

# **REVOLUTIONARY WORKS**

## **SEAMUS COSTELLO**



**FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS**

**FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS**

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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE FOR THE FIRST EDITION

Dear Comrades,

It is a great honor to have worked together with the Irish Socialist Republicans with the Seamus Costello Memorial Committee's permission on this new edition of the Revolutionary Works of Seamus Costello.

Although it is the first time these works will be published in book format, it would be incorrect to call it the "first edition". In October 2017, comrades from the Seamus Costello Memorial Committee already published and distributed a 60 page booklet containing Costello's most important writings and speeches marking his 40 year martyrdom. We include its contents here in this edition.

To the six works present in the booklet, we have added five other documents, found in archival issues of *The Starry Plough* and/or *The United Irishman*. We also added a short biography, as well as speeches from Seamus Costello's funeral, published after his martyrdom in the October 1977 issue of *The Starry Plough*.

In the previously published booklet's introduction, its authors wrote: "We believe that the revolutionary writings of Seamus Costello are as important today as they were 40 years ago. The struggle for National Liberation and Socialism in Ireland has not ended. We hope that the republication of these writings, long out of print, can inspire a new generation of socialist republicans to take up the mantle of Seamus Costello and finish the business of establishing

an Irish Socialist Republic.”

It is in this same spirit that comrades sought a new printing of an augmented edition to the works, which I have the pleasure to present you here.

FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS

# Prologue

## **SEAMUS COSTELLO, FORTY YEARS (1977-2017)**

Seamus Costello of Old Connaught Avenue, Bray, County Wicklow, was assassinated at the behest of former comrades off the North Strand, Dublin, on 5 October 1977. Typically, the energetic, optimistic, dynamic, hands-on Costello had presented himself that day in a time of acute personal hazard for what was meant to be a dialogue aimed at defusing the catastrophic feud being waged between rival strands of socialist republicanism in Ireland. At the time of his death Costello remained committed to realizing the ideals delineated in the progressive 1916 Proclamation and Democratic Programme of the First Dáil (January 1919). He wished to bring into being an Irish society informed by the inspirational writings of Michael Davitt, Fintan Lalor, James Connolly, and Liam Mellows. Costello had the dubious distinction of being the first leader of an Irish political party to be killed. Knowing his life to be at risk, he persevered in his work until his final hours on Northbrook Avenue.

The unique circumstance of his death aged thirty-eight was insufficiently noted in the same mainstream media that, in May 1991, obscured the “Loyalist” shooting of Donegal Sinn Féin Councillor Eddie Fullerton. Clearly, wider political considerations pertained within an Irish Establishment that regarded the Irish Republican Army, Official IRA and Irish National Liberation Army as embarrass-

ing irritants to economic stability and social elitism. Polite “Dublin Four” repudiation of the war in the North of Ireland was rendered at nought by the harrowing Hunger Strikes of 1980 and 1981. Character assassination, all too often, preceded actual death.

Born in 1939 into a Bray family that was neither poor nor disadvantaged granted the young Costello many options in life. Following robust schooling with the Christian Brothers in Monkstown Park, he entered private life as a mechanic aged fifteen. Ambitious and confident, he matured into an excellent car salesman, a line of work that enabled him to remain in Ireland while hundreds of thousands of his contemporaries departed for England, Scotland and North America in search of employment. Intelligent, lucid and politically engaged, he was, as the contents of this pamphlet charts, an early agent of the revival of the Republican Movement in his home area. In fact, Costello was an early member of Na Fianna Eireann and, with access to vehicles, a trusted and useful acolyte in an area used by IRA General Headquarters for training.

Costello at all times in youth and maturity displayed a deep historical insight and resultant common sense that differentiated him from many others seeking leading roles in the illegal Republican Movement. While it is true that his prominence in South Derry during the 1956-62 Campaign was partly a result of organizational matters in Dublin, the fact remains that he was at an early age second in command to area O/C Piaras O Duill (RIP). Sub-

sequently interned in without trial, the young man dubbed the “Boy General” had seen more action than most of the senior IRA and Sinn Féin leaders corralled in the Curragh Camp until 1959. He and others left the Curragh determined to revive the fortunes of the unrealised Irish Republic. During the re-organization of 1962-63 Costello was advanced to the leadership while others of deep ideological commitment were effectively dismissed. Within a reduced IRA cohort Costello enjoyed high rank and was among the first to raise the near heretical concept of Sinn Féin candidates taking their seats in the Dáil if elected.

The militant, if pragmatic, Wicklow man appreciated, as the speeches published in this pamphlet aver, that the Republican Movement should engage with the pressing issues facing the unprivileged. He argued that they should fight such battles on the streets and beaches but also in the forums of the Twenty-Six County State. IRA Chief of Staff Cathal Goulding pushed the Movement further to the left of the political spectrum than many traditional adherents were prepared to countenance. Clear-sighted as never before, Costello was critical to this process that alienated many people of principle. He was, as the speeches reprinted here attest, deeply conversant with the historical canon whilst adhering consistently, at times stridently, to a pronounced socialist republican tendency. His mastery of such matters is self-evident and at a time when mischievous commentators disingenuously insisted on an absolute choice between

“Connolly” or “Pearse”, Costello knew well from his deep reading that both men were resolutely focussed on achieving a sovereign republic in which civil, religious and natural rights would be guaranteed.

In his short, radical life Costello made a difference to society in terms of checking moneyed interests who wrongly believed they were entitled to alienate and privatize cherry-picked parts of the Irish coastline. This was vehemently contested by Costello et al. in the Brittas Bay test case in Wicklow and did not eventuate. Attempts by persons to use overseas capital to proliferate “holiday” homes in impoverished regions of the south and west was curtailed. Efforts by state-backed interests to prohibit traditional modes of fishing in Limerick and Clare were strongly resisted.

Strike breaking initiatives in Limerick City and elsewhere did not succeed. Insofar as the transformative Republican Movement of 1962-68 held its illegal, often unrecognized position, in Irish political discourse, Costello was a significant figure.

Costello’s public statements indicate that he strove to better the conditions of his prospective and actual constituents. His comrades, in many instances, recall him as a demanding but utterly sincere activist; a man who required physical and psychological commitment beyond the norm from those within his trusted inner circle. No sense of dilettante ego pervades the speeches of this pamphlet. While obviously motivated to an arguably self-detrimental level, Costello demanded, won and exercised a position of

upper leadership during a time of transition from a discredited 1962 GHQ towards an equally criticized 1969 variant when sectors of Derry and Belfast burned without significant IRA intervention. It is a matter of record that Costello remained with the “Official” Republican Movement after the December 1969 split until, having played a very active role in their offensive operations in Ireland and abroad, he could no longer countenance the political and social implications of the May 1972 “ceasefire” which some key figures regarded as premature. Costello was, in fact, one of the most proactively militant OIRA leaders to evade prosecution in the years 1968-1972. When his comrades re-evaluated matters following the bombing of the British Army’s Parachute Brigade Headquarters in Aldershot, England, an OIRA retaliation for the “Bloody Sunday atrocity of January 1972, Costello was among those opposed to a cessation.

In his short life Costello exerted himself in many public political and cultural forums not least Wicklow County Council, Bray Urban District Council, the Irish Transport and General Workers Union, National Museum Development Committee and the Cualann Historical Society (Bray). He led campaigns against ground rents, privatization of public beaches, housing provision and ran unsuccessfully as an “Independent” for the Dail in 1977. By then Costello was Chair of the Irish Republican Socialist Party founded on 8 December 1974 alongside the Irish National Liberation Army in the Spa Hotel in

Lucan. The IRSP represented the revolutionary left and attracted many of the most notable persons of this tendency from Official and Provisional quarters, as well as from the trade unions, academia and private sector. The INLA had a much greater impact in the conflict in the North than their relatively small membership suggested.

Ominously, the IRSP launch date was the anniversary of the callous Free State executions of Rory O'Connor, Joe McKelvey, Liam Mellows and Dick Barrett. The Provisional IRA obviously did not contest the mass defection of Official IRA personnel in the Lower Falls/ Beechmount, Divis Flats, and other sectors of Belfast to the emergent INLA. The OIRA, with guidance from their Dublin HQ, viewed matters differently and a spiral of events, some of which were later understood as arising from chance and misunderstanding, precipitated lethal infighting. Such conditions jeopardized Costello, who survived a number of attempts on his life. He boasts no biography and, cut down in his prime in Dublin, no autobiography. Civic authorities have removed memorials dedicated to his memory at the site of his assassination. This pamphlet comprises a selection of key speeches by Costello during the main years of his public contribution to Irish politics. The editors have reproduced his authentic voice in various modes of engagement. His Bodenstown "oration" in 1966 was probably the most important republican statement since the Army Council's "dump arms" order in February 1962. Citing Wolfe Tone and paraphrasing Pearse, Costello

told the ranks of a numerically diminished IRA that they advocated 'the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland, religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities for all our citizens'. No republican or socialist can contest such fundamental objectives.

DR. RUAN O'DONNELL

UPDATED SEPTEMBER 20, 2017

# Introduction

## MAN OF VISION

What Seamus Costello meant and still means to the people of County Wicklow would take volumes. This short account will have to suffice.

For a man of average height and appearance, to us, the people of Wicklow, he was a tower of strength and determination, our hope, our guidance, and our inspiration for the future. He explained our age-old desire for freedom and showed us the path to take to achieve it.

From his secondary education in the 50s border campaign to his Bachelor's degree in freedom fighting, which he obtained in the Curragh University, he took up his practice throughout the 32 counties of Ireland. Graduates from the Curragh realised that in order to achieve national freedom, the class struggle and the national question went together, in other words, that national liberation and socialism were the same struggle.

By freeing the beaches of Brittas Bay, he liberated all the beaches in the 26 counties, thus proving what a small group of determined people can achieve against powerful capitalist opposition. Once elected to the Bray Urban Council and Wicklow County Council, he organised the people to organise themselves, from housing action groups to unemployment, to small hill farmers, to Northern civil rights and the military campaign. Seamus was there in the thick of the peoples' struggle right up to his assassination.

First and foremost, Seamus was a man of the people whose task in life was to make us masters of

our own destiny. He was not one of those smooth-talking, respectable politicians of the established parties, or should say established parasites, who exploit the electorate for personal gain, i.e. Joe Soap going to his T.D. or councillor with his cap in his hand begging for his rights, such as tap water, flush toilets, and what not.

Seamus from the outset was a believer in equality, the rights of man, and liberty—the three basic beliefs of all true republican socialists. Seamus spent his time with the underdogs, the working classes, the poor, the exploited, and he taught them. He taught them their rights as human beings. He explained to the people the evils of the British class system and pointed out how the native Irish gombeen class could take over from the British and keep the British class system alive to the detriment of the people.

He explained why certain classes live in luxury and these classes hold on to the wealth and power they stole from their fellow citizens. He explained to us the evils of capitalism—the profit motive. How and why fellow workers become monsters after they extort profit from their own class, for, to succeed in the capitalist class system, one must be callous to the extreme.

He explained how the class with the stolen wealth, the rich and powerful, set themselves up as the guardians of the people. The rich make the laws, not to protect the poor but to protect and cover up their own crimes and fortunes.

He explained how workers, starved for jobs, are

manipulated into the forces of law and order. Let's face it—if we had social justice, there would be no need for force to implement law and order. So pity your fellow worker in the Gardaí and Free State Army—protecting the rich and harassing the poor.

It comes back to capitalism and the class system every time. So long as the present system remains, we will never know justice. He explained that justice, freedom and the brotherhood of man can only come about in a classless society—in effect, a 32 county socialist republic.

Seamus was not an armchair revolutionary intellectual. This is precisely why he did not fit in with the decor of Gardiner Place. His vision—his passion for social justice, his ability to communicate on bread and butter issues and without beating about any bushes—enabled him to link bread and butter issues directly to the class struggle, to capitalism, to the national problem and to British imperialism. He saw in Co. Wicklow the same problems that beset the whole country. He looked on Ireland as one unit—a whole Irish Ireland.

Seamus could see the Northern loyalist or Unionist fulfilling the same British role as the Southern Fianna Fail and Fine Gael nationalists. Both regimes—North and South—continue to uphold British imperialism.

Because of his vision and his organising ability, he became a tower of strength to the people of Wicklow and Ireland. He showed them the light. He showed them the road to national liberation. Without doubt

he was the greatest threat to the capitalist establishment since James Connolly. His life—short as it was—was not in vain. It exploded with purpose, not for himself but for his fellow men.

In conclusion Seamus Costello was a man of the people. He got his degree in working class involvement, on the streets with his own people, campaigning with them for justice.

SEAN DOYLE



## **Costello Articles & Interviews**

## BELFAST ORATION

*THE UNITED IRISHMAN*

MAY 1966, VOL. XX, ISSUE #5

*Extracts from the Oration of Seamus Costello during the 1916 Jubilee Commemoration at Casement Park, Belfast.*

In this jubilee year of 1966, we stand, as it were, on a watershed of history. It lies spread out behind us in all its grandeur and its squalor, its glory and its tragedy. This is indeed an historic occasion for two reasons.

First of all, it is the first time in years that an all-Ireland commemoration has taken place in Belfast—the cradle of Irish Republicanism. It is also a truly historic occasion by virtue of the fact that we have here today representatives of all branches of the Republican Movement side by side with representatives of the Belfast Trade Union Movement.

If we of this generation are to pay a fitting tribute to the men who died for us all in 1916, it is absolutely essential that we understand the ideals for which they died. The most widespread misconception outside the Republican Movement concerning the men of 1916 is that they had died simply to change the colour of the flag and the post boxes—that they were a group of romantics unconcerned with the everyday problems of the people. Nothing could be further removed from the truth.

We of the Republican Movement know that

Clarke, Pearse, Connolly and the others died for the ideals of a free, independent and prosperous nation, proud of its own distinctive language and culture, working out its own destiny, untrammelled, and unhindered by any outside or alien control—a nation that would ensure the security, prosperity and happiness of all its people without distinction as to class, creed or political persuasions.

Having stated what the aims of the 1916 leaders were, it is essential that we examine the situation in Ireland today, and see how far we have progressed towards the ideals for which they died 50 years ago. Let us now see what we have achieved after 45 years of so-called “independence”. The politicians in the South have spent 45 years telling us that we are free, that we have achieved the ideals of Connolly, Clarke, Pearse and the others. What they mean is that they have accepted the existence of Partition, with its consequent evils of emigration, unemployment and sheer poverty. They would also have us believe that that selling of our national assets to the first foreigner who has the money to buy is a hallmark of freedom. They would also have liked us to believe that the use of the infamous Offences Against the State Act against workers who are struggling for a just wage is a necessary and desirable thing.

