

AUGUST 1983

Resolution on the Minority Question in Ireland ..... Carolan & Kinnell  
Resolution on 'Building the WSL' ..... Oliver  
Report on END Convention ..... Oliver  
Amendment on 'Bombings' ..... Mellor  
Resolution on unemployed work ..... Tyldesley, Bayley,  
Kumar, Paul

At 6pm, after the conference session on Saturday, there will be  
a youth commission meeting and an NUT fraction meeting.

## RESOLUTION ON THE MINORITY QUESTION IN IRELAND

Carolán and Kinnell

1. The Protestant community in Northern Ireland is a distinct community with its own history, culture and psychology. If it existed in its own distinct territory, it would have all the features Marxists recognise as making up a nation.

It does not have a distinct territory - there is a major Catholic community <sup>even</sup> within the Protestant heartlands. Therefore it is not a nation.

In any case, because the Protestant and Catholic communities in the North of Ireland are so intertwined, there can be no question of full 'Protestant self-determination'.

Our slogan for Ireland is: self-determination for the people of Ireland as a whole. But within that we need a democratic policy for the minority question.

2. There can be no socialist revolution in Ireland without the unity of large sections of the Catholic and Protestant workers. There can be no democratic solution in Ireland - that is, no solution offering the best, clearest conditions for the free development of the class struggle - without democratic relations between the majority (Catholic) and minority (Protestant) community.

3. We therefore support the maximum democratic rights for the Protestant minority within a united Ireland compatible with the rights of the majority.

4. As a general principle Marxists favour regional or provincial autonomy for markedly distinct areas within a state, together with the most decentralised possible local government.

"In so far as national peace is in any way possible in a capitalist society based on exploitation, profit-making and strife, it is attainable only under a consistently and thoroughly democratic republican system of government... the constitution of which contains a fundamental law that prohibits any privileges whatsoever to any one nation and any encroachment whatsoever upon the rights of a national minority.

"This particularly calls for wide regional autonomy and fully democratic local government, with the boundaries of the self-governing and autonomous regions determined by the local inhabitants themselves on the basis of their economic and social conditions, national make-up of the population, etc." (1913 Resolution of the Bolshevik Party Central Committee).

5. This principle applies to the mainly-Protestant areas within a united Ireland.

Within Ireland our slogan for the Protestant community is maximum autonomy and local self-government of that community's own affairs compatible with the democratic rights of the majority of the Irish people.

6. Such a proposal for a united, independent Ireland, with within it a measure of self-government for regions, and within those regions maximum local autonomy for towns, districts, etc., can offer both majority and minority the maximum of democratic guarantees possible without infringing on the rights of the other community.

The Catholic majority of Ireland would have the rights of a majority within all-Ireland politics. Catholic minorities in mainly Protestant regions would have the protection of local government (town/district) autonomy, plus the constitutional guarantees (courts, bills of rights, appeal procedures,

## Resolution/2

inspectorates, penalties against sectarian practices) of the federal government. Likewise Protestant minorities in mainly-Catholic regions. The concentrated Protestant minority in the North East would have the safeguard of regional institutions.

So far as formal democratic constitutional provisions can ever guarantee anything, this proposal would protect the rights of both Catholic majority and Protestant minority, while allowing neither to oppress the other.

7. The precise details of such an arrangement will be worked out by those who will live within such structures.

A federation of two regions - the four heavily-Protestant counties, and the other 28 - with local autonomy within each region, e.g. for the Belfast Catholics, is one possibility. The parts of the federation would have roughly the same relation to each other and to the federal (all-Ireland) government as the states in the USA have to each other and to the US federal government.

8. Short of military conquest or driving out the Protestants, there is no other conceivable form of bourgeois united Ireland than one that allows such autonomy. Bourgeois green nationalism and its petty-bourgeois spin-offs can never unite the Irish people. The sectarian Catholic nature of the South East has reinforced Partition and the communal divisions.

9. The proposal for local autonomy is a democratic proposal - it is part of our transitional programme for Ireland.

"The Fourth International does not discard the programme of the old 'minimal' demands to the degree to which these have preserved at least part of their vital forcefulness. Indefatigably, it defends the democratic rights and social conquests of the workers. But it carries on this work within the framework of the correct actual, that is, revolutionary perspective..." (The Transitional Programme).

We reject the sectarian fear of advocating reforms and democratic demands lest they undermine the prospect of revolution. Our method is that of the Transitional Programme, as above.

To advocate democratic demands in no way confines us to a perspective of reform. Reform demands within the revolutionary programme are weapons for the mobilisation of the masses, including (as in this case) the reconciliation of divisions within the working class.

