

"BUT HOW CAN I RAISE THE QUESTION OF IRELAND FROM DAY TO DAY ??????"

This document is aimed primarily at Big Flame members and sympathisers who are not directly involved in Irish Solidarity work. The aim is quite simple, namely to help integrate Irish solidarity work into the day to day work of the organisation and more specifically to suggest ways in which militants in a wide sphere of struggles and activities can raise directly and indirectly the question of Britain's involvement in Ireland.

While the form this takes is that of a very activity orientated 'nuts and bolts' guide it should be stressed that this is not a blueprint - but rather a modest first attempt at answering the question "How can I help raise the Irish question without dropping my existing activity?".

In addition I have tried to suggest activities which, because they do not fall easily within the political reference point of one sector (and thus commission) often tend to get forgotten.

At the end of each section I shall try and include a short list of what I feel are useful sources and resources for that particular area/issue.

We thought UTOM members might find it useful so in addition to inclusion in the BF discussion Bulletin it'll appear in the UTOM IB.

ANTI RACIST & ANTI FASCIST WORK.

* Link into Anti Fascist work the National Front and British Movements'

positions on N.Ireland and their open support for and links with Loyalist paramilitaries. Highlight the sectarian nature of the Northern Ireland state - it is not a problem of equal antagonisms (ie Protestants and Catholics at each others throats) that can be wished away by abstract calls to "workers unity". Just as the problem in Britain is not between the equal antagonisms of Black and white. Most anti racists if put on the spot will recognise the latter point in relation to Britain but somehow on Ireland... "well thats a different question". Northern Ireland was, and still is a sectarian state set up on the basis of a guaranteed ascendancy of Protestants over Catholics. In short it is a 'racial' situation in which one section of the population seeks to defend its domination over

* another.

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* As the NF and BM clearly realise a reactionary Loyalist statelet off the west coast of Britain could be "their most dynamic force"; in contrast should the Northern Ireland statelet be toppled it will be a significant kick in the teeth not only for British Imperialism but also for Racist and Fascist organisations in Britain.

* Anti Irish prejudice is rampant as can be seen from the sickening increase in so called 'Irish jokes'. As Curtis and Renwick recently pointed out (see sources) "Moral and political justification for the brutalities of colonial rule rested on the widely held view that the colonial native was inferior to that of the coloniser." Indeed Britain's continuing involvement in Ireland is very much underpinned by the continuing belief in Racist stereotypes of the Irish as somehow unfit to look after themselves and their country. We should make sure that the development of anti Racism in the ANL includes a firm commitment to oppose anti Irish Racism.

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* On future anti racist/fascist demonstrations why not include an Irish pipe band. While I like the apparent popularity of new wave/reggae within the ANL and RAR, the exclusion of music from other traditions smacks to me of chauvanism. Lets argue the merits of including Irish rebel music on the

agenda of future RAR and ANL gigs/carnivals.

- * Invite speakers from Irish immigrant organisations (eg Sinn Fein and IRSP) to speak at anti racist/fascist meetings on theme of anti Irish racism.
- * Suggest that your local ANL branch or anti racist group has an educational on anti Irish Racism.

.....Usefull sources/Resources.

Richard Ned Lebow - "White Britain & Black Ireland". Excellent account of the influence of stereotypes on Britains Colonial policy in Ireland. American publication, hard to get hold of in Britain. Try inter Library loan; or write for info to 'Director of publications, ISHI, 3401 Science center, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19104. USA.

J.A. Jackson; 'The Irish in Britain' esp Ch 'Attitudes and Anxieties; the of prejudice and the problem of identity.' (P 152/164).

John Stuart Mill; 'Principles of Political Economy.' Clifton, N.J. Kelly, 1961 (1973 reprint).

Info on links between Fascist and Loyalist groupings is scattered in various journals. However i'll gladly photocopy this info for interested people; though i'd appreciate a 30p Postal Order to cover costs. (Write to BJ/BBF).

The latest Pamphlet by the Campaign for Free Speech on Ireland, 'The British Media and Ireland' contains articles by Andrew Brown on 'Anti Irish Jokes' and one from Liz Curtis 'Echoes of the present: the Victorian press and Ireland'. Orders, enquiries etc to Information on Ireland, 1 North End Road, London W 14.