This year with the signing of the so-called “Free Trade Agreement” the recent and long-standing betrayal of national interests has been presented and acclaimed as an advance in the pursuit of national unity. This agreement which will make Ireland

more dependent on Britain's goodwill politically and economically, than at any times since the Act of Union—this, then is the “freedom” that Mr. Lemass would like us to believe the patriots of 1916 died for.

### **EXPLOITATION OF WORKERS**

Having examined the position in the South, let us now turn to the North, and see how almost [1.5] million of our countrymen are faring out under direct British rule. The North today is a place of carefully fostered bigotry and sectarianism. It is also a place where an extremely high proportion of the population is denied the right to have a political organisation that represents their point of view. It is also a place where religious differences between Catholic and Protestant workers are deliberately fostered by those whose only purpose is the exploitation of all workers.

It is essential that we understand how discrimination against any section of the working classes works to the benefit of the Capitalist class. The great majority of people in the North are either industrial workers or small farmers who are controlled economically by a majority of the wealthy and privileged capitalists. It is the business of these capitalists to maintain their privileged positions, to see that the majority will never set their sights on the just distribution of the wealth which they created, and which the capitalists now enjoy. It is their business to ensure that the majority will never become a force strong enough to remove them from their privileged positions. The

positions of the privileged are secured by their artificially created divisions of the working classes. By discrimination in employment and housing, one section of the community are led to believe that it is in their interest to keep the capitalists in power.

Never are they told that the jobs which they hold and the houses which they live in are theirs by right, rather are they tricked into believing that these natural rights are a reward for their support of the regime. These tactics serve the twofold purpose of keeping a large section of the population loyal to the regime, whilst at the same time it ensures that they do not insist on a bigger share in the wealth.

### **UNITE ALL SECTIONS**

Having outlined what we of the Republican Movement believe to be the true position in Ireland today, many of you are, no doubt, wondering what we propose to do about it. The First aim of the Republican Movement is to unite all sections of the Irish people, irrespective of class, creed, or political persuasions, in their demands for political and economic independence. Many of you may feel that this policy, particularly in the North, is impossible to achieve. History has shown that this is by no means impossible. In 1798 Catholics, Protestants, and Dissenters fought side by side for national independence. The men of 1848 led by John Mitchel, the Newry Presbyterian, and Lalor, the Laois farmer, wanted no less than "Ireland her own, from the sod to the sky". The Irish Revolutionary Movement at the beginning of this

century had no better champion than James Connolly. His feat in uniting the Protestant and Catholic workers of Belfast in 1911 and leading them to victory in the dock strike is often forgotten. But here in the fight for the emancipation of the worker, Connolly showed that Catholics and Protestants had a common bond. His slogan was “Irish Worker”, not Catholic Workers, or Protestant Workers—his battle cry was “The Cause of Ireland is the Cause of Labour, the Cause of Labour is the Cause of Ireland”. A further illustration of this common bond can be found in the Belfast of the early ‘30s, when armed Catholics and Protestants side by side faced British armoured cars and machine guns, when the British attempted to cut down on the outdoor Relief Benefits. The united efforts of Irish workers won the day. The ideals of the Republican Movement of today are identical to those of Tone, Mitchel, Lalor and Connolly. The land of Ireland for the people of Ireland, the wealth of Irish Industry for those who create, it—namely, the Workers. This is not a Utopian dream, and certainly not impossible. It can be achieved and will be achieved when the workers of Ireland, when the men of no property in Ireland, when elements of Irish Republicanism and Labour realise the power which they hold in their own hands, when they decide to unite and fight for the rights which are theirs for the taking. In pursuance of this policy it is the duty of every man here who calls himself an Irishman to go forth from here and play his part in the organising of a militant Trade Union movement with a national

consciousness. It is also our duty in the rural areas to assist in banding together the small farmers who are at this very moment threatened with extinction. It is our duty to return the land of Ireland to the people of Ireland.

Let no one pretend that our task is an easy one. When the Irish people do decide to unite in their demands for complete freedom, they will see who their real enemy is. They will find themselves opposed by the concentrated might of British Imperialism in its most vicious form. We have seen it manifested many times in history when the military might of Imperialism was used against the revolutions of the common people of subject nations.

We in the Republican Movement have never regarded the National tradition and the Social tradition in our history as separate and distinct entities, each existing alone and apart from the other. In this historic city of Belfast Irish Republicanism was born. Republicanism was conceived in answer to the tyranny of despots, it was conceived in answer to the exploitation of the people, it was conceived in answer to bigotry and sectarianism. For Tone, all these evils stemmed from the connection with England and in his lifetime he worked to subvert this tyranny. We in the Republican Movement, are the inheritors of this tradition. We believe that the connection with Britain is the source of all our evils and believe in ending it.

There is no one who can say that Partition has been of benefit to the Irish people. There is no one

who will not say that it has not been of benefit to sectional interests amongst us, to those who thrive on the weakness which is division, the cancer which is bigotry and sectarianism.

Now as in time past, we Republicans must set our faces steadfastly on the road, which leads to freedom. Freedom to us means among other things the evacuation of British troops from our country. We will not compromise on this question. No foreign troops under no matter what flag will ever garrison Ireland in peace.

## ORATION AT BODENSTOWN

*THE UNITED IRISHMAN*

JULY 1966, VOL. XX, ISSUE #7

*Text of oration delivered by Seamus Costello at the Wolfe Tone commemoration at Bodentown, 1966.*

We have assembled here today to pay our respects to the memory of Theobald Wolfe Tone, the father of Irish republicanism. If we, the republicans of 1966, are to pay a fitting tribute to Tone, it is essential that we examine in depth the ideals for which he fought and died. He believed that the Irish people “had but one common interest and one common enemy; that the depression and slavery of Ireland was produced and perpetrated by the divisions existing between them, and that, consequently, to assert the independence of their country, and their own individual liberties, it was necessary to forget all former feuds to consolidate the entire strength of the whole nation, and to form for the future but one people.”

His attitude towards the so-called “Irish parliament” of the day is also worthy of attention. He maintained that the parliament was a totally ineffective body, that it had changed nothing in Ireland, that the social and political order remained the same, and that, as before, the real power lay with the British Government. He realized that until such time as the Irish people united and demanded their just rights that the wealth of this country would either be controlled directly by Britain, or be syphoned off with

the willing connivance of a subservient Irish parliament.

Having seen the problems that existed at the time, Tone in conjunction with the other leaders of the revolutionary movement decided that the first logical step towards a solution was to “break the connection with England, the never-failing source of all our political and economic evils.”

You may well ask why we of the republican movement, 168 years after the death of Tone, find it necessary to advocate the same course of action that he advocated. The answer is simple. We find it necessary to advocate the same course of action because of the fact that the Irish people still do not control their own affairs, and because their economic and political independence is considered a fit subject for barter or sale by our two subservient puppet parliaments. If the Irish people have any doubt about the truth of this statement and want proof of what I say, they have only to take a close look at the situation that exists today in each part of our partitioned land. In the North, the destinies of one and a half million of our countrymen are controlled by a puppet regime whose existence for some 45 years has depended on the support of British armed forces. This regime has found to its apparent delight that one of the simplest ways of ensuring its continued existence is by the furtherance of bigotry and sectarianism. Ample evidence of this policy can be found in the recent antics of a certain reverend agent provocateur.

These then are the means by which the British

imperialists intend to maintain the people of the North in perpetual slavery. These are also the means by which the working classes are divided against their own material welfare. The pro-British capitalist class who control the economy of the North know very well that, when the people reject those who foster sectarianism, their next step will be to demand a just share of the wealth which they create. These are the real reasons why one section of the community are led to believe that it is in their interest to discriminate against another section. Never are they told that the standard of living which they enjoy, at the expense of their victimized neighbours, is theirs by right—rather are they tricked into believing that these natural rights are a reward for their support of the regime. These tactics serve to ensure that a large section of the population of the North remain loyal to the regime and at the same time do not insist on having a bigger share in the wealth.

In the 26 counties the most that can be said of the position is that it contains one evil less religious discrimination is absent. The political and economic subjection of this part of Ireland to Britain is no less complete than that of the North.

However, British control over the destinies of the people of the 26 counties is not as obvious. This is due in the main to the fact that since 1921 they have had the co-operation of successive quisling parliaments in order to ensure that their interests here are fully protected.

The effects of this economic subjection are obvi-

ous in every sphere of life in Ireland at the present time. We of the republican movement have no need to tell the Irish people of the sorry mess which has been made of the economy.

The politicians are telling us every day. They tell us that this position arises as a result of the workers insisting on having a better standard of living. Never are we told that the profits which accrue from our labours are invested abroad by the native and foreign capitalists who control our resources. We are constantly told that we must work harder for the same wages despite the fact that we have to live with an ever increasing cost of living and an ever increasing burden of taxation. Up to now we have been "advised" that it is wrong for workers to withhold labour in the struggle to wrest a decent wage from those employers whose only role in life seems to be the exploitation of workers. The situation in this regard has now changed radically, with the introduction of coercive anti-worker legislation. We now find that Mr. Lemass, in his eagerness to please his imperial masters, is prepared to use against farmers and workers the same type of repression which was previously reserved for republicans. It now seems inevitable that the republicans in Mountjoy Prison will soon find themselves joined by farmers and trade unionists.

We republicans must not be content to criticize those who misgovern both parts of our country. If we are to regard ourselves as true followers of Tone, we must provide the Irish people with an alternative.

It must be a realistic and practical alternative. Our target must be the achievement of the ideals set out in the Proclamation of 1916—the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland, religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities for all our citizens.

This in effect means that we must aim for the ownership of our resources by the people, so that these resources will be developed in the best interests of the people as a whole. Some of you may feel that these aims are impossible to achieve until such time as we have an independent all-Ireland government. It is certainly true that some of these aims will not reach fruition until such time as we have an all-Ireland parliament. However, in the meantime, you as republicans have an extremely important part to play in the furtherance of this policy.

It is your duty to spearhead the organization of a virile co-operative movement among the farming community. It is also your duty to use your influence as trade unionists to organise a militant trade union movement with a national consciousness. In short, it is your duty to become active, hard-working members of each and every organization that is working for the welfare of all the people and towards the reunification of the country.

You should use every possible opportunity to acquaint the people with our policies on land, industry and finance. We believe that there should be a limit to the amount of land owned by any single individual. We also believe that the large estates of

absentee landlords should be acquired by compulsory acquisition and worked on a co-operative basis with the financial and technical assistance of the State.

In the field of industry, our policy is to nationalize the key industries with the eventual aim of co-operative ownership by the workers. The capital necessary to carry out this programme can be made available without recourse to extensive taxation by the nationalization of all banks, insurance, loan and investment companies whose present policy is the re-investment of our hard earned money in foreign fields.

This in short is our policy. This is our definition of freedom. It was Tone's definition, Lalor's definition, Mitchel's definition, and the stated aim of Pearse and Connolly. We can expect the same reaction to the implementation of these aims from the forces of exploitation, whether native or foreign sponsored, as the originators received in '98, '48, '67, and 1916. Therefore, to imagine that we can establish a republic solely by constitutional means is utter folly. The lesson of history shows that in the final analysis the robber baron must be dis-established by the same methods that he used to enrich himself and retain his ill-gotten gains, namely, force of arms. To this end we must organise, train, and maintain a disciplined armed force which will always be available to strike at the opportune moment.

## WHO OWNS THE GROUND RENT IN IRELAND?

*The following speech was delivered by Seamus Costello to Bray Urban District Council in 1967*

Gentlemen, in proposing to you that the ground rents be abolished, I intend to show you that what we propose is a much needed reform of land law in Ireland—a reform that would bring the law into some correspondence with the morality and justice of the matter. Indeed, so great is the gulf existing between the justice and the law of the matter that our proposition boils down to a demand for a drastic overhaul, long overdue, of an antiquated feudal system.

I intend to discuss briefly first, the morality of ground rents, secondly, the law as it stands, and thirdly, I intend to give some idea of the extent of ground rent holdings and their ownership.

On the grounds of morality and philosophy, what we intend that this council has the honour of proposing to the other councils of Ireland cannot in any way be described as new. Ireland has always, because of the influence of England, lagged well behind the nations of the world in implementation of progressive legislation. The Divine Right of Kings died in the French Revolution of 1789. In 1789 in Ireland, a catholic who did not subscribe to the Divine Right of Kings was excommunicated by his Bishop—all the insurgents of Wexford and Wicklow suffered this fate.

Ground Rent is based upon the Divine Right of Private Property—the theory of the absolute right

to private property. Many of the ground rent landlords in Ireland, as I propose to show later on, own vast tracts of urban and rural property because their ancestors came over to Ireland with a sword in the time of Henry VIII, Elizabeth or Cromwell. Conquest rights became legal title and have remained so down to the present day. We query the morality of this—but we query further. We query the right of any man, be he Irish, English or cosmopolitan, to hold an absolute bequeathable title in land—land that he did not create, land that is the natural inheritance of all men—not a few individuals.

Pope Paul VI in his recent Encyclical, “*Progressio Populorum*” has put the case against absolute right in private property very forcibly. I quote:

God intended the earth and all that it contains for the use of every human being and people. Thus, as all men follow justice and unite in charity, created goods should abound for them on a reasonable basis. All other rights whatever, including those of private property and free commerce, are to be subordinate to this principle. They should not hinder, but on the contrary favour its application. It is “a grave and urgent social duty” to redirect them to their primary finality... To quote Saint Ambrose: “You are not making a gift of your possessions to a poor person. You are handing over to him what is his. For what has been given in common for the use of all, you have abrogated to yourself.” “The world is given to all, not only

to the rich” That is, private property does not constitute for anyone an absolute and unconditional right.”

In fact pope Paul is saying in 1967 is what Fintan Lalor said in the famine ravaged Ireland of 1848. I quote:

To any plain understanding the right to private property is very simple. It is the right of any man to possess, enjoy, and transfer the substance and use of *whatever he himself has created*. This title is good against the world; and it is the *sole* and *only* title by which a valid right to absolute property can possibly rest.

But no man can plead any such title to a right of property in the substance of the earth...

