nationalist population - if on the other hand it means that they must lose their privileges, then they would fight it on the streets whatever else was involved.

Nor should we get confused over the question of democratic rights for the loyalists. Everyone is in favour of maximum democratic rights for the Protestants in a united Ireland. But there is a vast difference between democratic rights and control which is the minimum that the loyalists will accept.

The reality is that there is no easy solution, and federalism is not one either. The loyalists have to be broken from their pro-imperialist position. Even if the level of the class struggle has dropped dramatically in the North (as opposed to the South), we still have to look to this. It is only through the Protestant workers' class experience that they can begin to question their role in the Orange state. But the question is only raised in the course of the anti-imperialist struggle. Thus the only possibility of uniting sections of the Protestant working class is through the combination of struggle on both class questions and the national struggle. This can be helped by the development of a mass based troops-out movement, which gives no concessions to pro-imperialism in Ireland.

Jones 7-8-83.

A Serious Problem of Democracy in the Group

We have produced this statement because we think there is a very serious problem of democracy in the group which ought to be brought to the attention of the members. These developments not only threaten the democratic rights of the membership as a whole, but threaten the minimum democratic conditions necessary for our faction to continue as a minority without being crushed.

The problem is the very destructive stance now being taken by the leaders of the present WSL majority, in particular comrades Carolan and Kinnell. It is plain to us, that as a result of recent developments they have decided that since they can neither win us to their politics nor assimilate us into the old ICL tradition, we must be driven out of the organisation a few at a time until we are dispersed as a political tendency. Comrade Smith raised this at the EC on July 29th, and the response of Carolan essentially confirmed it. Carolan said that a split would be serious but not very serious; it would be a splitting away, he said, of a segment of the organisation which would then be destroyed in the process - the organisation itself would continue and survive.

The implications of such a statement are obvious. Given such statements, and all the other evidence, we can only interpret it as the second stage of the driving out of the old WSL as a whole.

This situation has been rapidly developing since the second conference and since the Internationalist Faction left. Before that, when both traditions in the group were roughly the same size, there was a liberal attitude to democracy - pressure was put on branches like Leicester in more subtle ways. Now things have changed dramatically. With Carolan and Kinnell in a clear majority, they have plainly taken the decision to heat things up to breaking point - on both organisational and political questions. Thus majorities established at the conference on perspectives documents covering specific areas of work are now being used to dominate the group on all political issues quickly and without discussion. This convinces us that no significant political opposition is going to be tolerated. Carolan and Kinnell now regard any vote against them as an unacceptable challenge to their personal authority. Examples of this attitude are comrade Kinnell's astounding reaction to the loss of the vote on the Labour leadership resolution at the June NC and Carolan's reaction to the loss of the vote on TILC at the subsequent NC on July 9th. At both those meetings there were other pretty astounding examples, such as Kinnell's irrational attacks on Parsons and Jagger.

A possibly more important example of the lack of democracy in the group is provided by the issue which arose at the conference of the Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine. There, Carolan and Kinnell actually managed to change the established position of the group on the question of self determination for the Palestinians, and organised the production and distribution of a leaflet at the conference which actually argued against self determination. This was done over the heads of the majority of those comrades normally engaged in that area of work. It is worth going into the details of this.

A few days before the conference, Carolan raised with Keith objections to the fact that self determination appeared clearly on the statement to be put to that conference. He claimed that this was not precisely WSL policy, and personally invited Keith to the next EC to discuss it later in the week. Jones and Smith missed the meeting because of a transport breakdown. At that meeting a decision was pushed through authorising a statement to be drawn up by Keith "clarifying" our exact position on self determination - but with the specific condition that it would not argue against it - and to be distributed at the conference. Meanwhile, long discussions were had with Keith (as described by Comrade Kinnell) which resulted in agreement between them. The result was a statement which gave the Jewish population of occupied Palestine a veto over the right of the Palestinians to self determination - the key sentence reads "The precise nature of that state would be the outcome of the determination of both Jews and Palestinian Arabs; it would not be self determination by the Palestinian Arabs alone." This was distributed at the conference, despite the protests of minority comrades.

All this, of course, was nothing to do with developing the conference itself. It involved only the internal power politics of the WSL. It was not accompanied by any work or mobilisation for the conference at all. In fact the conference itself was clearly seen as irrelevant. It ended up with 20 people, 11 of them WSL. Nor was it an attempt to change the platform of the campaign, since the EC decision was that we would vote for the statement, having argued against it. It was simply a device to publicly change our agreed position of self determination for the Palestinians.

