

# Socialist Worker

For a Workers' Republic and International Socialism

# MASS RESISTANCE CAN BEAT ORANGEISM

**EVER SINCE** David Trimble and the bowler hat brigade of the Orange Order marched through the Garvaghy Road a whole number of establishment myth have been shattered.

□ The Orange Order is not a cultural institution like the Girl Guides.

For the last few years, Unionist politicians have been to pretending that the 12th of July is like a great Mardi Gras carnival.

## Argue

The Orange Order is even given grants from Europe to 'preserve its heritage' and Southern politicians argue that people there have to be more 'understanding of its culture'.

But Drumcree has shown that Orangeism has as much to do with culture as the Ku Klux Klan.

The Orange Order is led by middle class thugs who want to lord it over Catholics -- and crush all dissident voices among Protestants.

Like racism, it is a poison that should be opposed by all workers. This is why we should have no truck with the 'two cultures' idea which has led groups like the Irish National Congress to call for 'equal rights for Orange and Green'. Socialists do not call for rights for Orangeism -- but militant opposition to it everywhere it emerges.

□ The RUC: As Sectarian as ever:

The Orangemen could only march at Drumcree because there was an unofficial mutiny in the RUC. Hugh Ainsley said that the Orangemen were let through because they though could not enforce the law against huge numbers. This is nonsense.

The Orange barricades around

the North before the 12th were, for the most part, quite small. The television showed thin lines of Orangemen stopping cars with the RUC looking on. The RUC did not break those lines for the simple reason that they agreed with the Orange protesters.

The RUC stands most to loose in any settlement that reduced their numbers and questioned their role.

## Blatent

In the last week they have taken out their frustration by running amok in Catholics areas. Their blatant sectarianism is demonstrated by their baton charge in Altnagelvin hospital and the numbers of plastic bullets they have fired against nationalists.

□ A Peace Process that has failed.

Socialists welcomed the IRA ceasefire and oppose any return to

the armed struggle. But we have never believed the myth that peace in Ireland could come from right wing politicians sitting around a negotiating table.

## Settlement

The British and Irish governments would like a settlement in Northern Ireland that modernised sectarianism.

They want to create more places for the Catholic middle class and push Catholic and Protestant workers into economic competition with each other for low paid jobs from the multi-nationals.

But they have shown that they cannot deliver the slightest moves to 'parity of esteem'. The multi-party talks are a joke as bigots like Paisley and Trimble argue over where people are seated.

The reality is real change which destroys sectarianism will never come from the top. It has to be forged through struggle and unity from below.

# No going back



**THE MOOD** throughout many Catholic areas is that there will be no going back to 1969. This time masses of people are more confident that they can resist the RUC and the Orange bigots.

In the Derrybeg estate in Newry, hundreds of people built barricades and kept out the RUC for a few days. In parts of North Belfast, defence organisations have been formed to patrol their areas and kept out loyalist thugs. Most spectacularly, the 2,000 strong riot in Derry on the night of the 12th showed that many are willing to fight back.

## Effects

This resistance has already had two major effects. It has inspired a whole new generation in the South to see that struggle against the RUC as part of their own struggle. Socialist Worker meetings in the South on 'How to destroy the poison of Orangeism' have been packed out -- even when organised at short notice.

But the resistance also cuts through the notion of Orange superiority. If Trimble had gotten away with his march through Drumcree with only media sympathy being given to the Catholics, this would have encouraged every Orange loud mouth to feel that they can get away with it. The fight back in Derry, in particular, has shown that they cannot 'keep croppies down'.

This is why it is so important to keep up the mass resistance. We need more marches, more sit down protests to protest at the role of the RUC in propping up the Orange Order.

## Failed

The key to the present period is recognising that there have been two other strategies which have failed. Telling people to get off the streets and look to an armed struggle has led to a dead end. But so too has telling people to wait for establishment politicians and the media to come to their assistance.

People power is the only way to generate solidarity through Ireland to turn the pressure on the RUC.



# Mass resistance the way forward

# NEITHER ARMED STRUGGLE OR CONVENTIONAL POLITICS

Gerry Adams has argued that 'sinister elements' may be behind that bomb in Enniskillen. He is absolutely right to argue that it plays straight into the hand of the Orange establishment who want a military crackdown.

Yet the republican tradition itself has always only offered two solutions — either the armed struggle or a move into conventional politics like Fianna Fail did in the South. Tragically both have failed.

Bombs like that in Enniskillen

— or in Manchester, for that matter — are based on the idea that a small military group can inflict enough damage to force a rethink on the British ruling class. These actions grow out of a cynicism about the power of mass resistance.