The earth, together with all it *spontaneously* produces, is the free gift and common property of all mankind, of natural right, and by grant of God—and all men being equal, no man, therefore, has a right to appropriate to himself any part or portion thereof, except with an by the *common consent* and *agreement* of all other men.

The sole original right of property in land which I acknowledge to be morally valid, is the right of common consent and agreement. Every other I hold to be fabricated and fictitious, null, void and of no effect”.

P.H. Pearse, writing two months before the Ris-

ing of 1916, re-echoed Lalor's thesis: "...[N]o private right to property is good against the public right of the nation."

Thus, Gentlemen, we see that in morality and in philosophy the doctrine of the Divine Right of Private Property is a dead letter. Nevertheless, 1916 and the struggle for freedom subsequent to it failed to kill it in this country. The only other country in the world where ground rents exist is England-the country of its origin. Americans and Europeans are amazed when they hear of it.

Many of our own laws in planning stem from the realisation that there is no absolute right to private property, the law that makes a person seek planning permission prior to building demonstrates that the communities' right override those of the individual. All the various laws about unsightly structures, noxious weeds, noise volume, etc., all demonstrate the over-riding rights of the community over those of the individual. The ground rent laws of 1931, 1948, and 1957 demonstrate the opposite and uphold the right of the individual in land against that of the community. The ground rent laws are built up on the theory of absolute right in private property and allow the individual and his heirs and successors to hold the community to ransom for the ground space under their houses.

The latest word from lawmakers respecting ground rent came in January of this year (1967)—The Landlord and Tenant Act 1967. I do not propose to discuss this law at any length: the case of the

South City Markets and that of the tenants on the Proby Estate in Sandycove clearly demonstrates the fact that an unknown number of people who live in houses built before 1931 (when the first act was passed) are not covered by it. This is bad enough, but the most insulting feature of this law is the so-called “Right of Purchase” which it gives the tenant.

A tenant, according to this law, where it applies, may buy out this ground rent by paying his landlord a lump sum of money, which if invested at 7 1/2% p.a., while yield in simple interest each year an amount equal to the amount normally payable. This lump sum is arrived at by multiplying the amount of rent by 13.2 or 14 i.e. a £10 ground rent is “bought out” paying £132 plus your own and the landlords costs for the carriage of sale and investigation of the title. This extra cost has been averaged at £60-£70. I don't have to show that this so-called law is a public confidence trick of the most puerile type. What landlord in Ireland has to be persuaded to receive his ground rent in advance without the cost of bother of collection or the fear of conscious, alert people? The law of 1967 is not a law—it is sophisticated robbery—but what can we expect from a Cabinet which numbers among its ranks ground rent landlords—Mr. Donagh O'Malley (Limerick), Mr. Ryan (ex-Minister for Finance), his son and the leader of Fianna Fáil in the Senate, Eoin Ó'Riain? Or from an opposition which includes ground rent landlords, Paddy Belton, Richard Belton (Fine Gael), Paddy Norton, slum landlord and “socialist”, of the Labour

Party?

Who owns the ground rents of Ireland and how much are they worth? The Conroy Commission on Ground Rents (1961-1964) asked the Irish Landlord Convention, the association of the bigger ground rent landlords, and were told that it came to about £5,000,000. That is the amount that these gentlemen collect. Who are they? Some of their names are not unknown to the people of this country.

What is the extent of their Estates? Dublin is a good example.

In Dublin City the estate of the 16<sup>th</sup> Earl of Pembroke successor of Strongbow, includes considerable portions of Ballsbridge, Mount Merrion, Ringsend, Sandymount, Donnybrook and all of Ballinteer and Dundrum. The estate of the rack-renting Probys, successors of the Earl of Careysfort, includes most of Dalkey, parts of Sandycove, Dún Laoghaire and Blackrock, and all of Stillorgan. A portion of the Proby estate the 41/2 acre South City Markets estate was sold last May for £650,000.

The Longford and De Vesci Estates extend from Seapoint, through Monkstown to Dún Laoghaire, where they own by far the greater portion of lands and urban built-up areas such as these are hundreds of times more valuable than rural properties.

In Dublin County, the estate of Lord Howth extended from Raheny and include the lands of Clontarf. The Vernons own Clontarf itself. The present owner is a direct descendant of Anory Tristram, who affected the landing at Howth in 1177. Lord

Talbot de Malahide owns Malahide. Two years ago the Raniers arrived from Monaco for a holiday at the Carton Estate, Maynooth, to discover that the estate was more than twice the size of their own Principality of Monaco.

Whole towns and major parts of some cities outside Dublin are owned by ground rent landlords. Abbeylex is owned by De Vesci. The Earl of Cork and Ossory owns most of Cork. Two-thirds of Dundalk is owned by Lord Roden, who lives in the Six Counties and is a staunch supporter of the regime there. Kells belongs to the Marquis of Headfort. Middleton now belongs to a foreign company. And in conclusion it might be noted by many among us, to our cost, who owns most of Bray.

Some of the ground rent paid by Leinster House in Dublin alone might interest you. Ground rent in excess of £4,400 is paid every year on office accommodation located in 64 buildings scattered across Dublin.

On April 6<sup>th</sup> last, Leinster House, in a statement announced that it did not intend to buy out at present. Who, we wonder, is the fortunate landlord upon whose property the Tri-Colour is flown on all state occasions? Is this patriotic man a member of the Irish Landowners convention Ltd.?

These figures give some indication of the extent of ground rents and their ownership. The only question arising from them is how long must this country suffer these aristocratic parasites?

Councillors assembled here tonight have been

presented an opportunity by Sinn Féin to set a limit to the systematic robbery of ground rents. We hope you will make the most of it—Bray, Wicklow and Ireland cannot afford this blackmail any longer, need not and should not.

## DEMOCRACY AND THE MASS MOVEMENT

*An Educational Lecture delivered by Seamus Costello  
to Sinn Féin in February 1969.*

Mr. Chairman, Comrades,

1. My intention is to demonstrate during the course of this lecture how the working of democracy at both local government and national government level can be related to the work of mass movements.
2. I will deal first of all with the experiences to our Movement at local level, showing the effects of our activities both inside and outside the local authorities.
3. I then propose to relate those experiences to our Movement at the national level, showing what I believe would be the likely effects of our involvement in parliamentary action.

In order to understand the present position of the Movement in Wicklow, it is necessary to first of all trace the history and development of the Movement in that area since 1954. You may ask why 1954? The answer to that is that the first attempt made in modern times to re-establish the Movement in Wicklow was in 1954. At that time there was absolutely no Republican organisation in County Wicklow. In fact the last period during which organised Republicanism existed in Wicklow was during, and for a short period after, the Civil War.

This meant in effect that when the Movement

was reorganised, and indeed right up to the present moment, that none of our members were drawn from traditional Republican backgrounds. We had to start with completely new people who had no experience of, or preconceived ideas about revolutionary political action. I feel that this point is worth mentioning because of the effect it has had on our methods of operation. The main effect as far as I am concerned is that we have been able to approach every phase of our activities with a completely fresh outlook unhindered by any adherence to unnecessary taboos, except those imposed upon us by belonging to a Movement that has in the past and indeed to a certain extent in the present, been guided in its activities by past history, rather than by completely different circumstances of the present.

The first Sinn Fein Cumann was started in Bray in May of 1955. At that time, we had six or seven members, most of whom had been members of the Cumann in Dun Laoghaire for a couple of months before that date. From the time the Cumann was formed until the end of 1955, our only activity was the sale of *The United Irishman* in the town of Bray.

The position in Wicklow remained the same up to the end of 1957, except that we had a slight increase in membership, and we managed to spread the sale of *The United Irishman* into most of the other populated districts of the county. This was done by groups of three or four people in cars who managed to cover about 75 percent of the public houses in the county between 8PM and closing time on Saturday nights.

In this way we managed to get the paper sold and build up our finances out of the profits after having paid our petrol expenses.

There was no significant change in that position between 1957 and the end of 1959 except that a small number of our members were imprisoned and took part in the campaign. We still only had one Cumann in the county, and the campaign was simply a new topic for discussion in the pubs on Saturday nights. The only effect the campaign seems to have had on the public during this period is that they seemed more anxious to buy *The United Irishman*. I often suspected that they did this in order to keep themselves informed of the sensational happenings in the North, in the same way as they bought the News of the World to read about other sensational happenings in London or Glasgow.

Between 1959 and 1962 the organisation in Bray began to show signs of disintegration. We were reduced to about four or five active members and the sale of the paper in other parts of the County outside Bray was discontinued. At the end of 1962 we were selling about 14 *United Irishman*, all in the town of Bray. The morale of our members seems to have declined in direct ratio to the progress or otherwise of the military campaign. When the campaign ended in February 1962 we again set about putting the organisation on its feet, and by the middle of 1963 we had recruited about a dozen very active people, and had succeeded in re-establishing the sale of the paper throughout the county. In June of 1963, Joe Doyle

was released from prison in England, and we availed of the opportunity to publicise the existence of our organisation in Bray. We did this by having a torch-light procession and a rally afterwards. I have always felt that this was the first occasion on which the people began to develop an interest in our existence. We had a number of new recruits following Joe Doyle's return, and for the first time since 1959, the national collection was carried out on a county basis. We had already had a very successful year with Easter Lilies sales, and our financial position was quite sound.

Our activities between the end of 1963 and February 1966 were the same as was in 1963, except that we reestablished the Easter commemorations for the first time since 1924. We also established our first links with the trade union movement during this period and managed to get one of our members selected as a delegate to the Bray Trades Council, representing the Workers Union of Ireland. There seemed to be a growing awareness on the part of our own members at this time of the necessity for involvement in the work of other organisations. This was due in the main to the creation of a new policy in the Movement as a whole.

This new policy was brought a step forward in February 1966 when the local Sinn Féin Cumann called a public meeting of all Council Tenants in Bray for the purpose of forming a Tenants Association. The immediate result of this meeting was the formation of a very active association with four or five of our members in key positions on the com-

mittee. It also had a very favourable effect from our point of view on the course of the local elections in the following year. I will explain how this came about later in this lecture.

We also strengthened our links with the Trade Union movement in 1966 by inviting the Bray Trades Council to officially participate in the 1966 Easter Commemorations. They agreed to march and they appointed Roddy Connolly, the son of James Connolly, to speak on their behalf from the platform. Their participation in the commemoration served to link the organised working-class movement with our movement in the eyes of the people and subsequently helped us in the local election of 1967. By the beginning of 1967, our organisation in Bray was well poised for the local government election contest. We were still the only Sinn Féin Cumann in the county, however we were in a very strong position both from the point of view of finance and influence with the working-class people.

The latter was due mainly to our contacts with the Trades Council and the Tenants Association, both of which represent large number of working-class people. The Tenants Association represents about 800 families in the town and the twenty unions affiliated to the Trades Council represent approximately 1500 workers in Bray and the surrounding area. We managed to acquire the support of the Tenants' Association by holding a meeting of our own members who were on the Tenants' Committee and drafting a questionnaire which was to be circulated to all candi-

dates in the election by the Tenants' Association. The Association also informed each candidate that their answers to the questionnaire would be circulated to every tenant in the town and that the people could draw their own conclusions.

The questionnaire dealt with a number of problems about which most tenants had a genuine grievance, and our people on the committee took steps to ensure that the Sinn Fein candidates were the only ones who could give answers that were favourable to the tenants. The result was that the tenants received copies of the answers from all candidates and large numbers of them supported us because of our policy on housing matters. At this stage it may be of benefit to give an outline of the main points from our Election Programme and indicate briefly how the election was fought. The main points from our programme were as follows:

1. That all building land would be brought under the control of the local authorities and that they would be the sole agents for the purchase and sale of such lands at prices related to its agricultural value.
2. That housing should be treated as an essential social service and financed on a non profit making basis.
3. We stated also that we would organise the homeless people (about 300 families) to pressurise the council into building more houses.
4. That we would fight for the introduction of a

purchase scheme for all council tenants.

5. That we oppose the introduction of differential rents.

6. That we would seek to have repairs to all council houses done through a direct labour scheme.

7. We advocated the completion of a flood prevention scheme for the Dargle river.

8. We also pointed out the necessity for such things as local bus services, phone boxes, dispensaries, etc.

9. We strongly condemned the Managerial Act, and called for more direct participation by the people in local government matters.

10. We had to explain very clearly in our Election Manifesto that we would take our seats if elected. We had to do this because of the fact that the other parties were telling people that we would refuse to sit if elected. It was also quite obvious to us that no matter what the people thought of our Election Policy they could see no point in supporting us unless we were prepared to sit on the council.

We opened our campaign about four weeks before polling day by setting up a full time Election Headquarters, complete with telephone. During the campaign we gave out approximately 75,000 pieces of literature made up of National Election Manifesto, Local Election Manifesto, Candidate Literature,

Voting Cards, and hand-outs at polling stations. We used 3000 posters. We also had an average of 15 people working every night, either canvassing or distributing literature and we were able to provide transport and man all polling stations on voting day. We were the only party in town that managed to canvass every house and also to hold numerous public meetings. Our total expenses came to £360.00, and we made a profit of £50.00. The net result was the winning of two seats on the Bray Urban District Council and one seat on Wicklow County Council. Having outlined the type of Election Campaign we fought, I feel it is essential that we examine the reasons why the people voted for us. I think the reasons would be as follows:

1. Bray had experienced a long period of particularly bad administrations, resulting in a generally run-down town, and the existing parties were either unwilling or unable to take appropriate action to remedy the situation.
2. Most members of the outgoing council had been at least 20 or 30 years involved in local government and there seemed to be absolutely no difference between one party and another.
3. We had established a good relationship with the people through our involvement in the Tenants Association, the Trades Council, and the Credit Union movements.
4. We made no secret of the fact that we were a revolutionary socialist party and that we were pre-

pared to give leadership both in the local council chamber and on the streets.

5. We made it obvious that we were radically different from all the other parties and that we had no time for any party that existed by putting the people under a compliment for things that are theirs by right.

6. We made it plain to the people that if we were elected we would make sure that Bray Urban District Council would be democratised and that they would be able to make their presence felt in the council chamber on any issue that affected their welfare.

7. We fought a better campaign than any other party and people were impressed by the dedication and unity of our members during the campaign.

8. All of the other parties were suffering through internal rivalry between their candidates and we benefited from this.

After the local elections of June 1967 we had to lay down new rules of behaviour to deal with the following situations:

I. What would be the relationship between our elected representatives and our own organisation

II. What would be the relationship between our elected representatives and individuals or organisations.

III. What would be the relationship between our elected representatives and the representatives of

other parties.

