

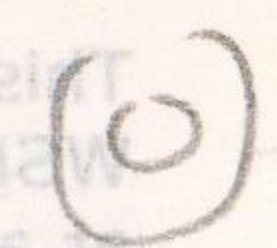
# *Crossing the Border*

**Organise!, Class Unity and the  
Partition of Ireland**



*a response to the WSM position paper on partition*





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Front Cover photo: working class kids and women digging up the pavers in a Belfast street, 1932, when for a while working class people united in Outdoor Relief agitation and came together in common cause to take on the Government, the Poor Law Guardians and to hurl pavers at the police.

**Crossing the Border: Organise!, Anarchism and the "Partition of Ireland" - a response to the WSM position paper on partition.**

Published by Organise! November 2004.



This pamphlet has been written in response to the updating of the WSM's position paper "The Partition of Ireland" which was amended at a WSM national meeting in July 2004. It is just that, a response, reflecting the broad range of concerns of members of Organise! with the WSM position paper, it is not a full account of our thoughts or position in relation to the situation in the north of Ireland. Organise! welcome the fact that, over some period of time now, the WSM have been reviewing their position paper in relation to the northern state and partition. Sharing the WSM's commitment to striving for class unity, in the struggle for anarchism and social revolution, we believe that this response represents an essential contribution to the debate on these matters.

Some of the discussion that has and continues to take place is a direct result of developments in the north around what is commonly referred to as the 'peace process'. We also feel that while Organise! have prompted and been involved in debates and discussions which have fed into, to some extent, the re-examination of this position paper - which we are glad to note is 'ongoing' - we are not responsible for the document as amended at the last WSM national meeting, nor did the presence of members of Organise! at that meeting imply endorsement of the document produced as a result.

We would like to apologise for the delay in compiling a response to this position paper, but it was felt that an in depth response, which attempted to deal with the issues raised needed time and consideration.

Throughout this pamphlet we deal with the WSM document point by point, on some occasions grouping points together, detailing our concerns with each section or group of points and stating our agreement where appropriate, we conclude with some more general comments on the document. Each section of the WSM position paper is reproduced in full.

If at times this document seems repetitive this is largely due to its nature as a response to the WSM position paper which often repeatedly makes points which we believe need to be challenged by anarchists and those committed to class unity and social revolution particularly in Ireland.

1. As anarchists, we oppose imperialism and believe it cannot play a progressive role. In Ireland we have always opposed British imperialism. In opposing it we see no form of nationalism as offering a definitive solution to either the working class in Ireland or the working class across the globe. In the final analysis nationalism argues for a common interest between workers and bosses of one 'nation' against the workers and bosses of another. As anarchists we stand for international working class solidarity against all bosses.

We agree that nationalism of any description cannot offer a solution to the exploitation and oppression faced by working class people in Ireland and across the globe. As anarchists we are all opposed to nationalist ideologies which tie workers to their ruling class and put the concept of 'country', in reality the nation state (whether it actually exists or where nationalists are struggling to bring it into existence), above the primary division in capitalist society - that based on class. The working class exists globally and is exploited worldwide by capitalism; as such global working class solidarity against all bosses is essential in any struggle against the capitalist system. However the standard, quite simplistic, definition of imperialism and by extension anti-imperialism is problematic when applied to the north.

We must remember that 'anti-imperialism' is a concept informed to a large degree by Leninist and other authoritarian 'socialisms' that have no problem with one state replacing another and who see the role of a nation state/government as non-problematic as long as the 'correct' leadership is in charge - this means that their anti-imperialism, like the rest of their political outlook, is based on radically different assumptions to those of anarchists.

The anti-imperialist position cannot, we believe, take adequate account of the fact that the most significant 'British' presence in Northern Ireland consists of a majority of the areas population - it is not the case that the British presence can simply be represented in terms of British troops or direct rule ministers. Many of the people who identify themselves primarily, or to some extent, as British (and there is no straightforward definition of what 'Britishness' means even to those adopting the label) are working class. We must also point out that the armed struggle conducted by the IRA over the past few decades led to a reduction in the amounts of people who felt they could accommodate an Irish identity, or element of this within, or as opposed to, the expression of Britishness.



Of course as anarchists we argue and struggle against nationalism, against the notion of a common interest between workers and bosses of one 'nation' against the workers and bosses of another, whether that nationalism is expressed as British or Irish. Nationalism is divisive and reactionary, whether it represents the dominant and institutionalised form in society or the 'underdog' nationalism that is struggling to assert its legitimacy.