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY WORK

- * International solidarity with the anti imperialist struggle in Ireland is now more important than ever with the British Govt stepping up its own attempts to cut off foreign aid to Republicans.
- * Where such activity is not already being undertaken we should encourage groups close to us to organise speaking tours of their own countries on particular aspects of the N.Ireland situation (Speakers could be invited from Ex soldiers group/ UTOM/ RAC/ Sinn Fein/ IRSP).

Richard Ned Lebow; "British Historians & Irish History" 'Eire-Ireland' Vol 11 (Dec 73).

Richard Ned Lebow; "British images of poverty in pre-famine Ireland" from Daniel Casey and Richard Rhodes, Eds; "The Irish peasant in the 19th Century".

Lewis P Curtis Jr; "Apes and Angels- The Irishman in Victorian Caricature" Washington D.C. Smithsonian Institution press, 1971.

East London UTOM leaflet on State Racism and Ireland. Available from Box Ut, c/o 2a, St Pauls Road, London N1.

SENIOR, H. - 'Orangeism in Ireland and Britain 1795-1836.' Published by Routledge & Kegan, 1966.

Ned Lebow - British Historians & Irish History. Published in 'Eire-Ireland' journal. Argues that anti irish stereotypes developed not ~~with~~ out of the influx of Irish immigrants to Britain and the States (primarily in the Victorian era) but rather that they developed in the 12th century "Providing Henry 11 with the pretext for his invasion of Ireland in 1171." (Eire-Ireland Vol 111 No 4, Winter 1973).

- * With the help of the BF International Commission the Irish Commission could offer to contribute articles on Ireland in the publications of sympathetic groups, in other countries.
- * We could/should suggest these groups exchange their own publications for others (eg 'An Phoblacht/Republican News', 'Starry Plough', 'Troops Out', 'Ireland Socialist Review').
- * 'An Phoblacht/Republican News' have long been appealing for relevant articles from Socialists in Britain, not just on Irish Solidarity work but also on anti imperialist struggles throughout the world. The last few years have seen a marked shift to the left in the attitude of the provos to the class struggle in other countries. This is very much a recognition that the war in the north is going to be a war of attrition and that it is necessary to learn from similar struggles in other parts of the world past and present. With this in mind, it would be useful if International Commission members, when writing articles for the paper/journal, could send an additional copy to An Phoblacht/Republican News (Readership between 30/50,000 per week). Other issues which may interest them would be counter insurgency, technology of repression, independence of small nations, moves towards strong state, problems of building socialism in one country. Articles should be passed on via Irish Commission delegates.
- * One attractive possibility would be to organise joint anti imperialist meetings/ festivals (eg with Sinn Fein, IRSI ZANU, etc). A glimpse of what could be achieved by such co-operation was evident to observers at the All London UICOM day conference on the role of the army which included speakers from ZANU, Kenya, Malaysia as well as from Ireland.

* MEDIA/TRADE UNIONS.

- * Much groundwork needs to be done with media workers in Britain. To date support has been restricted to media workers and personalities in London, the result of which is the excellent 'British Media & Ireland' pamphlet produced by the Campaign for free speech on Ireland. Moves have been made in both the NUJ and the TV technicians union (ACTT?) to oppose media censorship on Ireland. In one case the Technicians refused to show a censored programme and calls have been made in the NUJ for a Trade Union committee to monitor news on Ireland.

* COMMUNITY/AREA BASED RADICAL PRESS.

One idea which has received support from many Community and area based papers in Britain is that of 'Twinning' British Army regiments. (Eg Leeds Other paper or Sheffield Free Press could highlight the activities of Yorkshire regiments etc). The idea was put forward as an obvious way that such papers, even with a narrowly defined local orientation, could still give coverage to the N.Ireland situation. Unfortunately papers who have given verbal/written support to the idea of twinning have still to undertake the nitty gritty work of setting up an efficient and regular exchange network of info between papers in Britain and anti imperialist organisations, papers and community advice centres in the 6 counties.

* RADIO PHONE IN PROGRAMMES.