Our programme for Ireland is workers' revolution. That requires the unity of the working class North and South, Protestant and Catholic, and the building of an all-Ireland revolutionary party that can combine the struggle against British imperialism and for the unity of Ireland with an all-Ireland working-class struggle for socialism. Reforms and democratic demands are not counterposed to the workers' revolution: on the contrary, they are an irreplaceable part of the working of lead the working class towards it.

10. From the point of view of both Irish Republicanism and working class politics, the choice to be made about the Northern Ireland Protestant population is either to accept its existence and its right to existence, or else to try to drive it out or suppress it by force - to 'undo the conquest'. As long as 200 years ago, secular and democratic Irish Republicanism adopted the former policy, and Wolfe Tone expressed it thus:

"To unite the whole people of Ireland, to abolish the memory of all past dissension, and to substitute the common name of Irishman in place of the denominations Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter..."

This is the irreducible basic principle of secular Irish nationalism and Republicanism, and also, of course, a basic principle of Irish socialism. Anything less is inevitably a lapse into Irish nationalism into sectionalism, communalism, 'Catholic nationalism', and revanchism.

11. The WSL rejects the politics of Green nationalism, which proposes to replace the present oppressed half-a-million Catholic minority in the North with an oppressed one-million Protestant minority in a united Ireland.

If a united Ireland bore any resemblance to the existing 26 County state, then the Protestants would be an oppressed minority from the beginning.

Lenin's principle: "A struggle against the privileges and violence of the oppressing nation and no toleration of the striving for privileges on the part of the oppressed nation" should guide us also on the relation between communities and groups within a nation.

12. We reject the combination of trade-unionist minimalism and maximalist socialist propaganda purveyed by the Militant tendency. Revolutionaries need a programme adequate to answer all the political questions posed to the working class, and in the first place the question of national liberation and unification.

We reject the mirror-image variant of the same approach purveyed most clearly by the IRSP, who also make maximalist socialist propaganda but place the armed struggle where Militant places the trade union struggle. While Militant fails to relate to the political questions central to Northern Ireland political life, the IRSP does not — and by its nature cannot — relate to the working class as it actually is.

The WSL supports the struggle of the oppressed Catholic minority in Northern Ireland, and their right to wage armed struggle. At the same time we advocate workers' unity on the basis of class interests and as the prerequisite for a new Ireland: a thoroughly democratic Ireland with maximum autonomy for the minority, not the green-nationalist Ireland now on offer.

In the event of a working class upsurge in the South which could appeal to the Northern Ireland Protestant workers on a class socialist basis, the consistently democratic element in our programme would in no way limit us or hold us back. On the contrary, its advocacy by revolutionary socialists and Republicans would help prepare the way for a socialist solution, in so far as it was successful in placating Protestant fears of being incorporated as a minority into a state like the existing green-nationalist, Catholic-sectarian 26 Counties.

13. There is a radical difference between our proposal for regional and local autonomy, within a united Ireland, and the proposal of a separate, Partitionist, Northern Ireland state, whether independent or ruled by Westminster.

The 'right to self-determination' of the Protestant community would not make sense. There is no territory naturally suited to the exercise of such 'self-determination'. Any 'Protestant state' would entrap and oppress a large Catholic minority, as the Six Counties has done for 60 years. Concretely, now, 'Protestant self-determination' would mean restoration of Stormont (the Northern Ireland parliament abolished in 1972) and/or repartition. It would not be a democratic solution, clearing the path for class struggle, but a sectarian solution, bitterly divisive for the working class.

Resolution/4

14. Self-evidently federalism cannot mean letting the Protestants go on as usual, discriminating socially against Catholics. In so far as such discrimination is a matter of local (or in a federal Ireland, regional) government patronage, etc., it would be outlawed.
15. Formal democratic constitutional provisions can never in fact guarantee anything if the conflicts of real social forces dictate otherwise.

The essential purpose of the proposals above is not as advice to the powers-that-be, but as part of a socialist programme around which Irish socialists and Republicans could assemble a real united working class force, capable of being a real material guarantee against all sectarian discrimination.