2. However as anarchists living on the island of Ireland we have to deal with rather than ignore the divisions in the working class that exist based on communal identity in the north and the issues of state repression that continue around them. When we talk about "communal identity" we acknowledge that not all Catholics are nationalists, not all Protestants are unionists, and not all nationalists and unionists are religious believers. There are, however, two main communal identities, which can be summarised as Catholic/nationalist on one hand and Protestant/unionist on the other. In this paper the terms 'communal identity' and 'religion' are used interchangeably.

3. We reject the idea that there are any differences between workers from different religions on the island that make partition either desirable or inevitable. Rather we see partition as the main reason why conflicts based on religious divisions continue to exist.

We accept that in relation to what is sometimes referred to as a 'two traditions' model that the explanation of 'two main communal identities' is fair enough. This model does however exclude and marginalize those who do not fit exactly with these traditions - and we are not simply referring to the 'protestants' and 'catholics' who are atheists or the 'protestants' and 'catholics' who are not Unionist or Nationalist. This model excludes a wider diversity in society north of the border, an exclusion made all the more pertinent given the recent rise in visible racism here.

"We reject the idea that there are any differences between workers from different religions... that make partition either desirable or inevitable." The differences can really only be understood when it is admitted that they are essentially political as opposed to religious in nature, while materially as workers we have common interests which should, and Organise! believe must, override nationalistic sentiment and constitutional affiliation, it is a historic fact that the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries saw the development of modern Irish nationalism and modern Irish unionism. These are the two

dominant and mutually exclusive political outlooks in the 'island of Ireland' particularly the northeast. Pondering whether partition was 'inevitable' is quite strange reasoning and seems to be inextricably tied up with a nationalist historiography which sees the 'island of Ireland' as a natural and unquestionable political entity (as the title of the WSM position paper more than implies) which has been thwarted by perfidious Albion. British, perhaps more accurately the imperialism of a predominantly, though not exclusively, English ruling class has played a major role in Ireland but we have to acknowledge that there are other reasons why attempts at national, bourgeois, revolution have failed in Ireland. A major factor, tied into an increasing identification of Irishness with Catholicism in the 18th and 19th centuries, was the failure to win protestants to the struggle for Home Rule and for the cause of the 'nation'.

Following the Act of Union of 1801 increasing numbers of protestants - even many with previous involvement in the United Irishmen - became unionists, the bulk of these were concentrated in, but not exclusive to, the northeast. It is important to remember that the sense of economic grievance which developed in much of Ireland against the Act of Union was not universal - the Act had actually coincided with the industrial growth of Belfast and the surrounding area and therefore came to be seen as 'beneficial' by many.

The northeast of Ulster became an integral part of British industrial output centred on the industrial triangle of Belfast, Merseyside and Glasgow. Free trade throughout the empire and access to the overseas markets it provided were essential to the economy of Belfast and its periphery. It is worth pointing out that a sense of economic injustice seems to be historically linked to the development of anti-imperialist movements across the globe and the lack of such a sense of injustice has been used, in large part, to explain the lack of opposition to the Union in Scotland and Wales and the lack of development of nationalist movements in those two countries until very recent times. Such a sense of economic injustice in relation to the Act of Union was not a factor for the majority of inhabitants of the northeast of Ireland, while in the south and west of Ireland this was crucial to the development of nationalism.

As regards point 3 partition took place, as a historical fact, so we would suggest it must have been a 'historical inevitability' otherwise events would not have combined to produce partition. We can muse on the 'what ifs' of history as individuals but why elevate this to the level of the 'correct' political line? Should anarchists be concerned that the project to create a unitary Irish nation state



failed? The position on partition and use of 'island of Ireland' to describe a polity suggests we should. Organise! would suggest otherwise. The Irish nationalist project failed because it could not secure the necessary unity of purpose or agreement to make unity either desirable or achievable. Can we address the divisions in Irish society in terms of British occupation? This only appears possible given the discounting of a highly concentrated population of people in the northeast, of all classes, who opposed and continue to oppose the 'national sovereignty' project. And discounting this population only seems to make sense in terms of the 'false majority' argument of republicans and nationalists. The will of the majority of the Irish population was scandalously overturned by a minority with the help of the British empire sums up that argument. Sometimes it's simply presented as a malign act carried out by the British/English (read government/establishment) off their own bat.