While the right has for several years been successfully intervening on local radio phone in programmes, taking their 'common sense' racist filth into many homes; the left on the contrary seems to have adopted by default a position of principled abstinence ("Bourgeois media..wouldn't touch it with a barge pole....would you like a copy of Spartacist?). Its

high time we broke from this practice, and not just in relation to Ireland. In addition to the guidelines below on how to utilize phone ins, comrades should consider approaching their local station/s if they have one, offering speakers on particular themes. In B'ham we have twice had successful troops out phone ins, the second of which with three ex soldiers for withdrawal received overwhelmingly sympathetic support from callers. Ex soldiers are perhaps the best agitational weapon for raising the question of the role of the troops in N.Ireland, especially several on the same programme. So why not fix it up with your local station and the newly formed 'Ex soldiers for Withdrawal' group (see sources). An additional advantage is that the station, if pushed, will generally pay speakers fares and expenses (or at least some of them).

* UTILIZING PHONE INS/ SOME TIPS

It may seem like the easiest thing in the world to get in a call on a phone in programme. Sometimes it is, although getting on the programme is only winning half the battle. Sometimes its not so easy - the lines may be jambed, especially if its a contraversial issue like Ireland - in some cases the switchboard operator will vet you to see if your question is "suitable" in which case right wing and pro status quo calls will get prioritised.

There is no panacea, no blueprints on using phone in programmes. But i'd present the following guidelines/ suggestions as being helpful (perhaps?) to the potential caller:

- * First and foremost utilizing phone ins should be seen as a collective responsibility - that means where there is advanced notice of a programme you wish to intervene in, that you should get it raised and discussed with sympathetic groups and try and get a commitment that as many people as possible should ring in. It would also be wise to work out particular questions/themes to be raised by each person, so you avoid unnecessary duplication on one theme when instead you could be raising several. Of course in some cases you may want to do just that... ie emphasise a particular point. But the emphasis should be on collective advanced planning. One idea here could be to organise a telephone tree- especially for emergencies. With a Tel tree information is passed on down a kind of pyramid (eg you ring two contacts, they ring two and so on).By which time you should have at least a few people ready to tune in to the station and more importantly to ring in.
- * It may seem obvious - but try and prepare your questions, points in advance by writing cribs down on a peice of paper.
- * Most stations open phone in lines up to half hour before the actual programme starts. It pays to get your call in early, you may have to hang around a while but at least you're through.
- * You don't necessarily have to have a phone, even though many stations don't like or accept coin box calls. Its still worth trying. Whats more you can tell them its a coin box in your home ("You're in lodgings") or you can often get through by telling the swithboard operator your number (if they ask) but without the final 'X' which indicates its a coin box. If you're well off you can ring up the station via the operator. If you're ringing from a coin box and are not listening to the programme on a radio, give the impression that you are (eg they're likely to ask you to turn it off and listen to it via the phone itself..so pretend to turn it off). Only most stations wont think twice about cutting you off for one or several of the above stated reasons.
- * Once you're through try not to be intimidated or sidetracked by interview-er or guest/s . Because they're in the studio and you're on the end of

the line doesn't mean they have a license to piss you about or quiz you. Put them on the spot before they do it to you. Don't be frightened to change the subject if you think they're farting around.

* Try to gear contributions to the doubts/fears/questions that listeners are likeley to have on the subject at hand. With this as your starting point contributions are less likeley to be dismissed as abstract slogans.

* Tape the programme, use it for educational.

SOURCES

'The British Media and Ireland' by the Campaign for Free Speech on Ireland. Single copies 50p plus 15p postage and packing, 10 copies for £3.40 plus 60p P&P. Pamphlet is made up of excellent series of articles by media workers covering many aspects of British media coverage (or lack of it) on Ireland. Available from: Information on Ireland, 1 North End Road, London W 14.

'Media misreport Ireland' is the title of the Belfast Workers Research Unit bulletin No 6. It deals with media coverage but through the eyes of people in N.Ireland and includes analytical articles and a detailed dissection of local press coverage. Its available from Belfast Workers Research Unit, C/O 52, Broadway, Belfast 12 and costs 65p plus 15p P & P.