IV. What would be the relationship between our representatives and the Council officials.

A. In order to maintain proper contact between our elected representatives and our own members, we set up the machinery for the holding of regular meetings. We hold a general meeting twice a month on the nights before the local council meets. At our own meeting we discuss all matters on the agenda for the council meeting and decisions are made by the meeting regarding the attitude to be taken by our councillors. We also discuss at these meetings any items that our own members feel should be raised at the council meetings. We decide whether these matters will be raised directly by our own councillors, by the Sinn Fein Cumann through direct correspondence, or through agitation in the mass organisations. Whenever possible we adopt the last course of action in order to build the confidence of the people in their own organisations. It also helps to establish our members within these organisations and ensures that their leadership is accepted.

B. The contacts created between individuals or organisations as a result of our election presented us with a completely new situation. We found that suddenly large numbers of people and organisations were approaching our coun-

cillors for assistance, and we set up a Citizens Advice Bureau in order to meet them. The people we meet in this way can usually be broken into three categories:

1. Individual people who require assistance from someone with knowledge of local government procedure, so that they can overcome some problem that applies to them alone. They are usually people who are entitled to some particular service but don't know how to proceed about obtaining it. In these cases our local representatives simply approach the appropriate Council Department and iron out the red tape. We usually find that those people have already approached councillors from other parties, and we are under the impression that we are doing them a favour. We always avail of the opportunity to impress upon them that what they are seeking is theirs by right and that they don't owe us or anyone else anything for it. We find that this approach serves to create a spirit of independence on the part of the persons concerned. It also helps to establish our integrity and demolish the hypocrisy of the other parties.

2. If an individual approaches us with a problem that happens to be common to a number of other people we usually refuse to act on his behalf unless he first of all

agrees to bring the other people together so that they can all fight together. I can best illustrate what I mean by giving an outline of one particular case. In August 1967 we were approached by a particular individual who had no water supply in this house and who had been trying for 25 years to get Wicklow County Council to give him a connection from a nearby water main. During the course of discussion with him it emerged that there was a total of 13 houses in his locality without water and that they had spent 25 years approaching other councillors without avail. The other parties had simply said, leave it to us and we will look after it 100% but had done nothing about it. This man agreed to organise a meeting of his neighbours, which we attended. We pointed out to them that if they were prepared to organise themselves, they had a good chance of pressurising the Council into giving them a water supply. They agreed with our suggestion and formed an association. The association went on two or three deputations to council meetings and after threatening to withhold rates etc. they succeeded in getting the council to agree to install a water supply. Work will start on the scheme in about two weeks time. These people could not understand why none of the other parties had suggested the same

tactics as we had. Again we availed of the opportunity to explain the difference in policy between our organisation and the other parties. The result is that we now have the whole-hearted support of these people, and they in turn have developed a new sense of independence. If other examples of similar cases are required I can give them during question time.

3. The third category in this group is an approach by some existing organisation requiring assistance. Existing organisations are different from individual cases in so far as they rarely approach one party only. They usually contact all parties at the same time if the problem is connected with local government. If they have a long-standing problem that could not be solved the conventional manner we usually suggest some form of agitational activity, and we offer whatever technical knowledge which they may require. We have found when dealing with organisations that all conventional means must have failed them before we can suggest other methods. We have established very good relationships with the following organisations was a result of these approaches:

- Bray Trades Council
- Bray Tenants Association

- Bray Housing Action Association
- County Wicklow N.F.A.
- County Wicklow Macra na Feirme
- West Wicklow Development Association
- Greystones-Kilcoole Housing Action Association plus numerous other smaller groups.

We find that most organisations exist in order to improve the living standards of their members, and that a solution to their problems can be found by reference to the appropriate section of the Sinn Fein Social and Economic Policy. Every opportunity should be availed of in order to let these organisations know that the solutions advanced by our local representatives are in fact part of Sinn Fein policy and not just the opinions of individual councillors. If a solution can be found within the existing framework of society so much the better. If solutions can only be found through a completely new type of social and economic structure, then this should be made clear to the organisations concerned and every possible effort should be made to create a head on collision between these organisations and the forces opposed to them. In this way, we will help to create a desire on their part for fundamental changes in the structure of society. This in my opinion

should be one of the primary functions of Sinn Fein councillors. If we succeed in this objective the organisations concerned will be prepared to give us political support when we advance the same solutions from our political platforms.

III. The next matter that we had to decide upon was the relationship between our representatives and the representatives of other parties. We decided at the beginning that we would adopt a completely independent stand on all issues, and that if our views happened to coincide with the views of other parties we would co-operate. In turn if our views were different we would oppose them. In practice we have found that in most cases we have been opposed by the other parties, particularly on issues that require fundamental changes in the structure of society before they can be solved. The result of this is that we have succeeded in exposing the other parties as groups who are only interested in maintaining the status quo. We have been particularly successful in exposing the Labour Party in Wicklow as such a group. This arose because of their attitude in connection with a recent housing scandal, which I can elaborate upon during question time if necessary. The Trades Council in Bray have co-operated with us in this particular case, and we have publicly condemned the Labour councillors for their anti-working class attitude. It should be of interest to note that most of the delegates on the Trades Council are either members

of supporters of the Labour Party. The attitude of Sinn Fein councillors should be to avail of every possible opportunity to demonstrate that we are fundamentally different from all of the other parties, and we should not yield to the temptation to let up on the attack either from some short term advantage or because some of them just happen to be nice people.

IV. The relationship between our representatives and local authority officials needs to be examined at this point. Our experience of Wicklow has shown that most of the officials are reasonably honest and dedicated workers and that some of them are quite progressive in their attitudes. However, they are restricted in their activities by the rules laid down by the central authority for the running of local government. This means in effect that in cases where we advocate policies that cannot be implemented through the framework of existing legislation we run the risk of head-on collision with the officials. The effect of this can and should be minimised by pointing out at all times that we are opposed to the system as such and not to the officials that are forced to work within the confines of the system. In this way we will succeed in gaining the support of the progressive-minded officials, and at the same time we will help to create grave dissatisfaction on their part with the whole local government system. They will gradually become disillusioned and frustrated, and it will therefore be easier for us to

in their support for our ideas in the future.

The Wicklow by-election was held in March 1968 and at the time we still had only one organised Cumann in the whole county. The election was fought in basically the same way as the local elections, except that it cost us approximately £1200 as opposed to £360. As a direct result of the election we were able to form nine new Cumainn in the county. This was about the only advantage gained from the contest. We now have a total of ten Cumainn, all of which are reasonably active as outlined during the course of the lecture. In terms of votes we received approximately 2000 first preference votes, which I consider to be a poor return for the investment in time, labour, and money involved.

During the course of the by-election we found that the greatest single objection to voting Sinn Féin was the existence of the abstentionist policy. I stated at the start of this lecture that I proposed to relate our experiences on local councils to the likely effects of our involvement in parliamentary action at National level. Involvement in parliament can be usefully compared in a number of ways with our involvement in local councils. As I have already demonstrated during the course of my lecture there are two things that we can achieve through our involvement in local government affairs:

1. We can achieve some short-term results within the existing framework.
2. We can use it as a forum from which to advance

our revolutionary ideas thereby creating a lack of confidence in the whole system. Of course we can only do these things by operating both inside and outside the Council Chambers in a disciplined manner as I have already referred to.

I suggested the same tactics could be usefully employed by even a small group of well disciplined TDs at National level working both inside and outside Parliament. I believe that the Republican Movement is capable of producing the proper type of person for this job. And I also believe that we could establish the necessary machinery to control our TDs. The people of Ireland are clever enough to recognise the fact that effective power lies in the hands of Parliament at the moment, and in my opinion they are not going to give their support to any party that refuses to recognise this fact and act accordingly.

Before the Republican Movement can achieve power, we must succeed in breaking the confidence of the people in the existing Parliamentary institutions, and I would suggest that this should be one of the main functions of our TDs. They should also be full-time Revolutionary Organisers in their own areas, thereby demonstrating to the people who elected them the fundamental difference between ourselves and the other parties.

In conclusion I would like to give an example of the possibilities that could have been availed of by such a group of TDs in the recent past. The discussion on the ESB Special Provisions Bill in 1966 provided a glorious opportunity to demonstrate the effective-

ness of revolutionary tactics within parliament combined with action on the streets. If the opportunity could not have been availed of at that time it could certainly have been used during the subsequent ESB strike. During this strike approximately 50 ESB workers were imprisoned and almost 100 000 workers, most of whom were in sympathy with the ESB men were walking the streets of Dublin for the best part of a week. I suggest that the opportunities thus presented as a result of these circumstances could have been used with effect by a well-disciplined revolutionary movement acting in consort with its TDs in order to smash the Special Provisions Bill.

The present discussions on the Criminal Justice Bill presents similar opportunities for any party in opposition to avail of them, and with that provocative suggestion which I feel sure raises more questions than it answers, I will now conclude my lecture.

## **“AIMS, PRINCIPLES AND POLICIES” (INTERVIEW)**

*Interview with an Italian journalist shortly after the formation of the Irish Republican Socialist Party.*

### **What does your Party stand for?**

We are a revolutionary socialist party and our objective is to create a revolutionary socialist state in Ireland. Part of the struggle for a socialist state entails resolving the national liberation struggle and ending British imperialist intervention, whether military intervention, political intervention or control of aspects of the economy. This is the basic position of the party. We see the ending of British imperialist intervention in Ireland as an essential prerequisite for the development of the class struggle between left and right in this country. The class forces in Ireland have never developed properly in the last 50 years basically because of the imperialist intervention and because of the fact that the national struggle remains incomplete.

**Could you tell us something about the Structure of the Six County State and its relation to the non-development of the class struggle in Ireland, especially as regards the position of the Protestant working class?**

Class politics have never really developed in the six counties because of the nature of the state. The Unionist majority, or the loyalist majority, have always enjoyed some marginal privileges. Basically because

of their loyalty to Britain, and because they wanted to maintain the constitutional status quo, they have been rewarded with the better jobs, better housing, and up to recent years they had advantages in voting. The organisations traditionally used to maintain this loyalty are the Unionist Party and the Orange Order. They have always crossed class divisions and always had a large following of working-class people. They've had the petty bourgeoisie, they've had the support of the native capitalist class. For these reasons the class struggle has never really developed in the North, and we feel that it cannot develop because of the basic nature of the state, because of the sectarian nature of the state, and because of the manipulation of the sectarian divisions by the imperialists, who deliberately created these divisions in the first place, and subsequently fostered them.

**Is there any situation anywhere in the world with which you could compare the situation in Northern Ireland?**

I can't think of any example which is parallel in every respect. There may be some general examples. An example perhaps, although not identical but with certain comparisons, would be the French in Algeria. They saw their allegiance to France as a means of preserving their privileged status. Therefore they fought to maintain French domination in Algeria. There are some parallels, but in my opinion none of them is essentially identical.

**About the working class in the Republic, its level of consciousness both in an anti-imperialist sense and in a socialist sense?**

In the anti-imperialist sense its level of consciousness is, I think, pretty well developed for historical reasons. Perhaps you could say it is instinctive rather than theoretical. It is something people have inherited for hundreds of years, and in times of crisis it becomes very evident. This sentiment, or anti-imperialist opinion, is there, and we've had many examples of it in the last five or six years. After Bloody Sunday when 13 people were killed in Derry by the British army, something like half a million people demonstrated in Dublin. Factories and shops closed and the British embassy was burned. There were 100,000 to 150,000 there the day it was burned. These demonstrations are a manifestation of historic anti-imperialist sentiment or opinion. The major political party here, Fianna Fail, has traditionally got approximately 50 percent of the votes in every election. Their original motivation was anti imperialist, or they presented themselves as an anti-imperialist party, and for this reason they gained popular support and still retain that support. The development of class politics is a much different question. Class politics have never really developed in this part of Ireland. The working class are organised in the trade union movement. In fact, they are very well organised and better than most European countries in terms of organisational structure and numbers—even in terms of militancy. But there is little or no ideological direction in the

trade union movement. Although the trade union movement is officially affiliated to the Labour Party, most trade unionists probably vote for the Fianna Fail party, which represents native capitalism. There is an obvious contradiction there. They are just organised to gain better conditions of work on a day-to-day basis, and to fight for wage increases. But they don't have a perspective for undermining the capitalist system as such. Working class socialist politics are confined to the smaller parties on the left, who represent a section of working class opinion, which, unfortunately, is a minority section of working class opinion. One of the principal reasons for lack of development of working class or socialist politics is the existence of partition—the fact that the British are still within the country. In the minds of most people this has been the main question in Irish politics for 50 years. The main question that must be resolved is the struggle against imperialism, so that the workers can think in terms of confronting the native capitalist class. That is the principal reason why we want to end imperialist intervention in the country. We want to see a natural political situation develop, with the confrontation which you normally expect between left and right, and in this way to bring the Irish working class into control of the resources and the wealth of the country.

**How long do you think it would take, if partition were ended, to bring the Unionist working class in the North to a militant socialist position? And what is necessary for such a development apart**

## **from ending partition and destroying the Six County State?**

Historically, some sections of the Unionist working class in the North have been fairly militant within the framework of the six-county state. They have been militant on some class issues. If the British presence in the country were ended, and if the loyalist working class in the North were convinced that it was ended and finished forever, we feel that the natural tendency on their part would be to think in terms of class politics within this island. In some ways they have different traditions. They perhaps would have a different definition of what they call civil and religious liberties. They would want those civil and religious liberties protected, and they are entitled to have them protected. They are entitled to have a constitutional arrangement in this country which does protect them. They are also entitled as workers to have their standard of living protected. The key to the development of class struggle lies in this area, because this raises the whole question of class politics—who controls the wealth and resources. In that context, we think class politics can develop, and the Unionist working class in the North will adopt a radical position. How long is going to take? I don't know. It might happen in a year, it might take ten years. I'm no prophet.

## **What is the position about education in regard to clerical control?**

The education system in the 26 County State is a

sectarian education system controlled in the main by a Catholic clergy. We are completely opposed to this. We want a secular education system in both parts of the country.