Rather than partition per se it is more the ongoing adherence of much of the population of the north east to two mutually exclusive ideologies, the ongoing lack of resolution (without one side winning outright) and stability which contribute to the ongoing conflicts which in our opinion are not, as you state, 'based on' but rather drawn along religious divisions. If partition, as you believe, is the 'main reason why conflicts based on religious division continue' then it would follow that once partition is ended religious division and conflicts drawn along these lines will disappear. We can see no evidence to support such a belief. Sectarian conflict clearly predates partition and the establishment of the Northern Ireland state. Examples of such conflict stretch from the Battle of the Diamond in 1794 to the Home Rule riots of the 1880s. Thus we have no reason to regard the removal of partition as being a step conducive to the ending of sectarian conflict. If anything, if we can take Sinn Fein's word for it that the 100,000 plus legally held firearms (mostly shotguns) in the north, plus the R.I.R and P.S.N.I., are sites of Unionist power, we must maintain that an ending of partition would lead to further conflict rather than less. In terms also of Unionist and Loyalist reactions to the ending of partition in terms of an extension of the southern states jurisdiction northwards this seems the most likely outcome.

4. All sections of the working class have lost out as a result of these religious divisions. In the north the divisions in the working class make it more difficult but not impossible to unite against the bosses. In the north the divisions have historically meant that workers from a catholic background suffered state discrimination and were often the targets of loyalist and Orange attacks. [In the south, the birth of mass socialist politics

in the working class has been delayed for decades, Southern workers were subject to a theocratic state regime which not only denied abortion rights but also subjected the vulnerable, in particular children, to brutal regimes of 'discipline' based on physical and all too often sexual abuse.]

If by 'all sections of the working class have lost out as a result of these religious divisions' you mean all sections of the working class have suffered because of sectarianism practised and encouraged by the unionist state established in 1921, then yes our class as a whole suffered under unionist misrule from then until the introduction of direct rule. Despite the Craig policy of 'giving out bones' to loyal subjects there really wasn't that much to give out. As Craig himself put it - 'bones'.

Discrimination in employment was endemic prior to direct rule and remains a problem now, although the difference between the likelihood of unemployment between catholic and protestant males has narrowed in recent years. This narrowing of the gap is of course a result of higher unemployment among protestants (which has historically been high anyway) with the demise of 'traditional' textile, tobacco and shipbuilding industries. Further reductions in the numbers of police, security forces and their support staff will also impact positively on this differential.

It must also be pointed out that initial discriminatory practises in allocating jobs favoured Presbyterians in the early development of Belfast as an industrial town and city. It would appear that Presbyterian businessmen largely favoured their co-religionists when it came to employment. Catholics certainly made up the bulk of the poorest sections of the developing city's working class population but it should be noted that, as well as a well-to-do Anglican gentry, there was a small but significant section of poor, discriminated against 'Anglicans' who eked out an existence near the very bottom of society. Also, while there were in percentage terms approximately twice as many poor catholics in Belfast, in absolute, person-to-person, figures there was about one poor protestant to every poor catholic.

As well as ongoing discrimination the development of the apprenticeship system and trades unionism also acted to compound sectarian job allocation - with the effective passing of the family trade from a father to his sons and the fact that apprenticeships were got by way of relatives already with a company "putting in a good word".



We have always pointed out that in terms of death, injury, bereavement and imprisonment that suffering throughout the conflict in the north has been an almost exclusively working class experience. Working class people have on an ongoing basis also been victims of capitalism in often no less a horrific manner through injury and death at work, redundancies and the decimation, by developers or due to job losses, of entire communities. This 'war' has went largely unreported or under reported.

As to stating the working class suffers due to 'religious divisions' the terminology here isn't great - do we suffer because some of us attend different churches or is it because assumptions about your political outlook are often made on the basis of your confessional habits? It must also be pointed out that these days protestants also suffer from sectarian discrimination and attack in almost the same circumstances as working class catholics. As an example ongoing attacks have been carried out by nationalists on the Fountain area of Derry, the protestant Torrens estate now lies deserted following ongoing sectarian pressure and attack. Other sectarian attacks have been carried out against protestants and assumptions are made about political outlook on the basis of perceived religion. What has been described as 'chill factor', whereby people won't take a job in a particular area effects protestants and catholics alike, while smaller 'catholic' employers and entrepreneurs are just as likely to discriminate against protestants as is the case for protestant employers.