But the reality of the last 25 years is that the tactic of bombing is completely counter-productive. It makes it far harder to gain solidarity among workers in the South. It drives Protestant workers back into the hands of loyalist paramilitaries.

### Closer

And above all it does not work. The bombing campaign of the last two decades did not bring a united Ireland one step closer — and a new campaign to get a better seat at the negotiating table would inflict more suffering for no tangible gain.

### Solution

Yet the other republican solution of seeking to enter the establishment will also fail. The Irish Times reported last week that 'government sources' in the South are pleased that Sinn Fein tried to 'calm tension on the streets'. It is a compliment that they could do without.

Any attempt to work with the Southern establishment or the right wing politicians in the US will lead to compromises which put back the struggle.

How could Irish American politicians who stand over discrimination against black people in the US care about oppression in Northern Ireland?

How could Fianna Fail politicians who favour attacks on Southern workers and help prop up the border, come to the aid of people who threaten the stability of partition?

After Drumcree, the encouragement given to people to line up like stage Irishmen and women and wave the Stars and Stripes for Bill Clinton has been shown to be a tragic farce.

### Alternative

There is a need for a political alternative to both these strategies. This has to start by supporting mass mobilisation like the Derry protests against the Union-

ist Mayor who swapped his chain of office for an Orange sash.

But it has to go deeper. This time around there needs to be a strong socialist movement which supports resistance from Catholics but also holds out the hand of friendship to those Protestants who are sick of the Orange Order.

### Arguing

This means arguing for class unity by challenging the idea that all Catholics have something in common and that all Protestants have a vested interest in supporting the Union.

It means seeing the fight in the North as part of an overall struggle to uproot capitalism and the arrangements of partition it foisted on Ireland.

That can only be done if there is a party that is willing to be both active and take up arguments.

That is what the Socialist Workers party is about.

## Protestants against the Orange Order

THERE ARE many more Protestant workers today who despise the Orange Order than in 1969. This fact, if properly understood, is key to the situation.

Membership of the Orange Order has dropped from 125,000 in the late sixties to 80,000 today. But the weakness of the Orange Order goes far deeper.

In the 1960s, Orange membership gave access to jobs and houses. Today it is a ticket to the unemployment exchange or low wages.

In the sixties, the link with Britain was a badge of superiority which fed into the idea that Protestants were better than Catholics. Today Britain is a tenth rate power that attracts multi-nationals by the cheapness of its labour.

### Command

In the past, the great institutions which Orangeism looked to like the monarchy could command awe and respect. Today Prince Charles is a pathetic figure who has more to say to his plants than his subjects.

All of this has undermined the certainty of loyalist ideas. Thousands of Protestants know that loyalty to Queen and country has only brought them low wages and poverty. This is why the source of sectarianism today is more likely to come from middle class suited bigots like Paisley and Trimble.

But Protestants will not turn their back on the Orange Order unless they are offered a real political alternative.

That has to start with opposition to all elements of anti-Protestantism in the riots. The attack on the

memorial to workers who were victims of the Teebane bombing was simply a disgrace. Attacks on Protestants homes in places like Claudy should be vigorously opposed by every socialist and republican.

### Linked

The mass resistance of Catholics will be a help to those Protestants who have started to question loyalism — but if it is linked with sectarian behaviour it will be a disaster.

As well as a clear political alternative is also required.

If Catholic workers are encouraged to believe that they have something in common with right wing politicians in the South like Albert Reynolds and Fianna Fail, they will have nothing to say to Protestants who have begun to question Orangeism.

What is needed instead is a political force that makes it clear that it wants to overturn the Southern state and build a workers republic where all gain.

Ninety years ago, James Connolly wrote that 'the national and economic freedom of the Irish people must be sought in the same direction — the establishment of an Irish socialist republic'.

He is still correct. But to take up that struggle we need a strong socialist party which organises Catholic and Protestant workers for the same goal and the same fight.

## WHERE ARE THE UNIONS?

The trade unions in Ireland played a major role in bringing thousands onto the streets to demand peace.

They condemned IRA bombs and demanded that they restore the peace process.

But when the Orange marches go through Catholic areas they stay silent. They did not even call protests against the murder of a young Catholic taxi driver during the heightened sectarian at-

mosphere.

IF the trade union movement called major demonstration to oppose this bigotry it would give tremendous confidence to both Catholic and Protestant workers.

By staying silent, they are doing a major disservice to all workers' and setting back the cause of workers unity.

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