**How would you see the problem of school integration in the North?**

In principle we are in favour of an integrated secular education system. The difficulty about the present situation in the North is that if we do have an integrated education system, it means in effect that we have an education system, which is under the control of the pro-imperialist section of the population. So, in the present conditions we would have to argue and oppose that development. The Catholic community in the North has controlled its own education system. The state has controlled the education of Protestants or loyalists. While we disagree with the Catholic Church controlling the education system, Catholic education has tended to produce people who have some form of anti-imperialist attitudes and sentiments, and even politics. We think it is better to maintain that than to destroy it. When we have the destruction of the Six County State, we would have a national education system for the whole country, which would be secularised.

**What in your view is Britain's policy now towards the situation in Northern Ireland?**

British policy must be viewed in light of their attitude towards Ireland as a whole—not just towards

the six counties. What Britain wants is to maintain her influence here over the whole island. Her military and political intervention in the North is simply a means of maintaining this influence and this control. Britain knows that if she is compelled to withdraw from the North, she loses all control over the economy, the wealth and the resources of this country. She knows that there is a good possibility of the creation of a socialist state. Britain and the EEC countries also would be conscious of the effect of a socialist state in Ireland on the western European working class, in France, in Germany, in Italy, in Belgium, and in Holland. A socialist revolution in Ireland would be an inspiration to people all over Western Europe. The EEC countries have a vested interest, as well as Britain, in ensuring that there is no change in the status quo in Ireland.

## LOYALISM AND THE CONNOLLY APPROACH

*March 1975*

Connolly had to face exactly the same predicament. In Belfast prior to 1916, you had people who classified themselves as socialists and who were also interested in ending British rule in Ireland. Their approach to the Protestant working class was on the basis of limited and immediate issues. One of the principal issues that affected both sections of the working class was the question of whether or not they could get gas and water into their houses.

Some very militant campaigns were engaged in on these two demands—gas and water for the houses in the working-class districts. Republicans and socialists were involved in this campaign on the basis that this was the way to unite the working class. At the same time, these republicans and socialists refused point blank to mention or even discuss the national question with the Protestant working class, on the grounds that if they did, the Protestant working class wouldn't listen to them and that they would lose their co-operation on the issue of gas and water for the houses.

Connolly was totally in opposition to this approach. He categorized them as gas and water socialists. Today in Belfast we have what we call ring-road socialists. They are exactly the same type of people. They are, in fact, the leadership of the official republican movement in Belfast.

We maintain that any co-operation with the Prot-

estant working class must be on the basis of a principled political position. It must be on the basis of explaining fully to the Protestant working class what all our policies are, not just our policy on the ring-road. We must try and politicize them, simultaneously with conducting a political campaign to get rid of Britain.

It will be primarily an educational function, or an educational campaign directed towards Protestants in the hope at least that some significant section of the Protestant working class will understand.

## **“PRINCIPLED STAND” (INTERVIEW)**

**THE STARRY PLOUGH**

**APRIL 1975, VOL. I, ISSUE #1**

*1975 interview in which Costello defined the main ideological differences between the IRSP and the Officials*

### **What caused the present feud between the IRSP and the Officials?**

As far as we can see, it is the fact that the IRSP is undermining the Officials organisationally, particularly in Belfast where the feud is most intense. During the past 3 or 4 months, since the party was launched on the 12th of December, the IRSP has taken some 200 members from the Officials in the Belfast area. This has led to a situation where, at the moment, the Officials in Belfast have only half the numerical strength of the IRSP. As a result of this, a request was made by the Sinn Féin Ard Comhairle to the Official IRA to prevent the organisation of further IRSP branches in the Belfast area. Immediately after this request, starting on Dec. 12th, a number of our members were kidnapped in the Belfast area. From then until the murder of Hugh Ferguson, we have had dozens of people kidnapped, people beaten up, people wounded through shooting, houses petrol bombed, cars burned and so on. Undoubtedly the immediate cause of the feud is the fact that the Officials are losing members.

## **What are the main ideological differences between the IRSP and the Officials?**

The principal ideological differences would be their attitude towards the National Question as against our attitude. Basically, the position of the leadership of the Officials is that there is no hope of achieving National Liberation until such time as the Protestant and Catholic working class in the North are united and therefore there is nothing which can be done in political terms or in any other terms about this particular issue. Our attitude, on the other hand, is that the British presence in Ireland is the basic cause of the divisions between the Protestant and Catholic working class in the North. It follows from that, in our view, that the primary emphasis should be on the mobilisation of the mass of the Irish people in the struggle for National Liberation. We believe, also, that the left in Irish politics should play a leading role in this struggle. Up until recent years, many of us felt that the Official Movement was capable of and willing to do this. Indeed the rank and file of the Official Movement had expressed their views on this at the 1972 and 1973 Ard Fheiseanna, where they rejected the position of the national leadership on the national question and put forward a policy which would have led to a more militant approach on this question.

However, the leadership disagreed with this policy and deliberately frustrated its implementation. The result of this was that the Official Republicans, who, at that time, were the largest single body of

organised left-wing opinion in Ireland, deliberately divorced the working-class struggle from the national struggle and gradually degenerated taking a reformist position on a number of very important issues.

### **What issues in particular?**

The principal issues that come to mind immediately are the Civil Rights struggle, the Assembly Elections, the question of taking seats and the question of the rent and rates strike. In all these issues, the leadership of the Officials hesitated to take a stand. They have, for instance, regarded the Civil Rights struggle since 1969, as the only struggle worth taking part in. They ignored the presence of 15,000 troops on the streets. They ignored the torture and terror perpetrated by the British Army on the Nationalist population and they acted as though there was no change in the situation since 1969... In other words, they failed to realise the change in the nature of the struggle in Ireland, particularly in the North. They failed to realise that struggle within the context of the Six County State to an outright struggle against Imperialism, as manifested by the British political and military presence in Ireland.

### **The IRSP has been described as a “Stickie” organisation with a “Provo” streak. How would you differ from the Provos?**

The principal difference we would have with them as I see it, is that the Provisionals are not as an organisation dedicated to the establishment of a

Socialist Republic.

We feel that, from an organisational point of view, many of them would accept a theoretically independent state, with no significant change being made in the social and political structures of the state. However, there are individuals within the Provisionals ranks who are quite radical and support the idea of establishing a Socialist Republic. We are not in business to criticise the Provisionals. We have our own policy to pursue and we have our own objectives. To the extent that the Provisional policy runs parallel to ours, we are prepared to co-operate with them. The principal meeting point of our two policies at the moment is the question of British withdrawal from Ireland.

I don't think anybody can question the sincerity of the Provos on that particular point. To that extent, we are willing to cooperate with them *on that issue*. We are also, of course willing to co-operate with the Officials, or any other radical organisation in Ireland that we have common ground with on specific issues.

**Would you be willing to co-operate with Loyalist groups on short-term economic and social issues?**

We would certainly co-operate with anybody on any aspect of our policy. But we think that any approach to the Loyalist and Protestant working class in the North must be on the basis of a principled political approach. In other words, there is no use in us, as an organisation, going to some Loyalist group and asking them for co-operation with regard

to housing on the Shankill and Falls Road and at the same time pretending that we are not Socialists and we are not Republicans.

We feel that the approach to the Loyalists must be an honest one and that we must explain to them what all aspects of our policy are.

We must explain, for instance, that we are opposed to the British presence in Ireland and that we are not merely opposed to that presence because we want to establish a Catholic Republic in the whole country. We are opposed to it because we regard it as the principle means of dividing the Protestant and Catholic working class and because we regard the British presence in Ireland as the principle obstacle preventing the emergence of class politics in Ireland.

We feel that, if we approach the Protestant working class on this basis, we may manage to convince some of them, at least, that our approach is correct.

We see no point whatsoever in cooperating with them on short-term issues while at the same time trying to fool them about our politics. If we were to do that, we would be in the same position as the people in Belfast in 1913 whom Connolly described as “gas and water” Socialists.

The Official Movement, during the last few years, have tried this particular approach and have now moved into a position of what we would call “Ring-road Socialists” In other words they are prepared to adopt a common stand with Loyalist organisation on the question of the Ring-road in Belfast and to hope, or believe that the Protestants will not suspect that

they are really Republicans or Socialists. We feel this is a very dishonest approach and that ultimately it is a counter-productive one.

We have a situation arising from that, where the ranks of the Official Movement now find themselves moving in parallel directions to Loyalist murder gangs. This is the logical extension of an unprincipled political approach.

**You have criticised the Officials for contesting the Assembly Elections. Yet the IRSP has decided, in principle, to contest the Convention Elections. Is there not a contradiction?**

First of all, let me say that the decision which the IRSP made regarding the Convention Elections was, as you point out, a decision in principle. This decision was made at the meeting at which the party was formed and we have explained quite clearly since then that this decision will be subject to review at our Annual Conference, which is taking place on April 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>.

What the final outcome of that discussion, at the conference, will be, I don't know. But the essential difference which we see between the Assembly Elections and the Convention Elections is that the Assembly was, in fact, a Parliament, with statutory powers of administration and powers of government:

The Assembly Elections were an attempt, by the British government, to reestablish the Stormont Parliament under another name and to continue with separate political institutions in the North directly

under British control. A large section of the population of the North had rejected the existence of the Stormont Assembly. In the context of that situation, we felt that it was a totally unrevolutionary and a very reactionary decision by the Official Republicans to agree to contest these elections. We felt that they were lending validity and credence to Britain's claim to govern any part of this country, despite their repudiation of this claim.

The Convention, on the other hand, has no powers. It is not an Assembly. It is not a Parliament. The only task of the Convention will be to discuss constitutional arrangements for the future government of Northern Ireland. We understand from the British government's statements that, in fact, the Convention will be abolished after a stated period of time and it is for this reason that some of us, at the original meeting, felt we should contest the Convention Elections.

**You state that the IRSP is not an abstentionist Party. If you got candidates elected to the Dail, what kind of role will they play? The role of a social-democratic party? (e.g. the Irish Labour Party)**

When we say that we are not an abstentionist party, what we mean by this is that we are not a party, in principle, committed to abstention. But there are circumstances and conditions under which it might be desirable to abstain and if we felt that it was tactically desirable at any particular point in time, in

either the North or the South to abstain from Parliament, then we would do so. That would depend, however, on the circumstances existing at the particular point of time. If a situation existed, for instance, where there was a possibility of large-scale dissatisfaction, on the part of the people, with either, the 26 County Parliament or the Six County Parliament then abstention, on our part would be a legitimate tactic. We are not, however, abstentionist in principle. As for the role IRSP representatives would play in Leinster House, we would see their primary task there as one of highlighting the policies of the IRSP using the parliament as a platform for the pursuit of these policies, and for achieving publicity for them. But we feel that, in addition to that, members elected to Parliament would have, by necessity, to be active in politics outside of Parliament i.e. in extra-parliamentary and agitationary politics on the streets.

We see a direct relationship between the successful struggle on the streets in pursuit of any particular political objective and the presence of people in Parliament. We don't see Parliament as an institution that is likely to produce the results which we want from a long-term point of view. We don't see it in a reformist way. We see both Parliamentary institutions in Ireland as institutions that have to be abolished if we are to make progress from the point of view of establishing a Socialist Republic.

## FIRST IRSP AND FHEIS

### THE STARRY PLOUGH

MAY 1975, VOL. I, ISSUE #2

*The following are extracts from the Chairman's speech delivered by Seamus Costello from Wicklow.*

The historic decision to form the IRSP was taken in the certain knowledge that no existing political organisation in this country was willing or capable of creating a genuine socialist revolution in Ireland, a revolution that would end Imperialist rule in Ireland and establish a 32 County Democratic Socialist Republic, with the working class in control of the means of production, distribution and exchange.

At one of the most critical periods in our history, when practically every Irishman and woman instinctively recognised that a courageous change in strategy was called for in 1969, we found ourselves led by people whose most ambitious demands were for the democratisation of Stormont, and for a Bill of Rights, as a defence against the murder and terror of the Imperialist troops and their native allies, the Loyalist murder gangs. Almost overnight, the sectarian murderers of the UVF and UDA became potential allies in the struggle for a Socialist Republic. All that was needed for this miraculous transformation was that they should display some slight interest in cooperation on the question of the redevelopment of the Shankill or the proposed route of the new Ring Road.

The rejection of this strategy of the leadership at 1972 and 1973 Ard Fheiseanna was clear evidence of the re-assertion of the Republican Socialist position but it was deliberately sabotaged by the Ard Comhairle of Sinn Féin.

From the beginning of 1974 right up to the end of the Ard Fheis in December last, the Ard Comhairle engaged in a campaign of slander and vilification against all of those who dared question their refusal to implement policy. They availed of their control of the machinery of organisation to purge, threaten and intimidate genuine revolutionaries rather than engage in constructive wide-spread political debate within the movement.

The Rent and Rates strike has been betrayed by the secret payment of arrears on the Republican Clubs premises in Cyprus St. The RUC were given a safe conduct into the Lower Falls in order to inspect the Cyprus St. drinking club cum torture centre, so that they would support the granting of a liqueur licence when the application came before the courts. The RUC kept their part of the bargain, with the result that the officials now have the unenviable distinction of being the only organisation with a fully licensed torture centre and knee capping factory in full swing.

The principal targets for the Official's vicious campaign of murder, torture, and felon setting are the Belfast members and supporters of the Party.

From the very beginning of this campaign by the Officials against the IRSP, the National Executive and

Belfast Regional Executive of the Party, have made every possible effort to bring it to an end. We have accepted the offers of at least nine different mediators, the most recent being Michael Mullen and the only obstacle in the way of a solution is the absolute refusal of the Officials to even indicate a possible date for discussion and seem intent on creating further bitterness and division between former comrades.

The political maturity and discipline displayed by our Belfast members in the face of this provocation, has aroused admiration, not only in Ireland but also in revolutionary aides abroad, and serves as an indication of the determination of the party to survive and organise against the main enemy—Imperialism—and its native collaborators.

On a National level it shall be our task to organise the maximum possible degree of political support for our demands for National Liberation. To do this we will seek the formation of a broad front composed of all organisations and individuals at home and abroad, who are prepared to assert the right of the Irish people to full control of their own destiny.

In doing this we recognise quite clearly that the struggle for National Liberation must reach a successful conclusion before we can establish a Socialist Republic. We recognise also that the primary cause of the present divisions in the Irish working class is the British presence and that as long as those divisions exist, working class unity must remain an empty dream. Because we are socialists and revolutionaries, we recognise the absolute necessity of working class

leadership in the National Liberation struggle.