It is an indisputable fact that catholics suffered disproportionately under the unionist administration and for many years after it was dissolved. Was this the result of partition or the system of government pursued by the Unionist Party? They were of course inextricably linked - however the WSM admit that they got things wrong in the past as regards the 'irreformably sectarian Stormont state', and if it can be, and perhaps is being, reformed why does it represent any more a failed, or illegitimate, state than any other?

While the last years of the unionist government actually saw some reforms implemented (in keeping with all such efforts throughout Irish history a case of much too little too late) direct rule saw many of the original civil rights movements demands met. By then of course things had moved on.

That partition is responsible for the non-appearance of mass socialist politics in the working class in Ireland is surely a flight of fancy and mimics the worst of the 'labour must wait' school of thought - must wait because in this case they have to, not simply because someone tells them to. In many other countries there is a

stunted socialist movement, which is often quite removed from meaningful working class support let alone participation. In relation to the theocratic nature of the southern state it must be added that the power of the churches, both Catholic and Protestant, were increased greatly with the establishment of the northern state also. It was the combined force of the Catholic church and many of the Protestant churches that scuppered early plans for integrated secular education in the north. From the closing comments in this point we must ask if we are to take it that you blame sexual abuse on partition as well?

5. It is important to realise that partition is not a historic accident but rather the result of centuries of imperialism and struggles against imperialism. From the reformation onwards the British State encouraged religious conflict in Ireland in order to divide and rule.

6. The 1798 rebellion offered the greatest opportunity to simultaneously remove the British rule and to unite all the Irish people regardless of creed. Its defeat and the process through which it was defeated resulted in centuries of sectarian conflict. Most importantly was the encouragement of the Orange Order as an instrument of counter-revolution aimed at physically suppressing Catholics and radical protestants alike.

7. The partition of Ireland in 1922 was carried out in the interests both of British imperialism, which maintained military bases as a result, and of the northern bosses as it provided a weapon to divide the working class. At the time the economic interests of northern and southern bosses were opposed. The north was well developed with export orientated industry (linen and shipbuilding) and needed access to English markets. The south was underdeveloped and for industry to develop southern capitalism would have to be protected from cheaper English imports, partition therefore favoured both sets of bosses.

Can anything be referred to as a historical accident? Again the 'centuries of imperialism and struggles against imperialism' is based on a nationalist historiography that claims, as unionism claims, a primordial justification which is not based on any close reading of historical fact. Nations, we are sorry to have to point out, are created by would be ruling classes and the nation state aimed at by Irish nationalism was, like the movement which sought it, the result of the development of modern nationalism in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>



centuries. Unionism in Ireland shares the same modern origins and while both claim a much longer tradition these claims are based on the cherry picking of history – an approach anarchists should reject, but the WSM do not seem to have developed any criticism or realisation of this in this paper. Nor was partition the aim of the British government or of unionists such as Carson. The British policy was for Home Rule for Ireland, it was a policy that met with considerable resistance from unionists and the Conservative opposition.

That 'the British State encouraged religious conflict in Ireland in order to divide and rule' is another statement which should be looked at more closely, we are not denying that they engaged in religious conflict - historically this was usually in the context of religious conflict taking place across Britain itself. Was the deliberate policy of 'divide and rule' at the heart of this? That 'divide and rule' occurred is more likely to be related to the very natural, from the point of view of any system of government, suppression of the states enemies and rewarding of its allies. This is a phenomena not confined to Ireland post or pre-partition.

Point 6 places a great deal of political importance to what was a failed bourgeois national revolution, leading us to question why people who recognise that the working class and the bosses can never have any common interests hark back to the loss of this the 'greatest opportunity' to unite all the Irish people? Yes, while it was formed in the context of local sectarian violence in County Armagh, which Protestants did not have a monopoly of, the Orange Order at different times was encouraged when the ruling class found it useful. At other times it was itself suppressed.