Equally important was the reaction of Carolan and Kinnell when this issue came up at the EC. We raised it together with Cunliffe and the Oxford area committee as a question of party democracy, seeking to condemn the attacks on the democracy in the group by this kind of organisational manoeuvre, and hoping to prevent it recurring in the future. We were then met with another manoeuvre. Carolan and Kinnell tried to turn it into a discussion on the merits of the self determination slogan. When we insisted that whilst a discussion was important and has its place, our purpose was to discuss whether democratic norms had been violated, we were accused of "wanting to avoid politics".

It appears that the decision to introduce a "no holds barred" situation and heat things up to breaking point was taken after the July 9th NC. Since at the first EC after it, on July 9th, there was no dialogue at all, just the cold

pushing through of decisions which had clearly been discussed in advance.

The major decision taken at that meeting under those conditions was on Afghanistan. Out of the blue it was now asserted that our lack of a position on Afghanistan is unprincipled, and we must have one immediately. Such a dramatic switch after two years has plainly nothing to do with Afghanistan itself (where there has been no dramatic recent development). It is located and can only be located in the internal politics of the WSL, and the conjuncture we have reached.

As comrades know, a decision on Afghanistan was unresolved at the time of fusion. It was scheduled for discussion. For various reasons we have held this discussion off. This has always been by the overwhelming majority on both sides. Carolan, who now raises it on the EC, not only agreed with holding it back, but actually advocated it. He opposed it going on the conference agenda earlier this year on the basis that it would "split the movement". Now (at the EC) he argued that not only was our lack of a position unprincipled, but it had been so for a long time.

A resolution was consequently voted through, placing Afghanistan on the agenda of the August NC meeting, for its possible inclusion on the September conference agenda. After the August NC, or the event of the August NC failing to deal with it, Carolan would have the right to start putting articles in SO about it.

At the EC on July 29th, things changed again. When it became clear that it was impossible to discuss it at the August NC, a decision was taken to begin putting articles in the paper straight away - from a troops out position! This would lead to a public debate in SO on the issue. This outrageous move has established a de facto position of the group on Afghanistan without any discussion at all. A troops out position is now established and the onus is on the minority to change it.

As comrades know, our common position right from the fusion conference has been that we should only open a debate on Afghanistan when we have the right conditions and can have a full debate amongst the whole membership.

This has now not only been changed out of the blue, but it has been changed to the extent that five people voting 3-2 have effectively established our position on Afghanistan, since it was made very clear by Carolan that articles will be written from a troops out position. We are now forced into a public debate on the issue under conditions where we have had no internal discussion at all. No branch discussion, no aggregate meetings, no documents. A proposal from Cunliffe that we now embark on a proper internal discussion culminating in a decision on Afghanistan at the end of it was rejected by the comrades. This dramatic switch of position (the arguments advanced to show that our lack of a position is unprincipled could have been advanced at any time during the past two years) was obviously not made lightly and cannot be taken lightly, particularly since it is quite clear that an EC meeting has no authority at all to take such a decision (remember it becomes immediately effective - before the next EC) since the way we would proceed on Afghanistan was voted on at the fusion conference itself. It is outrageous that an EC meeting should change a decision taken by the whole of the movement.

It is impossible to escape the conclusion that this switch of position has been thrown in to heat up the internal situation. There is no possible way that such a destructive move could be anything but divisive. At the EC on July 29th, Carolan actually said that he had held back in the past for the sake of the unity of the group - if that is true, it would again imply a decision to let things rip.

One more thing should be added to complete the picture. At the EC meeting on July 21st, when it was suggested that the movement is in danger, Carolan said, "That is wrong; we may split, but we will survive just the same". At the EC meeting at the Summer School, when we raised the Palestine campaign, he "warned" us: "This is the end of your manoeuvring, next time you will get it back with interest". Then at the July 29th EC (as reported above) he went much further, trivialising a split, predicting the destruction of the minority after the split and arguing strongly that the majority which remained would continue and survive just the same.

We have included these details not to nit-pick (since whilst they may have been brief, they were calculated statements) but to try to bring home to comrades, just how fast things are moving, and how dangerous the situation is. These are our fears, and we ask that they be taken seriously within the group. We call upon the majority to reverse the course they have taken. We want to be part of a WSL in

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which we know we can advance our ideas, and know that our democratic rights, and those of everyone in the organisation, will be protected.

Smith 30-7-83
For the Faction.