At the same time we must explain and relate the everyday struggles of the people to the overall struggle against imperialism and native capitalism. The unemployed worker must understand the reasons he is unemployed. He must be shown the relationship between his condition and the crisis in capitalism and understanding that relationship must be organised to resist its effects. The small farmer must be shown how the EEC affects his livelihood and how to organise and agitate against it. In this context it shall be the policy of the party to launch a vigorous campaign of opposition to EEC membership in the coming referendum. We are about to enter an era of tremendous wealth as a result of discoveries both on land and in our coastal waters. At present, almost all of this wealth is going to leave the country for the benefit of foreign capitalists while the Irish working class have to be satisfied with the role of hewers of wood and drawers of water. It shall be the policy of the IRSP to encourage and promote the campaign for the nationalisation of these resources currently being conducted by the Resources Protection Campaign and the ICTU.

We must oppose their attacks on our organisations. It is from an independent working class standpoint that we must begin to fight against inflation, unemployment and income policies such as the National Wage Agreement.

We regard the whole concept of income policies such as the National Wage Agreements as an attempt

by the capitalist class and their allies in government to hold down the living standards of working-class people, while employers grow fat at their expense. At current rates of inflation, each worker would need to receive a 30 percent wage increase after tax deductions simply to maintain his or her present standard of living.

The present National Wage Agreement is totally incapable of doing this. It shall therefore be the policy of the IRSP to restore free collective bargaining as the only effective means of protecting workers' interests.

We recognise that the struggle of the Irish working class for national liberation and socialism cannot be seen in isolation from the struggles of oppressed peoples throughout the world. For this reason we extend our support to all peoples who are actively engaged in struggle against imperialism and capitalism in their own countries. We regard the Irish struggle as an integral part of this overall struggle, and a successful outcome of the struggle of the Irish working class will undoubtedly have far-reaching consequences, particularly in Western Europe. It shall be our policy to promote the maximum degree of communication with other revolutionary groups at home and abroad in order to bring about a greater awareness of the overall nature of the common struggle. While dealing with the whole question of international solidarity, I would like to place on record the support of this party for the most recent successes of the Vietnamese people in the final stage of their

struggle against imperialism.

It is our intention to explain our policies to the Protestant working class on the basis of our social and economic programme, and the recognition of the need to defeat British imperialism in Ireland. We totally reject the unprincipled approaches made to the Protestant working class by organisations which claim to have as their goal the establishment of a 32 County Democratic Socialist Republic. Their opportunism has resulted in the alienation of the Protestant working class, who cannot be won over to the Socialist Republic on the basis of gas-and-water-type socialism. British imperialism is responsible for the problems facing the Protestant working class. Only the IRSP at this point in time has clearly recognised the nature of the divisions which have been forced upon our people through the machinations of imperialism.

## ORATION AT THE IRSP'S FIRST WOLFE TONE COMMEMORATION

THE STARRY PLOUGH

AUGUST 1975, VOL. I, ISSUE #5

*Extracts from the oration of Seamus Costello, cathaoirleach IRSP*

The IRSP's First Wolfe Tone Commemoration was held in Bodinstown Co. Kildare on June 8<sup>th</sup>. Buses came from as far away as Belfast and Co. Derry. Over 800 people made their way to Bodinstown Churchyard where Ita Ní Chionnaith and Seamus Costello, members of the Ard Comhairle, spoke of the determination of the IRSP to dedicate itself to struggle for the emancipation of the Irish working class.

\* The most important and immediate task now confronting us is the creation of a broad front in the struggle for national liberation. We are currently seeking to have discussions with the leadership of all other anti-imperialist organisations towards this end. We seek the creation of a broad front against imperialism because we believe unity is essential if we are to succeed.

\* As republicans and socialists, we understand that if a nation fails to defend its cultural identity, it will inevitably lose its will to exist as a separate and distinct nation, and if its will to exist is lost the struggle against foreign imperialism is also lost. We therefore urge all our members to play an active part in the campaign against cultural impe-

rialism. One of the most immediate objectives of this campaign must be to resist granting of TV broadcasting rights to the BBC.

\* We see the struggle to socialism in Ireland as part of a worldwide struggle for the emancipation of the working-class. Let our contribution to the success of that struggle be the creation of a Socialist Republic in Ireland.

\* We therefore seek the creation of a broad front on the basis of the following demands:

1. The immediate and total withdrawal of the British military, economic and political presence from Ireland.
2. The immediate disarming and disbanding of the UDR, RUC and RUC-Reserve.
3. An end to internment and release of all political prisoners in Irish and English prisons.
4. A general amnesty for all those involved in the rent and rate strike or in acts of resistance against the British occupation forces.
5. An end to all repressive legislations North and South.
6. The creation of local committees to co-ordinate defence against the Loyalist murder gangs.

\* We have above 150,000 unemployed in both parts of the country as a direct result of the crisis in imperialism and capitalism, and the latest fore-

cast is of 200,000 unemployed in the 26 counties alone by 1980. All of this so that the imperialists and their native collaborators can increase their profit margin without reference to the large-scale human misery caused by their activities.

\* Of course, the support of the Loyalist working—class is essential if we are to have a socialist republic, however their support in the struggle must be sought on the basis of a principled explanation of the correct relationship between the national and the class question.

\* It shall also be our policy during the coming months to involve our members in active agitation against rising prices and bad housing conditions, and against the rapid decline in living standards caused by EEC membership. We will also continue to support the various organisations representing the Small Farmers, in their constant struggle to remain in their land in the face of a deliberate campaign by the Brussels bureaucrats to drive them from the land.

\* It shall be the policy of the IRSP to encourage and promote the campaign for the nationalisation currently being conducted by the Resources Protection Campaign and the ICTU.

\* The divisions which have existed in the anti-imperialist forces are a luxury which we can no longer afford to tolerate. For too long, we have failed, as a result of [what w]e can see no evidence that

Britain is ready to withdraw. In fact all the indications are to the effect that Britain is working towards a political solution which will guarantee permanent protection for her interest in Ireland.

\* In all parts of the country, it is our intention to involve our members in support of local unemployed action committees.

We fully support the demand for the nationalisation of all industries threatened with closure. We see no good reason why the Irish working-class should have to pay for the crisis created by imperialism and capitalism.

## TROOPS OUT MOVEMENT CONFERENCE

*Address by Seamus Costello to the Troops Out Movement conference in the Mansion House, Dublin on September 18, 1976.*

I am addressing this conference on behalf of the Irish Republican Socialist Party, and for the benefit of those who are not familiar with our policies I would like to give a brief summary of the origins of our party and of the political principles upon which we are organised.

The IRSP was founded in December 1974 by a group of active republicans, socialists and trade unionists, who recognised the need for a revolutionary socialist party—for a party that understood the relationship between the national question and the class struggle in Ireland, and would have a programme of political action based on this understanding. Our ultimate goal is to end imperialist rule in Ireland, and establish a 32 county democratic socialist republic with the working class in control of the means of production, distribution and exchange. Most of those involved in the formation of the IRSP were active members of Sinn Féin Gardiner Place until we reached the conclusion that the leadership of that organisation were unwilling to accept that a struggle against imperialism was in progress, and incapable of mobilising the Irish left in support of that struggle. The repeated failure of the Gardiner Place leadership to implement the democratic decisions of their own organisation, or to allow for an honest and free inter-

nal debate of their failure, left many of their most active and politically conscious members with no alternative but to form a new party.

Our party is organised on an all-Ireland basis with approximately 800 members. We accept the principles of democratic centralism and produce a quarterly internal bulletin which promotes debate on matters of policy, strategy, and tactics within the party. We also produce a monthly newspaper called "The Starry Plough". Our main activity since our formation has been to promote the concept of a broad front in support of the struggle for national liberation and against repression, North and South. We are also involved in the current campaign for the repeal of the death penalty in the 26 counties, and for the reprieve of Noel and Marie Murray who are currently awaiting execution. We are also involved in organising the campaign against unemployment and the campaign for the retention of political status in Northern Ireland prisons.

I want now to elaborate on our concept of a broad front and the demands around which we believe it should organise and campaign. Our first and most important demand is that Britain should immediately and publicly renounce all claims to sovereignty over any part of Ireland or its coastal waters. Secondly, Britain must immediately disband and disarm all of the locally recruited, pro-imperialist forces such as the UDR, RUC, and RUC Reserve and withdraw all troops from Ireland. Finally, Britain must release all political prisoners, grant a general amnesty, and

abolish all repressive legislation. As socialists, we believe that these demands are attainable, and that the development of normal class politics throughout the whole country will follow as a natural development. Every republican and socialist organisation in this country supports the demands which I have just outlined, and in our opinion, the vast majority of Irish people would also support them if given the opportunity. During the past 12 months, we have attempted to give them this opportunity by promoting the concept of a broad front. We have held a series of discussions with members of all republican and socialist organisations at either rank and file or national leadership level. At rank-and-file level in all organisations we found an almost unanimous desire for unity in the struggle against imperialism and an ever increasing awareness of the power of the reactionary forces ranged against us.

Unfortunately, the widespread desire for unity in the struggle which exists at rank-and-file level is not reflected in the attitudes of the leadership of some of the organisations involved. At the very point in the struggle when unified action is absolutely essential on all fronts, we found leaders more concerned with maintaining their own positions of influence, or in pursuing faction fighting and vendettas against former comrades. We found some whose political judgements were so perverted by the irresistible urge to automatically do or say the opposite to what some other republican, or socialist organisation, said or did that they were prepared to concede victory to the

main enemy.

At the very point in our history when a thorough and all-embracing re-assessment of overall strategy and tactics is so vital to the success of the struggle we found leaders unwilling to admit or concede the slightest possibility that they ever made a mistake. Some say that the civil rights strategy as expounded in 1968 and 1969 is still valid and that the democratisation of the Six County State is the central demand. They expect Britain to impose a Bill of Rights on a loyalist majority whose position of marginal supremacy depends on the total denial of civil rights to the nationalist minority. They say that the most revolutionary demand in Ireland today is “peace at any price”, and prove their point by marching with the most reactionary elements of Irish society—the elements whose true slogan would be “peace with exploitation” rather than “peace with justice”. The same people, who profess to be socialists and democrats, have even gone to London to deny the democratic right of the British working class to demand a British withdrawal from Ireland through the “Troops Out Movement”.

Of course, all of the opposition to the broad front concept does not come from the ex-revolutionaries now turned reformist. It comes as well from some sections of the ultra-left who fail to recognise the connection between an unemployed worker from a multinational concern and the presence of imperialist troops in the country. Finally, the opposition to a broad front comes from leaders who recognised the

changing nature of the struggle in '69 and '70 but didn't have the ability to create the necessary popular support for their actions. Because they were nurtured in the tradition of the heroic and lonely sacrifice and the tradition of carrying on the torch to the next generation, they saw themselves as an elite sect who would hand freedom to the people on a plate.

The fact is that the elitist and conspiratorial approach is no substitute for the development of a people's struggle. The wonder is that after six years of active struggle, some of those involved are not prepared to reassess their strategy and tactics. The confusion, weakness and divisions which exist throughout the anti-imperialist movement was heralded in the carnival of reaction which Connolly spoke of. The imperialists and their native capitalist allies are more united than ever before in pursuit of their solution. If our analysis of the situation in Ireland today is accepted as being correct, we would like to know the attitudes of all organisations towards our call for a total re-appraisal of strategy and tactics. In particular, we would like the comments of those represented at this conference. If this conference serves the function of opening a debate on the fundamental problems confronting the revolution in Ireland, it will have served a very useful purpose in our view.

The IRSP is fully committed to the struggle for national liberation, democracy and socialism in Ireland, and we understand the relationship between the national question and the class question: the presence of British troops in Ireland is but one mani-

festation of the imperialist presence and must be seen in the context of the overall relationship between Ireland and Britain. Some people say that Britain would really like to withdraw from Ireland and that she is only waiting for a suitable opportunity to do so without losing face. The principal advocates of this particular argument are, of course, the native capitalist class whose position of power and influence is guaranteed through the maintenance of the constitutional status quo. They promote this idea mostly to confuse and de-escalate the struggle and thereby secure a return to a position of "peace with exploitation". The fact is that British economic interests in Ireland can only be guaranteed through her continued military and political presence here and through the maintenance of partition.

Partition has been the instrument through which the working class in both parts of Ireland have been divided for almost 60 years. In the South, the green Tories of Fianna Fail have always had more working class support than the Labour Party. They have had this support because they were regarded as the party that would end partition and complete the national liberation struggle. Of course, the orange Tories in the North kept their working class support in line by convincing them that their position of marginal supremacy could only be guaranteed through the preservation of the union and discrimination against the nationalist minority. Both sets of Tories could thus continue their exploitation of the entire working class and effectively prevent the development of

class politics in the whole island.

Even if Britain didn't have to protect her own economic investments in both parts of Ireland, she would still be under tremendous pressure to stay and protect the interests of American and European multinationals who also control large sections of our economic life. Almost every important sector of our economic life is now subject to exploitation by British and other multinational concerns. The most obvious areas are oil, gas, mineral resources, hire purchase, insurance and banking companies, light and heavy engineering companies, textiles and man-made fibres, motor assembly, fertilizers, and fisheries, the construction industry, and finally the breweries and distilleries. As you can see from the list, it doesn't leave much in the control of the native capitalist class. In many instances they have been bought out and now fulfil the function of a compliant and obedient managerial corps.

As a revolutionary socialist party we are conscious of the international implications of our own struggle. We regard our struggle as part of the world-wide struggle for the emancipation of working-class people. Our contribution to that struggle must be to create an independent socialist state here in Ireland, and at the same time extend solidarity to all genuine revolutionary movements abroad. An independent socialist state based on the history, traditions, and cultural identity of our own working class, would be an inspiration not only to the British and European working classes but to oppressed peoples everywhere.

Our enemies are, of course, also conscious of the possible effects of a successful anti-imperialist struggle here, and can be expected to give moral and material support to Britain as an insurance against an upsurge of support for socialism in their own countries. The existence of support groups abroad, particularly in Britain are of paramount importance to the success of our struggle. The anti-Vietnam war movement in America succeeded in making the Vietnam war a live issue in domestic American politics and eventually played a major role in compelling an American withdrawal from Vietnam. We believe that the "Troops Out Movement" and the British trade union movement can play a similar role so far as Ireland is concerned. You have the potential to make the Irish struggle a live issue in domestic British politics, and this will ultimately be the key to success or failure in our struggle. For our part, we must accept the responsibility for overcoming the divisions that exist in the ranks of the anti-imperialist movement, and producing the organisational structures which will be capable of demonstrating to the world our determination to secure our own emancipation. If we fail to demonstrate the stature and vision that will be necessary to accomplish our goal we have no right to look for your support.