The 'interests of British imperialism' are and were not as unified as this statement would have us believe. It was the ruling liberal party that, during different terms of office at Westminster, proposed the three Home Rule for Ireland Bills. On all three occasions it could be pointed out that the Irish Parliamentary Party held the balance of power at the heart of the empires administration. Other interests were of course opposed to any 'dissolution' of the Empire. The claim that Britain maintained military bases as a result of 'partition' is inaccurate. The maintenance of the treaty ports in the south, until 1938, cannot be explained as being the result of partition. Partition or not military bases in Ireland would have been maintained. It verges on paranoia to suggest, or repeat an oft heard but ill informed position usually spouted by the authoritarian left and left republicans, that partition was carried out 'to divide the working class'. This was not the reason for partition. In fact division in the working class pre-dated partition by a long time.

This is a position usually linked with Connolly's warning of a 'carnival of reaction' following the partition of Ireland – this 'carnival of reaction' and division of the labour movement happened as many workers divided along clear (and often openly sectarian) home rule and anti-home rule lines before partition was even suggested as an option. We agree that the uneven economic development of capitalism in Ireland meant that partition favoured both sets of bosses. It must be acknowledged that in the context of capitalism and without a viable movement towards socialism or workers control that it also favoured northern workers who 'enjoyed' better wages than the rest of Ireland, wages that in some industries were on a par with English wages. Workers who would have heard and largely accepted the arguments that Home Rule would mean protectionism that would damage export-based industry in the northeast, and would therefore damage their standard of living, had hard economic reasons to support the Union. By the same token southern workers could be persuaded that Home Rule and a protectionist economy would be beneficial to their interests.

8. The north was created in such a way to ensure a permanent unionist rule by tying Protestant workers to their bosses in return for marginal privileges in a 6 county rather than a 9 county "Ulster". These privileges were maintained by northern bosses (e.g. Brookborough's famous statement about employing 'good Protestant lads') and meant Protestant workers can be mobilised against Catholic workers demanding a fair share under Northern capitalism or unity with the republic. Examples of this in action can be seen in the Loyalist and police attacks on the nationalist ghettos in 1969 in response to a peaceful civil rights movement demanding basic democratic rights, in the 1974 unionist strike against power sharing.

The north was created in such a way as to ensure permanent unionist rule by abandoning the unionists in three of Ulster's nine counties (as Irish unionists in the south and west had been earlier abandoned) to ensure a more secure majority. Gerrymandering was used to reinforce this majority while the abolition of proportional representation (an original constitutional requirement of the new state was a p.r. voting system) was primarily aimed at staving off threats to the unionist vote which were not nationalist, notably the threat from labour candidates and independent unionists who could undermine what was seen as the given electorate of Official Unionism. Again sectarian discrimination in employment was a deliberate policy that was promoted to greater or lesser degrees dependent on circumstances. For instance the Outdoor Relief Strike of 1932 was followed by concerted efforts to



ensure that unionist employers employed good protestant 'lads and lasses' over catholics. There were limits to this even then and massive levels of unemployment continued on both sides of the 'religious divide' until well into the second world war.

At odds with the assertion of mobilisation of privileged protestant workers against unprivileged catholics is the fact that most sectarian riots and attacks on catholics, and attacks on protestants by catholics, took place in interface areas between the poorest sections of Belfast's protestant and catholic populations. This is the case to this day with the social conditions and often even the location of the interfaces remaining relatively unchanged.

Why are demands from catholic workers for a fair share under capitalism conflated with demands for unity with the Irish republic? Of course unionist opposition can be easily mobilised against the later. Why also is the extension of a southern capitalist state northwards equated with positive social reform? While republicans were able to effectively link the idea that Ireland's problems would be solved once national unity was attained with resistance to a discriminatory northern state is this either a progressive goal or one that offers any opportunity for building sustainable class unity? Mobilisations against power sharing and the Anglo-Irish Agreement were motivated by a desire to keep the southern government out of 'Northern Irish affairs' and were not primarily motivated by communal anti-catholic sentiments.

9. British troops were not sent into the North in 1969 in order to keep the peace but rather to provide a breathing space for the northern security forces and to stabilise in the interests of the British ruling class what they thought could have become a revolutionary situation. This remained their role, which is why we call for "Troops out now". In addition they were used also to break the back of any mass peaceful reform movement through actions like Bloody Sunday in 1972.