TRADE UNIONS/WAGED WORK

* While its not always possible even to mention "Northern Ireland" in many Union branches without (at worst) getting shouted down or (at best) told it has "no relevance to branch business" (eg "we're non Political" or "thats not our problem"). Non the less we need to be on our toes and aware of ways of raising fundamental questions about N.Ireland not just at union branch meetings but amongst the rank and file on the shop floor. Again, not an easy task, but heres a few ideas:

* One danger of "revolutionary Socialism" (ie simply seeing activity as passing grandeur resolutions at branch meetings) is that such resolutions often have little resonance at a rank and file level. On Ireland in particular we cannot afford to reduce activity in the T.U's to passing resolutions at branch meetings. Theres no doubt that sometimes getting the brannh to adopt a certain position/policy can be a springboard to a deeper campaign of raising the Irish question amongst the rank and file. But all too often the left has been content at counting the number of TU banners on demonstrations, even though as in some cases it may be little more than two members of a branch carrying the banner. Ok, its a start, but lets set our sights on more long term groundwork, so anti imperialist politics begin to find some resonance amongst the rank and file.

* At a day to day level you may know which workers are sympathetic on the Irish question, (perhaps, from something they said over a cuppa). Try and establish some sort of contact with such persons, feel the ground carefully but try and discuss Ireland more often, bring in the odd pamphlet or leaflet that you think they'd find interesting. Maybe they'd buy 'Troops Out!' or be interested in coming to films/ meetings on Ireland.

Often ones credibility/^{on an issue}so sensitive (to dormant British chauvanism) as Ireland will depend on ones credibility as a militant on other issues - such credibility may mean the difference between being listened to on the one hand or (without it) being denounced, ridiculed or as was the case after the B'ham bombings and the recent Mounthatten execution being beaten up.

* Assess the situation in your workplace - work out the best course of action in terms of raising the Irish question - set yourself goals that may be reached - these could be fairly modest at first, but can be stepped up as you feel confident. Eg: leaflets, pamphlets can be distributed and or left

in the canteen or tea rooms; posters on noticeboards, stickers in canteen, washroom etc.

- * Raise the question at T.U branch meetings. Get your branch to invite speakers from various solidarity groups (eg UTOM and Ex soldiers) to address branch meetings. Try and make these meetings accessible to the majority of the membership (not just activists)- canteen meetings over lunch and a pint are one idea and of course creche facilities are a must. Another body worth getting to T.U meetings is the Trade Union Campaign Against Repression (T.U.C.A.R.), see sources section.
- * Make sure important demonstrations are discussed; that Ireland doesn't conveniently get passed over to next months agenda. Get your branch to sponsor important demonstrations, to give out (and pay for) organising leaflets for the demo amongst the membership, to display posters, to make sure the largest possible contingent goes on demonstration with TU banner.
- * Get you branch to affiliate to important solidarity campaigns (eg UTOM) and conferences; to inform membership of them; to canvass support from other branches in the same union; the union executive and local Trades councils.
- * Push your Union and/ or Rank and File paper to include info on campaigns your branch is supporting. Send readers letters to it on Ireland.
- * If your branch has a fairly good record on Ireland (though this may be just paper support) you could propose it organises a special delegation to the six counties (on the lines of the 1976 Labour Movement delegation. Also Newcastle Trades council have just completed one such trip - see sources).
- * Work to establish Rank and File links with workers in subsidiary companies in Ireland (eg with Multi Nationals). With NI companies you could push for a union enquiry into 'possible' discrimination in these companies and call for a full union enquiry into the ratio of protestant to catholic workers (and likewise with particular jobs, skills, menial jobs, positions in T.U etc).
- * With TU sponsored MPs get them to raise Ireland in the House, support important campaigns etc. And on the contrary (with cretins like Roy Mason very much in mind) be prepared to push for Union to oppose sponsorship.
- * At a Trades council level; several have been pushed into officially opposing army recruitment of unemployed youth and school-leavers. In some cases these TCs have even initiated leafletting campaigns against army recruitment which took in schools and dolequeues.