The Logic of Carolan's Position on Ireland

Reformism

Carolan said at the summer school that in his opinion there is no possibility of a revolutionary upsurge in Ireland, and that we therefore "have to deal with reality. Ireland will either be united by the revolutionary movement of the working class, or there will have to be some relationship between the British and the Southern governments." True he said that if there was a revolutionary upheaval then "we have to be flexible" and then he would put forward a socialist solution - but in the mean time he would advocate a negotiated federal solution.

It should be made clear that it is fully a part of our revolutionary programme to fight for reforms. One example of such democratic demands would be the defence of democratic rights of the Protestants in a united Ireland. However, revolutionaries differ from reformists in that they see the solution of the problems of the working class in the taking of state power; this means smashing the capitalist state and establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat (Trotsky tells us of the socialists who keep their talk of socialism for May Day speeches).

Surely it is the role of revolutionaries to give leadership in a way which not only prepares the working class for the mass upheavals but also puts us in a position to influence the direction the workers will take in the struggle.

In his SO article on Feb. 3rd, Carolan puts forward only two alternatives to a federal solution: to force the loyalists into a united Ireland, or to accept the status quo. He says that working class unity and "socialism now" are a part of the latter. Therefore anyone who rejects his federal solution has to take one of the others. But surely as socialists we have to try to draw out the relationship between these things. The Militant use the class struggle and socialism now to avoid the struggle to remove British imperialism.

In reality Carolan's solution is similar to that of the Militant. He said at the summer school that "There is no way Britain will be thrown out of the Northern state". He also argued that the withdrawal of the troops would be a part of a negotiated federal solution.

Carolan raises the question of force because he wants to pose the alternative to his policy as being a "bloodbath". But this makes nonsense of his "realistic solution". How can people be persuaded by words to give up something they would be prepared to go to a bloodbath to defend? Throughout the history of Ireland since 1916 the British have threatened a "bloodbath" unless they got their way.

Should the treaty of 1922 have been signed by the Irish? A Treaty which partitioned the country and forced Irish MPs to swear an oath of allegiance to the king of England? Carolan has said that in hindsight, Collins was right to sign it. This implies that the Communists and revolutionary nationalists who opposed it were wrong.

It is true that Collins was intimidated into acceptance of the Treaty by the threat of 200,000 troops and a potential bloodbath, but this has been the method of the civilised, protestant, British ruling class wherever they needed to defend the empire.

Of course we don't want a bloodbath. We want the best conditions for the struggle for independence - that means the least lives lost. But the struggle for independence is a precondition for the development of the Irish working

class for social revolution.

The Labour Party Connection

Every time mass struggle erupts in Ireland, sections of the ruling class begin to have doubts and try to look for a solution. One recent example was the proposal in 1971 by Harold Wilson. He called for a united Ireland in 15 years' time. He linked this simply to safeguards for the minority in a united Ireland.

In 1972 he changed this to fall in line with Shirley Williams who was arguing that a united Ireland could not be imposed on the protestants. Like the Tories, Wilson also had a meeting with the provisionals.

After the death of Bobby Sands (which has plainly had a big impact on the Irish issue inside the LP), the LP NEC report to the 1981 conference called for "unity between the two parts of Ireland". The report however also said that the LP would not "force" Northern Ireland out of the UK.

Tony Benn called for British Troops Out and United Nations forces in. Others had appeared to go further. Reg Freason called for the "peaceful reunification of Ireland". It is clear that by stressing "peaceful" he was opposed to the use of force.

The LP have continuously qualified their position on Ireland. There is a difference however from the 1949 Ireland Act. In that it was made quite clear that the protestant community had a veto over a united Ireland. The more recent resolutions have been more subtle - saying simply that no force should be used. In other words, the protestants must agree and thus have a veto.

Federalism can be seen in a similar way: what happens if the federal proposals made are not accepted by the protestants? Is force then used, with all the possibilities of a bloodbath etc? Or is the protestant veto accepted? Do we then say to the nationalist population - wait until the protestants are prepared to accept it?

Out of the various doubts of bourgeois politicians like Clive Soley (interviewed in SO) there have emerged others to their left (in varying degrees) within the LP who have now taken up Ireland (thus given great opportunities in the LCI). We will not be able to relate to such people however if we make concessions to their backwardness (i.e. to their search for a bourgeois solution). I believe that Carolan has developed his positions precisely in relationship to this environment. However, the best of the LP democrats are going beyond this position, as shown by the way they related to the Gerry Adams visit!

Permanent Revolution and Ireland

The 1944 Theses of the Irish Trotskyists (reprinted recently by Workers Power) says: "The one uncompleted task of the bourgeois revolution is national unification". I think this is right. It is through this task that Trotsky's conception of the permanent revolution is applicable.