We are confident that the momentum of the past seven years can be maintained and that even if the leaders of the various revolutionary organisations are not capable of giving the necessary leadership in a rapidly changing situation, then new leaders will emerge

from rank-and-file level to fill the vacuum. Too many sacrifices have been made for us to fail now, so let us move forward to victory. We have nothing to lose but our chains, and in breaking them, we also break those that bind you just as securely as us.

## THE ANTI-IMPERIALIST BROAD FRONT

*A document drafted by Seamus Costello presented for discussion to the "Broad Front" talks held between various socialist and anti-imperialist groups in 1977.*

The IRSP fully endorse the sentiments, expressed in the basic discussion document regarding the seriousness of the present political crisis in Ireland and fully support the call for the maximum degree of anti-imperialist unity. We feel that genuine anti-imperialist unity can be achieved and that the basic discussion document lays the basis for such unity provided those present at this conference can agree that the document needs clarification and amendment on a number of important points.

As a socialist party, our ultimate political objective is the creation of a unified 32 County Democratic Socialist Republic within which the Irish working class will control the wealth and resources of the nation. This objective can only be achieved through the efforts of a unified and politically conscious Irish working class. The fact that a unified and politically conscious Irish working class does not exist is a direct consequence of the creation of two partitioned states in Ireland, and of continuing imperialist interference in both parts of the country. The problems arising from this lack of working class unity are painfully obvious.

The working-class people of the South have been skillfully divided by the allies of British imperialism since the establishment of the 26 County State.

For 50 years the Southern working class have been conned into supporting political parties who held out the illusion of radical solutions to both the national question and the class struggle, while in reality they used the working class as a power base for their continued betrayal of both struggles.

In the North the Protestant working class were led to believe that the only way in which they could preserve the marginal supremacy which they held over their Catholic counterparts in jobs and housing was through supporting corrupt Unionist politicians and through them the Union with Britain. Their genuine and well-founded fears regarding the preservation of their religious and civil liberties in the context of a united and clerical dominated Ireland were also exploited by the same corrupt politicians. At the same time the Catholic working class was conned into believing that their salvation lay in supporting green Tory politicians who, while hypocritically advocating the re-unification of Ireland, as a guarantee of their ultimate salvation, completely submerged themselves in corrupt Unionist politics in exchange for favours for the class they really represented, the Northern Catholic middle class. As history has shown, the working class, North and South, Protestant and Catholic, have been victims of the so-called solutions to the "Irish Question" imposed by Britain and her subservient native parliaments.

It is still Britain's objective to find and impose a political solution, which will guarantee the continued protection of Britain's economic and strategic inter-

ests in both parts of Ireland. Britain is also acting as the local protector of the interests of other imperial powers in Ireland. Some of the EEC countries as well as America and Canada have a powerful vested interest in supporting a British imposed "solution" in Ireland. Britain also has to consider the possible effects on internal British politics of the emergence of a united and independent state in Ireland. In our view, if an independent Ireland is to be viable in economic terms, and if it is to provide a reasonable standard of living for the majority of our people, it can only be done through a radical change in the ownership of wealth and resources. In these circumstances Britain and the EEC countries would have every reason to worry about the effects on working class opinion in their own countries. Finally of course Britain's strategic interests must also be protected through the imposition of a "solution" which will ensure that Ireland continues its present policy of pro imperialist "neutrality".

Every British imposed solution including the original partition of the country, the Northern Ireland Assembly... the Convention and direct rule, has been designed to protect these economic and strategic interests. The present policy of the Ulsterisation of the conflict is also clearly designed to perpetuate the division of the country and the sectarian divisions of the Northern working class.

The native capitalist class, acting through the political parties which represent their interests in both parts of Ireland have played a fundamental role

in supporting British imperialist interests in Ireland. They have done so because they have now accommodated themselves to the role of overseers for British and other imperialist economic interests. They have clearly thrown their weight behind the various solutions put forward by British imperialism over the past eight years, and will continue to do so in order to ensure that the one solution which would end their role as the native agents of foreign imperial interests does not emerge.

As a party we therefore recognise the absolute necessity of securing a constitutional solution to the present crisis which will allow the Irish working class the freedom to pursue their interests as a class in the context of the development of normal class politics. In our view the first step in securing a constitutional solution which meets this requirement must be for Britain to concede the right of the Irish people to exercise total sovereignty over their own affairs. This objective can only be achieved through the creation of a unified struggle on the part of all anti-imperialist organisations. We would therefore support the formation of an Irish anti-imperialist Front composed of delegates from affiliated organisations who support the agreed political programme of the Front. The primary objective of the Front would be to mobilise the maximum degree of support for its declared objectives throughout Ireland. The Front should clearly be seen as the leadership of a mass movement against all forms of imperialist control and interference in Ireland. The Front should have sufficient support and

assistance from its affiliated organisations to enable it to open a head office with a full-time staff.

We propose the following political demands as the basis on which an Irish anti-imperialist Front should organise:

1. That Britain must renounce all claims to sovereignty over any part of Ireland or its coastal waters.
2. That Britain must immediately disband and disarm the UDR, RUC, and RUC Reserve and withdraw all troops from Ireland.
3. That the British and 26 County governments must immediately release all political prisoners and grant a general amnesty for all offences arising from the current conflict.
4. That Britain must agree to compensate all who have suffered as a result of imperialist violence and exploitation in Ireland.
5. Recognising that no country can be free and independent while it permits imperialist domination of its economic life, the Irish anti-imperialist Front will oppose all forms of imperialist control over our wealth and resources.
6. That the Irish Anti-Imperialist Front rejects a federal solution, and the continued existence of two separate states in the six and 26 counties as a denial of the right of the Irish people to sovereignty and recognises the only alternative as being the creation of a 32 County Democratic Republic

with a secular constitution.

7. That the Irish anti-imperialist Front demands the convening of an all-Ireland Constitutional Conference representative of all shades of political opinion in Ireland for the purpose of discussing a democratic and secular Constitution which would become effective immediately following a total British military and political withdrawal from Ireland.

We feel that these demands would secure the active support of all genuine anti-imperialists in Ireland and that they should form the basis for an agreed programme of action by the Irish anti-imperialist Front. We are submitting them to this conference in the hope that we can make a serious contribution towards overcoming some of the problems caused by the divisions existing between the anti-imperialist organisations.



# Epilogue

## SEAMUS COSTELLO: ONE OF THE GREATEST LEADERS IN 800 YEARS

*The Starry Plough* October 1977

Seamus Costello was born in Old Connaught Avenue, Bray, County Wicklow in 1939. He attended Ravenswell National School in Bray. In 1950, at the age of eleven, he moved with his family to Roseville on the Dublin Road in Bray. There were nine in his family, Seamus being the eldest.

His first interest in politics came when he read of the arrest of Cathal Goulding in Britain in 1953 following an arms raid on the Officers Training Corps School at Felstead in Essex. Costello subsequently “devoured” newspapers, according to his family and at the age of 15, on one of his many visits to Croke Park, he bought a copy of *The United Irishman* and immediately applied to join the Republican Movement. However, he was told to “come back next year”. Costello did and was accepted into the ranks of the IRA and Sinn Féin.

The first Sinn Féin Cumann was started in Bray in the same year, comprised mostly from members of the Dun Laoghaire Cumann, their activity confined to *United Irishman* sales. However, it wasn't long before it was being sold in every area in Co. Wicklow.

### COMMANDED ACTIVE SERVICE UNIT

During the campaign of 1956-62 Costello, at the age of 17 commanded an active service unit in South Derry, their most publicised actions being the

destruction of bridges and the burning of Magherafelt Courthouse. Those under his command described him as strict but radiating confidence. Once while resting in a safe house, a grenade exploded and set off the full magazine of a Thomson machine gun. Miraculously, no one was killed. Costello took the brunt of the explosion and was knocked unconscious. He received back injuries and lost half a finger and was moved back to Dublin for treatment.

He was arrested in Glencree Co. Wicklow, in 1957 and sentenced to six months in Mountjoy. On his release he was immediately interned in the Curragh for two years. Costello, as a prisoner, was described by fellow internees as quiet, rarely joining others in playacting, preferring deep discussion and reading. He was a member of the escape committee, which engineered the successful escape of Rory Brady and Daithi O'Connell amongst others. He is remembered by one internee reading Vietnamese magazines and it impressed Costello that peasants badly armed but with a deep political ideology could defeat their enemies. In later years he always referred to his days in the Curragh as "my university days". He took part in the critical analysis of the 50s campaign, agreeing that it had failed due to lack of popular involvement as distinct from popular support.

## **HELPED RE-ORGANISE REPUBLICAN MOVEMENT**

On the ending of internment in 1959 Costello assisted in the re-organising of the Republican Movement or as Costello put it "the cars started flying

around again”.

In 1962 he took up a job as a car salesman and, indicative of his drive and strong personality had little trouble in becoming salesman of the year of his firm. He successfully fought an attempt to sack him because of his political affiliations by threatening to stay outside his firm's offices every day until he was reinstated.

### **BUILT A STRONG LOCAL BASE**

Meanwhile he began to build a strong local base in Co. Wicklow. He maintained that Republicans should build a strong home base and that these could then be linked up together at a future date. He also became full-time political organiser for Wicklow at this period and developed a strong link with every conceivable organisation in Wicklow that dealt with the interests of the working class. He managed to involve the Bray Trades Council in the 1966 Easter Commemoration and helped found a strong Tenants Association in Bray. He also became involved with the Credit Union movement and farmers' organisations. During this period (1964) he married a Tipperary woman Maeliosa who became active in the Republican Movement.

### **HISTORIC ORATION**

In 1966 he gave the historic oration at the Wolfe Tone Commemoration in Bodenstown which marked the departure of the left of the Republican Movement, the result of years of discussions within

the Movement ably assisted by Costello.

We believe that the large estates of absentee landlords should be acquired by compulsory acquisition and worked on a cooperative basis with the financial and technical assistance of the State... our policy is to nationalise the key industries with the eventual aim of co-operative ownership by the workers... nationalisation of all banks, insurance companies, loan and investment companies...

But Costello always maintained not only the right to use armed force but the necessity for workers to be armed and this remained his position up to his assassination. "The lesson of history shows that in the final analysis the Robber Baron must be disestablished by the same methods that he used to enrich himself and retain his ill gotten gains, namely force of arms. To this end we must organise, train and maintain a disciplined armed force which will always be available to strike at the opportune moment." (Bodenstown 1966)

## **ELECTION VICTORY**

He pushed for Sinn Fein to contest the local election of 1967 in selected areas and he stood with Joe Doyle in Bray. Indicative of his organisational abilities is the fact that not only were Sinn Fein the only political party to canvass every house in Bray but they won two seats on Bray Urban Council, one on Wicklow Co. Council and collected more money during the election than they had actually spent during the

campaign.

At Council Meetings Costello and Doyle always put their Cumann's views in accordance with what had been decided at their meetings. A strong attempt was always made to involve the people's organisations in any controversy or local issue.

Costello headed huge deputations of local organisations to Council meetings and demanded they be heard. He demanded the public not be barred from Council meetings. So insistent was he that unsuccessful moves were made to have him removed from the Council. He became involved in all local problems; housing, road repairs, water and sewerage, access to local beaches, land speculation etc. and such national issues as ground rents, the anti-EEC campaign, anti-repression campaigns, natural resources, the national question, etc.

### **INVOLVED THE MASSES**

Meanwhile, Costello and Sinn Fein continued to build their strong links with local bodies always striving to show them their own strength while getting overall republican socialist policies across.

### **HELPED FORM NICRA**

Nationally, Costello had pushed hard for the establishment of the Northern Irish Civil Rights Association to involve the mass of the Northern workers in the struggle. The beginning saw some protestant involvement but with the orange card being played, brutality, murder and open repres-

sion the campaign changed through the years to a mainly nationalist campaign for national liberation. Costello, unlike many of the other leaders in the Republican Movement, was willing to accept changing situations and adapt, rather than insist that the struggle must be confined to a pre-laid pattern irrespective of the realities and holding back the struggle for national liberation.

### **A PEACE-MAKER DURING SPLITS**

Costello stayed with what became known as the Official Republican Movement in the split of 1969-70 which gave birth to the Provisionals. It was not that he disagreed with the struggle for national liberation and a British withdrawal but that he saw it as a struggle that must take place side by side with the class struggle in the entire country, something the Provos were not to even admit until 1977. Even at this stage Costello showed his willingness to do all in his power to unite the Republican Movement and was in correspondence with Dick Roche and Sean Cronin who were acting as intermediaries.

### **COSTELLO FORMS IRSP**

The change in policy in the Republican Movement from 1965 had seen the movement's involvement throughout the 32 counties in popular struggles, such as housing, ground rents, fisheries, industrial disputes, etc. Military actions had been taken in some cases: against foreign (mainly German) landowners in the midlands, against a lobster boat

the Mary Catherine (“to protect the Irish shellfishing industry”), against buses carrying scab workers in Shannon, against a mine in support of strikers, against land speculators, rackman landlords, etc. These actions were not meant to be a substitute for involvement in the national question but part of the same struggle.

The Officials, however, began to abandon such actions in the South and eventually in the North with the ceasefire of 1972. Costello maintained before his assassination that he should have broken away at this stage and not waited until 1974. The two years in question were taken up with Costello fighting a rearguard action to have the accepted policy implemented while a section of the leadership implemented their own policies, oblivious to Ard Fheis wishes. Disillusionment set in in the rank and file with many dropping out while a witchhunt began of all dissidents, orchestrated by this clique in the leadership. Eventually, Costello was charged with irregularities at the 1973 Ard Fheis and tried by Sinn Fein. He was found not guilty. However, the Official IRA tried him on similar charges, with the exact same evidence (ensuring Costello’s witnesses didn’t turn up) and found him guilty. They dismissed him “with ignomy”. Meanwhile, Sinn Fein suspended him, despite their having found him not guilty. He was refused permission to stand in the local election of 1974. Costello knew he was finished with the Officials and stood as an Independent Sinn Fein Candidate as he began to organise the setting up of

a new party that would entwine the class question and national question as one struggle. He topped the polls for Wicklow County Council and Bray Urban Council where he was immensely popular, being a member of the Wicklow Agricultural Committee and President of Brays Trade Council. The leadership of the Officials were dismayed by victory. He was nevertheless dismissed (“general unsuitability”) from Sinn Féin at the Ard Fheis of 1974, memorable for its undemocratic procedures (delegates refused entry at the door because they supported Costello etc.).