This type of reasoning or presentation runs into the counter argument that a self identifying 'British' population in Northern Ireland sees British troops, including those that are locally recruited, as 'their' troops - not an army of occupation but the army of the nation acting in the defence of the nations citizens. They are also, like working class people the world over, quite likely to have direct links of a family and friendship based nature with such troops. We believe that opposition to the presence of armed troops and police on the ground in the north would be better expressed in anarchist terms and in relation to our anti-militarism. Even though the

phrase was used for a while by Sinn Fein the demand for 'demilitarisation' is a much better one than the call for 'Troops Out Now'. The demand for demilitarisation can also extend from the demand that troops are removed from the streets, that the state military apparatus is dismantled to the call for the 'standing down' of militarist paramilitary organisations of both loyalist and republican persuasion.

10. Loyalism is a reactionary ideology in all its forms including those that try to appear socialist. It serves only to maintain sectarianism and Protestant privilege and protect the interests of the British and northern ruling classes.

11. Republicanism is a petty-bourgeoisie ideology and not a socialist one. Even those brands which claim to be socialist preach a theory in which workers must submerge their own interests and fight alongside their Catholic bosses until a united Ireland is achieved. Nevertheless it has considerable working class support in the north, but because of its stages theory where labour must wait it has little attraction for Protestant workers and has no strategy for approaching Protestant workers.

However, republicanism unlike loyalism often developed significant left strands within it because, at least in theory, it was based on the 'equal rights of all' rather than the 'god given destiny of the chosen people'. After the rise of Leninism however these strands were deeply contaminated with authoritarian socialist ideas. Still they sometimes, as with the Republican Congress movement of the 1930's, could win support from the northern protestant working class around the slogan of the workers republic. Although we and other anarchists have used that slogan as in the past, it is no longer useful shorthand for why we have different politics to republicans, so we prefer to simply say that we are for 'an anarchist Ireland'.

We believe that ALL forms of nationalism are reactionary and are disappointed to see the equation of Irish nationalism with republicanism used as a cover to avoid addressing this in relation to these two points. The use of 'republican' followed by 'Catholic bosses' gives away the contradiction here. There is also a problem of terminology in point 10. We must ask exactly how Loyalism, which is usually associated with working class protestants, serves to maintain Protestant privilege? Surely it would need more economic



muscle to achieve this or is this simply a case of using Loyalism in this context to cover all the variations on unionism?

The first paragraph of point 11 ends with a rather confusing fudge on republicanism "it has considerable working class support in the north, but because of its stages theory where labour must wait it has little attraction for Protestant workers and has no strategy for approaching Protestant workers". So which is it to be? Support it because it has considerable working class support, which we should not have to point out is based in one 'community' (and which also applies in the case of Loyalism), or not because of its 'stages theory' and the 'little attraction' and 'no strategy' for winning protestant workers?

The next paragraph compounds the confusion. The 'equal rights for all' are not inclusive of the right not to be incorporated into a unitary Irish state. The 'god given destiny of the chosen people' is a caricature of unionism which does not recognise the diversity of opinion within unionism and which would be meaningless, if not insulting, to many unionists. It serves to reinforce the demonisation of one section of Irish society while elating the position of other protagonists in the conflict. The oft-cited Republican Congress of the 1930's is not proof that republicanism could "win support of the northern protestant working class around the slogan of the workers republic". The branch of the Congress on the Shankill Road that has become the stuff of left republican legend does not amount to the "northern protestant working class". In the context of what follows this appears as a stretched attempt to justify past use of a left republican slogan by the WSM. What other anarchists have used that slogan in the past? We are unaware of any in Ireland, most anarchists being aware that a republic is simply a state without a monarchy and that, as in the Soviet Union, China, Yugoslavia, Cuba, etc., the term workers republic, like workers state, is a contradiction. Even if other anarchists in Ireland have used this slogan we would argue that they were wrong in doing so. The real use of the term, an attempt to appeal to the left of the Irish nationalist movement, is apparent when viewed in relation to this position paper as a whole. The aim of "an anarchist Ireland" when read in relation to the document as a whole would seem to reinforce, or at least perpetuate, mythical nationalist notions about the sanctity of Ireland as a political unit.

12. The tactic of armed struggle, as carried out by the Republicans was never capable of achieving a solution as it was incapable of delivering a military victory over the British army. In addition the British ruling class cares little for the deaths of individual soldiers in its army.

Furthermore a 'commercial bombing campaign' will always, whether deliberately or not, cause civilian casualties and heighten sectarian tensions.