Trotsky talks about the "burning problem for the people" existing in a country which demands the "boldest revolutionary measures" - "amongst problems of this kind are the agrarian question and the national question in their varied combinations". (Permanent Revolution page 130) Trotsky argues for the working class to be in the forefront of the completion of the bourgeois democratic tasks.

It is clear that in the relatively developed economy of Ireland the national democratic tasks will flow together, in the manner of Trotsky's theory, into the proletarian revolution. This is not to see it as some automatic process, as the Pabloites do in Nicaragua and Grenada. Trotsky says that the "democratic tasks of our epoch lead directly to the dictatorship of the proletariat". He speaks of the revolution which "does not stop at the democratic stage". Thus the democratic demands for an united independent Ireland are connected by us (by our struggles and our programme) to the struggle for a united Ireland.

We must put the struggle for a united Ireland into this context, other-

wise all we offer the Protestants is to wither maintain the present status quo or join the bourgeois Catholic south. We must make a connection with them by fighting for a workers' Ireland in this way.

Carolan of course denies that national independence is central to the theory of permanent revolution. His hostility to the application of the theory of permanent revolution leaves him offering "at the moment" only a reformist solution. If he did accept that the permanent revolution applied to Ireland then presumably he would connect the fight for reforms to the fight for the working class to take power! But since he argues the opposite position - that Ireland is a fully developed Capitalist state - he can put forward a reformist "realistic" solution.

(Possibly Carolan's hostility to the application of the theory of permanent revolution - since Trotsky is so clear on it - is because it would tie his hands on other issues? According to Trotsky, the tasks of the proletariat are to achieve "democratic and national emancipation" - Carolan leaves the latter element out.)

What is the Community?

Carolan argues that the protestants are not a nation but a community. He wants to differentiate himself from the notorious "two-nation" theory, developed by the Irish Communist Organisation, which led them to the support of British Imperialism. The problem is, that although he does not call the protestants a nation, he treats them as one, since the offer of federalism is more applicable to a nation than a community.

His position is clearly linked to his position of self determination for oppressor groups such as the Zionists in occupied Palestine (it is incidentally the same position as the Sparts).

Self determination and federalism have been historically put forward by Marxists as progressive democratic measures to those oppressed by imperialism. Self determination is not an abstract principle. By offering it to those who have been party to the oppression of others actually says that that oppression will continue. (For example, Carolan's position that the Zionists should have a veto over the self determination of the Palestinians ensures that the Palestinians will not get self determination and therefore that they will continue to be oppressed by the Zionists).

We would not consider supporting self determination for imperialist Britain, and we should not support it for Britain's loyal supporters in a colony established and held by military force in another country.

What unites the protestants is their relative privileges over the Catholics. They see Britain, through their loyalism, as the protector of this. This connection has been strengthened over the last 60 years. The working class has been purged of class conscious workers. 60 years of defence of their privileges is ingrained in their minds. It was Britain who established the Northern state and paid the specials to maintain it. Whenever there is any struggle for democratic rights for the oppressed Catholics, there is a reaction from the Protestant community. They always stand together in that way. That was their reaction to the civil rights movement. The more the oppressed struggle, the more the relatively privileged react.

It is clear that Carolan does not view it this way. He even put an article in SO that talked about the danger of going back to the division of the communities created by the hunger strikes!

Yet the hunger strikes created a great movement of the oppressed throughout Ireland and world wide. We need more such risings. The defence of their petty privileges by the protestants is holding the whole working class in Ireland back.

One of the things the Protestants fear is being taken over by the Catholic South with the attacks on rights which domination by the Catholic church would imply. This we must take into account in the form of democratic rights and the fight for a socialist Ireland.

Geoffrey Bell's book "The Protestants of Ulster" goes into much greater detail on the nature of this "community". He attacks Marxists who see the solution as "educating" the Protestants; "on this view, what is needed above all is for the protestants to be 'educated' through concentrating on social and economic questions and so achieving some measure of Protestant/Catholic unity in practice; the natural question should be relegated until such time as the protestant workers have learned to trust their Catholic counterparts" (p142).

There is Hope

The only way to view the struggle in Ireland is to involve all sections of the working class - North South and in Britain. Originally, at the time of the suppression of the Irish struggles in 1920, many councils of action called for the blacking of troops etc. Since then, imperialist stooges in the TUC have managed to get Ireland largely off the agenda of the trade unions. The North was even exempted from the 1926 general strike. The only real involvement of the TUC has been its "Better life for all" campaign, which was moralistic support for British Imperialism.