## OLIVER RESOLUTION ON 'BUILDING THE WSL'

We have identified four main areas where the fusion needs to be strengthened...  
a) international work, b) the link between O. and TU work, c) unresolved differences, d) more planning and leadership from the centre.

a) For international work we need:

i) a pamphlet on the history and state of the FI and a crash programme of education throughout the WSL - so that all comrades know who is who and who stands where.

ii) The WSL magazine must appear regularly and have news about the FI and encourage contributions from TILC groups. A better title would be 'Troskyism Today' since it would make our traditions clear to new readers and help international sales.

iii) Our paper should have a section every week on the 'Left Press' which could take up issues internationally and nationally - not in a sectarian manner but as a sober assessment.

iv) The WSL has a whole range of international contacts and these need to be prioritised. Some of our contacts have been around for a long time. It is time to take stock of the situation - to draw up a balance sheet. We can then decide who to go for in a big way and with whom to maintain only tenuous links.

v) We need consciously to seek out and bring into membership comrades from areas where we are carrying out solidarity work - e.g. Ireland, Iran, Poland and S.Africa. This requires careful preparation of pamphlets spelling out our political line for the class struggle in those countries.

vi) We also need to make every effort to intervene in international conferences and demonstrations - not just as WSL delegates necessarily, but also through TUs, O., WF, CND and so on.

vii) All this requires more resources. At least one full-time worker should be assigned to international work only.

b) The link between O. and TU work:

i) Extend the fight for democracy and accountability into the trade unions against the bureaucracy. Build Broad Lefts, build O. factory branches.

ii) Fight for O. involvement in industrial and community struggles at whatever level.

iii) Use the broad groups to draw in the best militants and activists, stress the link between O. and TU work. This needs a proper drive and organisation from the centre with tours round the country sorting out the relations between the League and the broad groups, making sure that things work properly. There should be a page of the paper devoted to broad group news, e.g. accounts of campaigns, meetings, interventions, where new groups have been established - the point being to give an identity to the broad groups and build up a spirit of loyalty.

iv) The policy of 'Wiganisation' passed by the I-CL but never implemented needs to be centrally organised as a major initiative.

c) Unresolved differences.

i) We must begin a process of resolving differences by clarifying what they are, discussing them and then adopting clear positions which comrades can understand and therefore defend regardless of whether they agree with them.

ii) The fusion left a number of political differences unresolved. Despite the deadlines laid down none of the three major issues - Afghanistan, the General Strike, and the EEC have been decided (although there was a vote of sorts on the EEC). Perhaps more importantly each organisation had a distinct method which assumed a particular approach to almost all the issues we have to face.

Clearly the experience of working together has led many of us to reassess our assumptions and develop our political understanding. We have grown together but this has not been a simple linear process. As our line on some things has begun to change some comrades have reacted by retreating into the safe world of their previous political existences. Tensions have grown around a whole range of political issues - tensions which are sometimes based



Oliver/2

on as little as simply vague suspicions of other comrades' motives, tensions which are starting to lead to explosive arguments and thus threaten the ability of the movement to function properly.

iii) The NC must draw up a plan/timetable for the adoption of political positions on the main issues facing us today. The most pressing of these are the Middle East, Poland and Central America.

In each case the NC should submit theses which outline the key points of analysis, programme and further areas of discussion. These will be debated throughout the movement with sufficient time for comrades to reflect on differing positions. The theses together with amendments and any alternative documents will then be submitted to national membership meetings for voting.

iv) The discussion process outlined above will be aided considerably by an avoidance of debates being carried in the paper - except under the most controlled fashion as directed by the NC which is the highest body of the movement between conferences.

v) The NC is instructed to investigate the functioning of the existing commissions, make any necessary reorganisation, and establish such new commissions as it feels are required. It must also agree a detailed outline of the frame of reference, organisation and status of the commissions.

vi) Democratic discussion also depends on strict adherence to the agreed timetable. Comrades who go to the trouble of organising their lives around agreed timetables have a right to expect the leading bodies \* to disenfranchise them by re-arranging dates of important meetings (e.g. the Aug.27-28 conference).

vii) In order to facilitate the maximum possible clarity and fraternal discussion the NC will publish a booklet (which all members will be instructed to buy) containing all the current positions of the movement (with dates adopted) together with all TILC statements.

d) More centralisation in the group.

i) Our own events, e.g. conferences, broad group AGM, summer school need to be planned well in advance and the membership mobilised.

ii) Our intervention in annual events, e.g. O and youth conferences, also need far better planning for the maximum results - resolutions, delegates, observers, collection of money to pay fares, travel, where to stay, etc.

iii) For demonstrations, a national mobilisation must mean a national mobilisation, and again needs to be fought for - not two days' notice given - coaches, contacts, collections, banners, posters, pamphlets, special issues of the paper etc are needed.

iv) The paper should be used to stress the importance of events and to create enthusiasm. There should be news of campaigns, meetings, plans, targets, etc. Where we have done this properly we have been successful, e.g. O women's rally and the broad group/CDLM conference against the cuts in 1981. Where we have not done so, e.g. AGM and summer school, we have lost money and demoralised the membership. The lesson should be clear.