13. The armed struggle was also faulted because it relied on the actions of a few, with the masses left in either a totally inactive role, or one limited to providing intelligence and shelter to the few. It is claimed that it did serve to maintain the gains made in the 60s and early 70s. The mass campaigns (civil disobedience, rent & rates strike, street committees, etc.) would have been a far greater protection for the gains won than the elitist militarism of a few.

For how long did the leadership of the republican movement seriously believe that the British could be militarily defeated? From quite an early stage the tactic of armed struggle was, we would suggest, aimed at forcing Britain to the negotiating table, a stage at which the myth and propaganda of a military victory was still being peddled - and certainly believed by many. No state cares much for the deaths of its soldiers, its what they are there for - to kill and be killed in defence of the realm. Mention of the 'commercial bombing campaign' and the link to the deliberate 'or not' civilian casualties and the heightening of sectarian tension is a fair enough observation. However the omission of reference to deliberate sectarian killings carried out by republicans and not linked to 'commercial bombing' speaks volumes in terms of bias and a lack of will to deal with the reality of much of the republican campaign.

14. The British state is responsible for the long history of armed conflict in the North. As long as the British remain in Ireland there is likely to be armed resistance, especially when there is no mass movement to demonstrate an alternative to militarism. Every generation has thrown up a new group of people willing to physically fight for "Irish freedom". Permanent peace can only come about after British withdrawal. When the 1994 ceasefire was declared we welcomed it because the ending of the armed struggle opens up real possibilities for revolutionary politics. We have opposed the republican armed struggle because it was an impediment to working class unity. It was based on wrong politics, it was a wrong strategy and it used wrong tactics. However we refused to blame the republicans for the situation in the six counties. Their campaign was the result of a problem and must not be confused with its cause. We



have been clear that, in the final analysis, the fault lies with the continuing British occupation.

Again we see many of the problems we identified with earlier points in this paper. The second sentence of this point reads not simply as an attack on those people who regard themselves as 'British' (not a very clever way in which to win people from nationalist myths and notions binding them to the particular nation state of their choice) but worse could be read as a declaration that the very existence of people identifying themselves as British in the north-east of Ireland is what has brought the armed 'resistance' down on that section of our society by dint of their very existence. There seems to have been very little thought here as to the implications of this statement or other statements like it.

"Every generation has thrown up a new group of people willing to physically fight for "Irish freedom", could someone explain what "Irish freedom" actually means?

Again we have "Permanent peace can only come about after British withdrawal" with no thought to the implications of such a statement. This can be read as reactionary anti-British sentiment (as it can, and further will, be read as a statement about people who identify themselves as British as opposed to a statement made in relation to a particular administration/government/military presence).

Not only has the republican armed struggle been an "impediment to" working class unity so to is the holding onto mythical notions about the sanctity of Ireland as a single, but thwarted, polity - particularly in the context of a capitalist society.

The IRA's armed struggle was based on wrong politics, it was a wrong strategy and it used the wrong tactics. While republicans cannot be singled out for blame in relation to the situation in the six counties surely they are not entirely blameless? Again, this point ends with a statement on continuing "British occupation" - see above.

15. We did not see the IRA ceasefire as a sell-out. Rather it is merely the natural progression of nationalist politics, which was always going to lead to a compromise with imperialism.

16. The IRA is not responsible for the creation of or the continuation of sectarianism. Rather it was re-created in 1969 as a response to the sectarian attacks by the security forces and loyalist

paramilitaries on what had been a peaceful civil rights movement.

17. We condemn all sectarian actions (i.e. those carried out because of religion) including any that may be carried out by republicans. We combat sectarianism not by appeals to the state forces for protection but by calling for workers to act through strikes, demonstrations etc against such outrages.

We condemn without reservation the 'punishment' beatings and shootings of people accused of 'anti-social behaviour' or drug dealing carried out by both republican and loyalist paramilitaries. These actions are nothing more than a crude attempt by these groups to maintain control over what they view as 'their communities'. They are authoritarian thuggery. It is no justification for these groups to claim that there is a 'policing vacuum' or that the communities are pressurising them to act. None of these groups have any mandate to enforce their 'rule of law'. They certainly have no right to set themselves up as judge, jury and executioner.

This starts with what seems to be a straightforward statement of fact, although we would replace imperialism with unionism and the British state given our earlier concerns. Yes the IRA was recreated on the back of the response to the civil rights campaign - with republicans, with increasing success, linking the issue of unity to the 'only' possibility of a solution to the oppression being faced at that time. As the WSM now admits that they were wrong in regard to the supposedly irreformable nature of the Orange State, then surely the accuracy of this link needs to be re-examined.