We need to reverse the position in the trade unions. We need a solidarity movement in the trade unions which sides with the anti-unionists; which does not offer 'federal status' to the British trade unions in the North.

In the LP the tradition has been for a handful of MPs to oppose the official "veto for the protestants" line. In the early days of the partition, as within the trade unions, the situation was not so clear and a resolution was passed by the 1920 LP conference calling for "self determination for the whole of Ireland". But the LP has constantly supported the partition since its inception. In fact it was Labour governments which brought the troops on to the streets in 1969 and introduced internment in 1974.

Things have improved inside the LP. Both the LP and the Tories in the early 1970s considered a solution involving the nationalists but drew back from it. Some leading Labour politicians are still considering such a solution. They are looking the same way as they did in the Falklands war - for a negotiated settlement which would keep British economic interests intact - a kind of de-colonisation.

This has created conditions where others in the LP such as Ken Livingstone are taking a more principled stand and calling for troops out. Clive Soley can call for a united Ireland but says the troops should remain, showing his pro-imperialist politics, but others go to the crux of the matter and call for troops out. It is the principled stand of Ken Livingstone and others which has led people like Gerry Adams to relate to the Labour movement in Britain - giving a boost to the LCI. But we must give no concessions to Soley and Carolan did when he interviewed him in SO by suggesting that a Labour government could "create the political conditions for change by a declaration of intent to withdraw" (Federalism of course is also a concession to such elements).

In the South there have been mass class movements recently as well as a mass response at particular moments to developments in the North. This is not new of course. 100,000 demonstrated in Dublin in 1949 when the Ireland Bill was passed, and the response to Bloody Sunday and the hunger strikes was clear. The need for a working class party to connect with these movements is also clear.

Programme

We have to develop a class based movement against British imperialism in Ireland. Which means that whenever possible our work must be through the trade unions in Ireland and the trade unions and LP in Britain. This would link up with our struggle for transitional demands which we would advance in the class struggle anywhere. But the additional and central element would be the solution of the national question. This would affect other of our demands. For example, we would be for workers' defence squads, but these could not be abstracted from Orange control of much of the trade union movement. So we have to put forward workers' defence squads which also demand self determination for the Irish people as a whole. It is clear that these would be initially Catholic. But to pos. them gives the possibility of an appeal to the Protestants

because of their class based nature. (They would be formed through the trade unions and strike pickets etc).

The Protestants of the North have to feel the weight of the class movements throughout Britain and Ireland. The Orange order relies on British capitalism and hostility to the capitalist politicians in the South. We must undermine this by a class movement against both these governments.

Initially formed, workers' defence squads would be fighting alongside the provos in defence of the oppressed Catholics. Similarly with regard to voting, because the national question is central to us and we want to develop a class-based anti-imperialist movement, we would first be voting Sinn Fein.

This would apply in all "communities". The article in SO was ridiculous which argued for voting for Sinn Fein by Catholics and for a different party for the Protestants. We either vote for a party or we don't. We don't change the vote for different religions! In this instance, because of their troops out position, we should vote for Sinn Fein.

The movement we develop must be Ireland-wide, as must our programme. We campaign centrally, as do the nationalists, for a solution to the natural question. We differentiate from them in that we say that only the working class can achieve this - not bourgeois governments. Therefore our movement must be involved in trying to give leadership to all struggles of the working class, North and South.

In Britain our central campaign should be for troops out now! No veto to the Protestants. For a socialist Ireland. We support within this context campaigns for political status, repeal of PTA, banning of plastic bullets etc.

We must challenge the imperialist chauvinism of the British working class. This does not mean we are provocative like the RCG: "Bring the war to Britain" - or that we lie about our attitude to civilian bombings; but it does mean we don't make concessions. The British trade union movement should be backing troop movements and doing anything they can to help the Irish independence struggle.

Instead, virtually nothing is done. This is mainly because of the leadership which has backed up every action of imperialism. But this does not mean we don't fight in the rank and file - we have to fight chauvinism at both levels, at leadership level and rank and file.

The centre of our solidarity work has to support those in struggle, sometimes despite their methods. Capitalism often builds its case on the methods. Leading Tory and Labour spokespeople often say they would discuss with Sinn Fein if they "renounced violence". We must be careful not to back up this attitude. At the same time we must tell the truth about our position. I have therefore proposed an amendment to the NC resolution to the effect that in future SO articles on bombings we must first put forward our solidarity with those in struggle, and in this context we criticise civilian bombings.

Jones 10-8-83