TEACHERS

- * While more and more Socialist teachers are opposed to army recruitment in schools, this opposition seems to be still generally confined to Socialist teachers groups and has yet to be FOUGHT FOR within the NUT at both a local and National level. Lets begin the discussion in the NUT and turn anti-recruitment sentiment into action.
- * If the army is due to come to your school and your union branch is strong, you could push for some form of protest action (eg boycott, non co-operation, getting the 'ex soldiers for withdrawal' group to send a speaker, using the 'Home Soldier Home' film "to give the other side of the story").
- * Remember that army recruitment is aimed at school students, so try and involve them in any anti recruitment work that may develop. Your intentions may be 100% sincere but it will be the school students interpretation of your campaign that will be decisive.
- * Draw up a list of known schools who invite army recruitment teams into school. Likewise with schools that run Army cadet training (though these are mainly restricted to Grammar and Private schools). Send the list to your local UTOM group, if non exists to UTOM nationally, and to NUSS who now not only undertake anti recruitment work (see sources section) but also are

to affiliate to clubs. They are also producing an anti recruitment organising kit which should be usefull also to sympathetic teachers.

* Where possible inform your local UTOM group of any army visits.

* For your lessons. (Obviously not all teachers will have the scope to do any of these things). A few ideas.....

* Try and make use of slides/ films/ video on Ireland in your lessons.

* Liberal or general studies classes seem to provide some scope for raising the Irish question in some context.

* You could discuss and contrast press coverage on N.Ireland.

* In science classes, maybe, on the issue of technological 'advances' in warfare N.Ireland could be bought in.

* History. Obviously it would be good to ~~xxxxxx~~ include a complete (ie that doesn't stop at 1921) course on the History of Ireland into lessons. (some usefull sources and resources are contained both at the end of this section and at the end of the article).

* Sources

Belfast Workers research Unit Bulletin (Now called 'Belfast Bulletin' has contained usefull analytical articles on press coverage of N.Ireland situation. See under Phone in 'Sources' for address.

NUSS are in the process of producing an organising kit aimed at school students on anti recruitment work. Also copies of past anti recruitment leaflets will be sent out to anyone who sends me 50p to cover photo copying, postage etc. (BJ/BBF).

'British Soldiers speak out on Ireland' is an excellent pamphlet containing articles from dissenting ex soldiers critical of British army presence in N.Ireland. It is available from Information on Ireland, 1 North End Road London W 14.

FILMS: 'The patriot Game' is obtainable from UTOM, Box UT, 2a, St Pauls R'd, London N1.

'Home Soldier Home' from Information on Ireland, 1 North End Road, London W14.

STUDENTS

* If you have a Troops Out Society support it. If not then why not try and set one up. Affiliate it to the UTOM. This way you can have fairly regular educationals and meetings and films on Ireland and build up student support for UTOM.

* Some campuses, colleges have Irish Societies which sometimes have useful political discussions and meetings on Ireland but sometimes restrict themselves to the occasional outing to see the Chieftains. It may be worthwhile setting up or supporting existing Irish Societies which may enable a broader forum for Troops Out ideas to be discussed and debated.

* If there are other societies which are sympathetic (eg Socialist Soc or socialist film club etc) but little chance of setting up a Troops out soc then push these socs to hold meetings, films etc on N.Ireland. and maybe from such a meeting a troops out soc could then be established.

* Publicise important rallies, demonstrations etc in your college. Maybe you know students who would be interested in buying 'Troops Out'; why not take a few each month to sell? Likewise with Ireland Socialist

~~xxxxxx~~

Review. (See sources at end of Article).

- * Students at Leicester Polytechnic (or was it University?) as part of their course work did a project on local press coverage of N.Ireland affairs.
- * Opposition to Racist and Sexist ~~Mag~~ mags should bring out the anti Irish dimension. Judging from recent correspondence in the Irish Post there is considerable opposition in the Irish Community to anti Irish jokes. If you're opposing such mags, write to Irish immigrant groups asking for support and send press statements and report of activities to the Irish Post.
- * Fight in the NUS for it to take up a clear anti Imperialist stand on Ireland. Push for affiliation to UTOM and for active support for important initiatives and demonstrations.

WOMENS MOVEMENT

- * Affiliate to/ invite speakers from the Women and Ireland group, (see below for address).
- * From Ireland the Relatives Action Committee (RAC) and the Women against Imperialism group are two bodies well worth inviting to speak at meeting.
- * Use the Women and Ireland groups Slide show.
- * Subscribe to/ sell the following papers/pamphlets.....