In December 1974 Costello along with other disillusioned republicans and socialists, many with years of involvement in the Republican Movement at leadership level and with a deep involvement at local level formed a new political party. There immediately followed mass resignations from the Officials from all over the country, North and South. Entire Cumainn came over. And so was born the Irish Republican Socialist Party named after James Connolly’s party of 1896. The word “Republican” was deliberately put first to emphasise the struggle for national liberation, a struggle that was being abandoned by most organisations claiming the title of “socialist”.

### **BLOODY BAPTISM**

There had existed a minority opinion in the leadership of the Officials at the time of the Provo split who felt that Provos should have been crushed. The growth of the Provos merely strengthened this opinion. The Officials decided to employ this tactic

against the IRSP and picked Belfast to launch their campaign of murder, driving the IRSP into hiding: Costello, who always had a deep appreciation of the damage of feuds and the demoralisation it would cause throughout the anti-imperialist movement, sought mediation with the Officials who refused. Eventually, Michael Mullen, head of Costello's union the ITGWU, acted as mediator and the Officials called off their murder campaign, mainly due to their bad showing in the Galway bye-election and the Northern Ireland Convention election. The feud had seriously affected the growth of the IRSP and stopped most resignations from the Officials. Three IRSP members were dead and scores injured. Indeed, a bloody baptism for the IRSP.

### **STATE CONSPIRACY AGAINST IRSP**

In the 26 Counties, the State was bent on destroying the IRSP culminating in the arrest of Costello along with over 40 IRSP members supporters and relatives in April 1976. Nine were severely tortured and six framed with the robbery of a train in Co. Kildare. Costello pushed the IRSP to sue the State and brought Amnesty International's first involvement in Ireland when they demanded "a full and independent inquiry" in May 1976 into the arrest of IRSP members and their ill-treatment.

Costello always maintained that there existed a state conspiracy to smash the IRSP, and the IRSP has ample evidence to prove this charge.

## **COSTELLO'S LEADERSHIP**

During Seamus Costello's leadership of the IRSP, he was attempting to build a strong republican socialist party that would entwine the national and class questions as one struggle. He sought to involve the IRSP in all the struggles of the Irish people; trade union work, housing, fisheries, the struggle for women's emancipation, the national question, the struggle of small farmers, tenants, the cultural struggle, sovereignty, the struggle for control over our natural resources and the struggle against repression, etc. While the IRSP was suffering from the Officials' murder campaign and state harassment, it was difficult for the IRSP to make much headway in these struggles although it was involved in all of them to some extent.

Costello always felt anti-imperialist unity was of the utmost importance and worked hard for it. He was the main person behind the Broad Front talks that took place between anti-imperialist groups throughout 1977, although they failed to form a Broad Front.

## **OPPOSED INDEPENDENT ULSTER**

He was the only leader of national importance that totally opposed unprincipled talks with Loyalists on any agenda other than 32 County Socialist Republic and he totally rejected an Independent Ulster as a "solution" to the Irish or the Ulster question. He could speak to Dublin's unemployed, Derry's harassed population, or Wicklow's farmers and

reach them all. No struggle of the working class was too insignificant for his involvement and despite his national commitments, his organisational duties as full time IRSP political organiser, he always found time to honour his commitment to his constituents in Co. Wicklow.

At the time of his assassination [Dublin, 5 October 1977] he was a member of the following bodies: Wicklow County Council, County Wicklow Committee of Agriculture, General Council of Committees of Agriculture, Eastern Regional Development Organisation, National Museum Development Committee, Bray Urban District Council, Bray Branch of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union, Bray and District Trade Unions Council (of which he was president 1976-77), the Cualann Historical Society, Chairman Irish Republican Socialist Party. From the period between 1964 and 1974, he held the positions of Adj. General, Chief of Staff and Director of Operations in the Official IRA and the position of Vice-President of Official Sinn Féin.

# Eulogy

## THE FUNERAL OF SEAMUS COSTELLO: THE ORATION THEY WOULD NOT REPORT

*The Starry Plough* October 1977

Táimid anseo inniu chun Séamas O Coistealbha, an laoch is tábhachtaí i nGluaiseacht na Poblachta len ár linn féin a adhlacadh. Is fear é bheith chomh cáiliúil i stair na hÉireann amach anseo is atá Séamas O Conghaile inniu. Is fear é a chaith a shaol ar fad ag iarraidh aidhmeanna an Chonghailaigh a chur i gcrích. Thuig sé freisin gúrbh cuid an-bhunúsach den choibhlint seo an troid ar son saoirse cultúrtha in Éireann. Gaeil den scoth ab ea é, fear a chaith a shaol ar fad ag obair ar son cosmhuintir na tíre seo. Sheas sé leis na feirimoirí beaga, leis na hiascairí agus le lucht oibre na cathrach. Thuig sé a gcuid fadhbanna mar ba díobh féin é. Rinne sé gach ab fhéidir leis, d'úsaid sé gach modh oibre a raibh gá leis, chun saoirse na tíre seo a bhaint amach. Tá sé ar lár anois agus is cailliúnt gan áireamh do phobal na tíre é.

*[We are here today to see Seamus Costello, the most important warrior in the Republican movement, buried. He is so famous in Irish history that he will be as famous as James Connolly is today. He is a man who spent all his life trying to fulfill the aims of the Congregation. He also understood the struggle for cultural freedom in Ireland, which is a very fundamental part of this conflict. He was a great Irishman who spent all his life working for the people of this country. He stood with the little farmers, the fishermen, and the city workers. He understood their problems as they were. He did all*

*he could, he used all the necessary procedures, to achieve the freedom of this country. That it is now omitted is a disregard for the people of the country.]*

### **AN OUTSTANDING MIND & PERSONALITY IN THIS GENERATION**

Seamus Costello exhibited a greatness of the same order as James Connolly. His energy, his intelligence, accuracy and thoroughness, his humour, quickness, and decisiveness, made him an outstanding mind and personality in this generation of Irishmen. He was both a thinker and a man of action. But he was also a man of deep concern and humanity based on that affectionate nature that he shared with his wife Maeliosa and children Caoilfionn, Fionan, Aoibbin, Ronan. He saw clear and far and dared greatly. He dared to take up the unfinished task of James Connolly.

Single-handedly, as Republicans and Socialists all around him deviated into reformism and one sided concentration on the class or the national struggle, Seamus Costello gave clear leadership on the unity of the anti-imperialist and socialist struggle and on the need for a revolutionary approach. As Noel Browne wrote about the conference in Boston a year ago where Seamus made such an impression:

“Seamus Costello spoke for the IRSP and gave a scintillating display of good humour, history, politics and facts... I’ve never heard his brand of Republicanism before... Is it not a triumph for our radio, TV and newspapers and of the venomous Dublin polit-

ical denigration machine that none of us has ever read, heard of or seen this man's remarkable dialectical skill and political ability."

Seamus did not court the establishment which promotes shallow pretentious mediocrities like Conor Cruise O'Brien. He had the socialist vision: "We are nothing and we shall be everything" which the establishment recognises and fears. The establishment responded by the State conspiracy to destroy the Republican Socialist movement by torture, frame-up and perjury. During the tortures, as *The Starry Plough* front page reminded readers on the day that Seamus was murdered Special Branch detectives made it clear that they wanted "something on that man Costello". The farcical trial is still dragging its repressive length along; and the same repression is now being used on the IRSP in England. Clearly Seamus Costello like James Connolly in his day was the single greatest threat to British imperialist interests in Ireland. This became clear to Noel Browne at Boston as he wrote: "They will have to shoot him, or to jail him, or get out of his way, but they certainly won't stop him. Costello the revolutionary Marxist Socialist whose ambition is a secular, pluralist united Socialist Republic, won't go away until he gets it."

### **OWED ALLEGIANCE ONLY TO WORKING CLASS**

Seamus's socialism was profound and practical. He came from farming background and he always championed the rights of the working farmer. The day before he was shot he was arguing at a Wicklow

Agricultural meeting for the re-distribution of large ranching estates among small farmers to make their holdings viable and save them from the destruction the EEC is planning for them. He had total faith in the working class and owed allegiance only them. He spoke in the accents of the people, and the workers and small farmers of Bray and of every part of Ireland and above all the working class of Dublin knew him as one of their own.

He was militantly proud of his ITGWU badge and of his Presidency of the Bray Trades Council. His Republicanism and his Socialism were not two competing strands, but an authentic unity. He saw the interrelationship of the class and the national struggle as no-one in Ireland since Connolly had done. He thought for a while this vision could be attained by the Official Republican Movement, until he saw them abandon the anti-imperialist national struggle and turn to social reformism.

## **HE FOUGHT TO WIN NOT TO COMPROMISE**

He never allowed the national question to take up all his time, or warp his judgment, or make him soft on native capitalism or its political parties. His life was motivated by a burning sense of justice and he seethed with indignation at the injustices and monumental stupidities of capitalist society in Ireland and on the world scale. He fought relentlessly, imperiously, against oppression of all forms of national oppression, wage-slavery, unemployment, slum housing, starvation, and criminally inadequate social

services. Like James Connolly, he was a revolutionary; which means simply that he was a fighter, relentless, intelligent, principled and skillful. He took big chances and thoroughly utilised all resources. He fought to win, not to compromise. He could not be bought, he could not be conned, and he could not be intimidated. But he economised effort, and was not unduly discouraged by setbacks, but pressed on. He was in the tradition of Fintan Lalor, who wrote, "Against robber-rights I will fight to their destruction or my own."

### **ON BRITISH AGENT'S ASSASSINATION LIST**

He was not only a political fighter. He was a great soldier. He always asserted and played his part in ensuring the right of the Irish people to use force of arms to achieve freedom from foreign domination. He could not see the British Army oppress the Irish people without attacking it decisively and tellingly. He fought, was wounded and interned in the '50s campaign, and he did not lay down his weapons. For years he was in the leadership of the Republican Movement. He earned the respect and fear of his enemies, who put him on the British agent Littlejohn's assassination list. Like Connolly, he had to a supreme degree the military virtue of courage. He lived openly and held his head high.

### **A BELIEVER IN MASS POLITICAL ACTIVITY**

But he was a volunteer soldier of the people. He was not a military elitist, but a believer in the self

liberation of the Irish people by mass political activity. As a soldier of the people he was a genuine man of peace, unlike the mercenary "Peace" Movement which exists only to encourage Irish people to be informers to their British oppressors. As he said at Crossbarry in Co. Cork in March 1976, "We want to build a society where our children can live in peace and prosperity, a society where they will control the wealth of this country."

### **A PEACE MAKER**

Since his war was only against the oppressor, he was a dedicated peace-maker between anti-imperialists. At Crossbarry he said, "Petty differences and recriminations must be forgotten and the necessary leadership given to the Irish people. No republican or socialist can afford to allow himself to be manipulated into creating disunity in the anti-imperialist forces." After the assassination attempt on him at Waterford in 1975 he was asked what should be done if he were ever assassinated not by the British but by fellow-Irishmen and he answered typically: "No reprisals: not one death".

He dedicated his life to anti-imperialist unity and the linking of the class and national struggles in Ireland. He never refused to talk with anyone in the principled pursuit of his goal. He never ceased to make strenuous efforts to reach agreement on joint action with the Officials, even though they had tried to violently suppress the IRSP, or to develop possible structures of anti-imperialist unity. But as he made

clear in the first edition of *The Starry Plough* in April 1975 he would not consider unprincipled alliances or overtures. He criticised the current attempts at unity with Loyalists in opposing the Belfast Ring Road “We feel”, he said, “that the approach to the Loyalists must be an honest one and that we must explain to them... that we are opposed to the British presence in Ireland... because we regard it as the principle means of dividing the Protestant and Catholic working class and because we regard the British presence in Ireland as the principle obstacle preventing the emergence of class politics in Ireland”.

He compared what he called “Ring Road Socialists” who try to convince people that they are not Republicans and not Socialists, with “the people in Belfast in 1913 whom Connolly described as ‘gas and water socialists’”. On such anti-imperialist and socialist grounds he rejected the idea of an independent Ulster put forward at the Boston conference, and he maintained to the end of his life that such an imperialist solution to “the Irish question” was counter to Republican Socialism.

### INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST

That Seamus Costello was an international socialist whose aim was ultimately to remove the scourge of capitalism from all the suffering people of the world is movingly expressed in the many telegrams to the IRSP from socialists the world over.

D’oibrigh Séamas O’Coistealbha ar son saoirse polaitíochta, eacnamaíochta agus cultúrtha na tíre

seo. Anois, ant-ómós is mó gur féidir a thabhairt dó ná leanacht leis an saothar ar chaith seisean a shaol ar fad ag obair ar a shon. Dearbhaímid anseo inniu go bhfuil sé i gceist againn leannacht leis an obair seo.

Tá saoirse na tíre seo le baint amach fós. Ní éir-eoidh le rialtas na Breataine ná le rialtas an tSaor Stáit saoirse a cheilt ar mhuintir na hÉireann go deo. Tá laochra againn atá sásta maireachtáil nó bás a fháil ar son na saoirse sin. Ba dhuine des na laochra sin Séamas O Coisdealbha. Denaimid comhbhrón ó chroí lena mhuintir agus le popal uile na tíre ar ang-cailliúint uafasach seo. I measc Laochra na hÉireann go raibh a ainm.

*[Seamus Costello worked for the political, economic and cultural freedom of this country, Now the greatest tribute that can be given to him is to continue on his behalf with the work on which he spent all his life. We confirm here today that we intend to do this work. The freedom of this country has yet to be realized. The British government and the government of the Free State will never succeed in concealing freedom from the Irish people. We have heroes who are willing to live or die for that freedom. One of these heroes was Seamus Costello. We extend our deepest sympathies to all his people and to the nation's people on this terrible loss. Irish fame includes his name.]*

## THE IRSP WILL GO ON

Today we lay to rest a great Irish Republican Socialist. To know him was a privilege. To call him comrade was an honour. To be associated with him

was to be inspired by his greatness and to learn new dimensions of human possibilities. But the greatest lessons we have learned from our great leader are rationality and persistence. And in the spirit of Seamus Costello, his organisation will go on striking at imperialism and preparing the Irish people to take their part in the liberation of mankind.

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