

SINN FEIN OPPOSES COMMON MARKET MEMBERSHIP

Executive Statement gives the Reasons and Outlines the Alternatives

THE Caretaker Executive of Sinn Féin reiterates Republican opposition to the attempt by the 26-County Government to bring the area under its control into the Common Market on England's heels. The Sinn Féin position has been stated many times since this question was first mooted:

A weak and divided Ireland would lose its identity and be completely submerged in this alliance dominated by the large capitalistic enterprises of European colonial and ex-colonial powers.

The development of an independent Irish industrial arm would be made impossible, because of the uncontrolled competition from the giant industrial combines of Britain and Europe. No country has ever been industrialised under conditions of Free Trade.

Decisions governing our economy would be taken by the Brussels civil servants who administer the Treaty of Rome and there would be an enormous increase in the cost of living.

An independent foreign policy would be impossible and our country would become an outlying tourist and pasture area in an inward-looking, selfish power-bloc which is hostile to the development, independence and aspirations of the millions of former colonial peoples whom Ireland once led in the fight for freedom.

The E.E.C. countries are almost self-sufficient in agricultural produce, and in a few years will have a surplus. In the E.E.C. our main agricultural market would still be Britain and in that market Denmark, Holland and other agricultural suppliers also in the E.E.C. would take significant sections which the 26 Counties already have. We already have the lowest density of agricultural population in Europe. The flight from the land, bad as it is to-day, would reach unprecedented levels, as it has done in all the Common Market countries since the Market's inception.

It is significant that the neutral countries like Switzerland, Austria and Finland will not join the Common Market. Sweden is prepared to negotiate, but has stipulated that her neutrality must remain intact. It is likely that she will negotiate associate membership which means making a bilateral trade agreement with the Community. We could do well to follow the example of Greece, Spain, Yugoslavia and other countries and open discussions on associate status.

The policies of national sell-out of Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael over the past ten years, which culminated in the signing of the Anglo-Irish Free Trade Agreement in 1965, have made it more difficult than ever for the 26-County administration, even if it wanted to, to strike out on a course independent either of Britain or the Common Market. Already, with the tariffs reduced by only 50%, this Agreement is taking its toll. The country is flooded with English manufactured goods and the Balance of Payments deficit has soared. Nothing that has happened recently has invalidated the arguments put forward by Sinn Féin in opposition to membership of the E.E.C. and the Free Trade Area Agreement.

The party politicians and the other clients of British imperialism in Ireland will attempt to sell the Common Market idea to the people on the plea that it will free us from excessive dependence on Britain. This will be said by the very people who have made us so dependent. But Britain's hold on Ireland will be strengthened not weakened, if we enter the E.E.C.; only that the other West European powers will also have a say in running Ireland.

The alternative to membership of the Common Market is not the Free Trade Agreement with Britain. The alternative to both is the Sinn Féin programme for:

The establishment of a 32-County Sovereign Parliament and the achievement of political, economic and financial independence, which we have not had for centuries;

The use of the power of the state to protect and develop Irish industry;

The repatriation of the more than £800 million of Irish capital invested abroad;

The expansion of state industry and public investment, and the promotion of co-operative control of the means of production, distribution and exchange, to secure full employment for our people in useful, productive activities;

The use of physical controls on imports and exports to help balance our national payments;

Vigorous pursuit of trade links with countries other than Britain and the E.E.C.;

An expansion of demand on the home market by a programme of greatly extended social security and increased investment in housing and education to satisfy the most important needs of the people;

The speedy restoration of our native language and national culture which will enhance our national morale and provide the spiritual driving force for the achievement of these aims.

We are told that Free Trade with Britain and within the Common Market will bring short-term disadvantages and will call for sacrifices by our people. If sacrifices are called for, how much better would it not be to make them in pursuing the noble aims set out above which were, after all, the aims of our people for generations, rather than make them while embarking on a course of action which would mean the complete sinking of our national identity and the loss of our neutrality in a bloc of powerful nations.

Already, Mr. Haughey's Budget has brought taxation here more into line with E.E.C. policy. Increases in social welfare benefits are to be welcomed but are of doubtful benefit when Turnover Tax has been doubled. This is a regressive tax which hits hardest at workers and those on small incomes, because it puts up the price of essentials like food, clothing, furniture and housing. This shift from direct to indirect taxation, hurting the poorer sections of the community is bad and an indication of what we can expect if Messrs. Harold Wilson and Jack Lynch drag us into the E.E.C.

The Sinn Féin alternative to a national sell-out either to Britain or the Common Market is the only alternative which will preserve control of our destinies in Irish hands. Our programme will be opposed by the powerful big business and anti-national elements in Ireland who have no faith in the future of our nation and who see a future for themselves as local managers for British and foreign interests. Our programme is an alternative which will be opposed to the hilt by Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael who will see it as a threat to their own selfish interests. But it is an alternative that will appeal to the mass of the common people, workers, small farmers and small propertied sections. It will appeal, too, to all radical sections of our countrymen in the Six Occupied Counties Protestant as well as Catholic.

Sinn Féin pledges itself to work during the coming year to bring this alternative to national sell-out before the people of Ireland. We call on all members of the Republican Movement to take part in organising and campaigning towards this end in such appropriate ways as will be decided during the year. We also call on other national organisations, particularly trade unions and bodies concerned about preserving our national identity to live up to their responsibilities and to oppose militantly this sell-out by all means in their power.