Belfast Workers Research Bulletin Number 5 - 'WOMEN IN N.IRELAND'. Written by Women active in Womens struggles in the north. Contents include 'Childcare in N.Ireland', 'Women and the Law', 'Woman and Education', 'Contraception and Abortion', 'Women and Repression, Women and resistance', 'Irish Feminism'. (60p + P&P), from Workers research unit, C/O 52, Broadway, Belfast 12.

'Irish Women at War', papers from the Feminism and Ireland workshop (June 77). Costs 40p (+ P&P) from Women and Ireland group, C/O A Woman's place, 42 Earlham St, London WC1.

SAOR BHEAN, a bi-monthly paper of Women against imperialism. price 10p (plus P&P). See 'Women against Imperialism' on this page for address.

WORK WITH YOUTH

- * At an individual level the 'British Soldiers speak out on Ireland' (See sources earlier) is very usefull to show to any potential (or actual) recruit to the British Army.
- * What you can do will depend on the scope available, especially at school or in a youth club. But try and get 'Home soldier Home' shown at your school/youth club. Especially if the army is due to tour your

Women against Imperialism

Based in working class West Belfast. They state: "We believe that the only way forward for the Womens movement in Ireland is a direct orientation to the working class Women and their needs." Contact: Anne Marie Loughran, 7, Riverdale Park Drive, Belfast.

Belfast Womens Collective

Statement of aims reads: "The struggle for Womens Liberation in Ireland must be seen within the perspective of a struggle to overthrow National and class oppression and establish a socialist society." Work includes agitating for child care provision and the production of a paper, "Womens Action." Contact C/O 52 Broadway Belfast 12.

school you could use this as an excuse to show the film and/or get a speaker from the 'Ex Soldiers For Withdrawal Group' "to give the other side of the story". Or maybe you don't need an 'excuse'.

- * NUSS having undergone fairly drastic changes (for the better) now have a firm commitment to anti recruitment work and affiliation to UTOM. In addition they ~~xxxxxx~~ are producing an anti recruitment organising kit (see sources).
- * Undertake anti recruitment campaigns in your area. Leaflet schools and dole queues. If you want to see past anti recruitment leaflets drop me a line, and please try and make a donation towards photocopying, postage etc, BJ/BDF).
- * Take up the question of army recruitment in youth unemployment campaigns (why should youth take any old jobs?). Oppose army exploitation of unemployed youth - against economic conscription!
- * Take 'Troops Out' into the schools and youth clubs, in fact anywhere where youth are likely to be; Order 'Troops Out' stickers and get sticking.
- * If you know of schools where the army recruitment teams are touring inform your local UTOM and NUSS branches.

SOURCES

NUSS ANTI RECRUITMENT KIT.
Due shortly, available from
NUSS national office,

'British Soldiers speak out on
Ireland' (see sources earlier).

The youth paper 'Revolution'
contains regular articles on N.Ireland
and anti recruitment activity. Available
from Revolution,

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS & BF GROUPS

- * Support work for Irish POW's would be very much appreciated (not least by the prisoners themselves). UTOM branches should be able to supply you with names, birthdays of prisoners. Adopt one and send him/her birthday and christmas cards.
- * Those books that are dusting up your shelves...do you really need them all? What all of them?! Any sorts of books (from politics to westerns) would be appreciated by prisoners, same goes for old transistor radios, records, record players etc. Have a good delve around and see if you can spare any of these things...ask your friends. Donations will be passed on via BF Irish commission delegates.
- * See the section on 'Utilising phone in programmes'.
- * Subscribe to various publications on Ireland (see sources), if you see possibilities for sales/ outlets why not take copies to sell.
- * Order in bulk 'Troops Out' stickers and keep em' on your person, ready to put up when the chance comes.
- * Last but by no means least, use your imagination... look for ways and means of raising Ireland in your day to day work in the factory, Home, community and school. If you have other ideas send them in to the discussion Bulletin, then we can maybe update it and circulate it more widely.

Brian Johnstone (B'ham BF/UTOM)