\* Typist's note: I assume 'not' should be inserted here.



BRIEF REPORT ON END CONVENTION (JUNE 1983)

Oliver

There has been a tremendous growth of the peace movement at rank and file level on an international scale. This seems to apply to all aspects of the movement but most noticeably the 'Women for Peace' as a result of Greenham Common and the Nuclear Freeze Movement in the USA.

The political discussion and division was between those enthusiastic and self-confident from involvement in grass-roots action vs. those older and more traditional delegates inclined to take things slowly, try and persuade the leaders, use the United Nations and so on. The former were in the majority.

This came out in political commitment to:

- a) solidarity with the oppressed of the Third World and seeing the link of their struggle with that of the peace movement,
- b) support for the dissident peace groups of Eastern Europe,
- c) a recognition of a feminist perspective - behaviour, vocabulary, etc. - to the peace movement.

There was virtually no involvement of the revolutionary left. The USFI gave out one leaflet and had a bookstall, very low key. The German MLPD (Maoists) gave out a few leaflets/bulletins outside the convention, and intervened more aggressively. The Italian PCI, the Flemish YS, and the Spanish YS gave out statements of their positions.

Those from the traditional labour movement were very much an activist minority - this applied as far as I could see to the German SPD, the Dutch LP, the Italian PCI.

The contradiction in the convention was on the one hand the tremendous enthusiasm of being part of a growing movement which clearly could have a powerful role to play - on the other hand, the lack of well-defined political leadership which would have power to direct the movement given that Cruise and Pershing are due here in 1983.

At the moment the Greens are having it all their own way and will I think grow in other countries too. This is because an alternative proposal of 'regeneration of the labour movement', which was in fact put by Tony Benn last year opposing Rudolf Bahro in debate, has not been clearly put to the Europeans, i.e. by us!

I propose:

1. We organise through the broad groups a British O. Left delegation to next year's convention, in Perugia, Italy, in July 1984.
2. Where possible we encourage comrades to attend European peace demos.
3. Using WF and CF we approach European women's and youth groups directly.

AMENDMENT ON 'BOMBINGS'

from Mellor

Amend "we condemn attacks on civilians" ( point 3 of Dec '81

NC resolution ) to read "we condemn attacks aimed at civilians".



## ORGANISING THE UNEMPLOYED

This is just a short document intended to put out what we feel our basic position on this question should be.

### T TRADE UNION MEMBERSHIP.

It is probably best to go for two methods of organising the unemployed in trade unions..

a) Those who are already union members should try and stay in thier original branch if made unemployed. This is a clear solution and it can be helpful in developing the fight against redundancies- for instance unemployed workers could point to the reality of accepting "voluntary" redundancy and at the same time play a key role in developing joint action by the employed and unemployed against redundancies etc.

b) For the majority of unemployed who are not union members, we should try and create special unemployed branches but with the rider that it is important to integrate these branches into the entire union, (branch, shop, combine committee) network if they are not to be simply inefficient shells.

### The NUWM.

We feel that the National Unemployed Workers Movement is a skeleton organisation and concentrating on it may lead away from more serious work in the broader Labour movement. It is certainly much less important than relating directly to the Trade Unions and can cut across that perspective. For example in our area, the right wing of the Trades Council have suggested NUWM affiliates to the TUC, thier motives are quite clear- they want to set up a toothless section of the TUC so they can limit and control the struggles of the unemployed,

### What we should do.

Our basic aim should be to unite the employed and unemployed sections of the working class. The best way to do this is to draw the unemployed, with thier special and radical experience, into the Labour Movement. In concrete terms the organisation can take three basic steps towards this.

### Rules Revision.

We need to wage a fight within the T.U.'s as they exist this at the present time, for a rules revision that will provide the necessary organisational basis for fuller access for the unemployed.

The key to this would be drawing up "Activists guides" to rule changes in particular unions. This is a very important step and the fact that it is a long term perspective, i.e. most T.U.'s only have rules revision conferences once in a blue moon, should not discourage us.



National Unemployed Caucus.

This should involve all comrades active in unemployed work and should receive central funding.

Full Timer for unemployed work.

It may be possible to avoid having the organisation fund him/her. So financial objections should not matter.

The full timer would have the job of co-ordinating existing work and examining the possibility of developing unemployed work in new areas.

Tyldsley, Baily, Kumar, Paul.