We welcome the condemnation of all sectarian attacks in point 18 but this is somewhat undermined, and appears mealy-mouthed, given the use of "that may be" in relation to sectarian attacks which have undoubtedly played a part in the armed campaign of republicans, particularly, although not exclusively, in the earlier years of the troubles. Those actions which workers have taken together as workers against sectarianism along the lines of the actions the WSM "call for" have and will continue to take place whenever necessary. Further we would agree with the condemnation of the actions of loyalist and republican paramilitaries in dealing with 'anti-social' behaviour and setting themselves up as police, judge, jury and executioner in working class communities. The area of policing and alternatives to state and paramilitary versions of it and the notion and practice of community policing, or



communities policing themselves, is an area that requires much more attention from anarchists.

18. The Good Friday Agreement came about as the culmination of Sinn Féin's strategy for over a decade which was aimed at building various broad fronts around different issues in an attempt to gain respectability by pulling in Fianna Fáil members and church figures. This involved dropping all references to socialism to maintain unity with "the broad nationalist family". This strategy was never going to deliver a united socialist Ireland, or any other significant improvements apart from those associated with "demilitarisation". It represents instead a hardening of traditional nationalism and the goal of achieving an alliance of all nationalists - Sinn Féin, Fianna Fáil, SDLP, the Catholic Church and "Irish America". Such an alliance has nothing to offer working class people, North or South, and we oppose it outright.

The Good Friday Agreement offered nothing except a sectarian division of the spoils and in fact copper-fastened sectarian divisions. We called for an abstention in the referendum on this deal, refusing to align ourselves with those calling for a 'no' vote, pointing out that they have no alternative to offer, just more of the same conflict that has ruined tens of thousands of working class lives. The republican forces of the 32 County Sovereignty Committee, the Real IRA, Republican Sinn Féin, Continuity IRA and the Irish National Liberation Army has nothing but increased communalism and sectarianism to offer. The loyalist opponents-whose rallies were attended by vocal supporters of the Loyalist Volunteer Force death squads -wanted a return to the time when Catholics lived on their knees in fear.

The Assembly set up under the 'Good Friday Agreement' demonstrates quite clearly the fact that the net effect of this agreement is to copper-fasten sectarianism, with elected members having to declare themselves 'nationalist' or 'unionist' in order for their votes to count. The political parties have shown that they are capable of plenty of agreement on economic issues - with no disagreement over budgets or spending plans, but issues such as what flowers should be put on display in the lobby or what flags should fly over Ministerial buildings are used to hype up the divisions between the two sides

19. The huge vote, North and South, in favour of the agreement -whatever else it might have indicated - showed quite clearly that the vast majority of people do not want a return to pre-ceasefire violence. Any return to armed struggle will deliver only more hardship and repression for working class people in the six counties.

We reiterate our view that permanent peace and an end to sectarianism will only come about after a British withdrawal and that working people from both communities must be convinced of the need to make the fight one for anarchism, not for 'national rights'.

Point 18 is quite accurate but the earlier section could be seen as implying that had Sinn Fein remained true to their particular brand of socialism that we could be on the road to a more satisfactory outcome. That would not hold up to much scrutiny, particularly from an anarchist perspective - or more fundamentally on its likelihood of ever attaining any semblance of class unity in the north or across Ireland.

We agree with the first section of point 19 but this does not seem to square well with some of the earlier points in the document which see ongoing armed struggle as inevitable given the ongoing "British presence". Nor does it sit well with the second section of the point.

20. [When the potential exists we should argue for northern workers to refuse to handle any work for the security forces. We are opposed to any military campaign aimed at workers who do handle security force work].

21. [On occasions where the potential exists (e.g. the 1981 hunger strikes) we should argue for the creation of a mass movement playing an active role through demonstrations, strikes etc and against any attempt to turn such a movement into one of passive support either for the military campaign or for the electoral one].

We understand that points 20 and 21 are referred for further consideration. We would like to point out that the "mass movement" of point 21 can and never will create a class based, genuinely, mass movement as it is framed purely in relation to the republican/nationalist struggle. A genuine mass campaign cannot be based on a minority of the population who, given the very basis



of their campaign and nature of their politics, have no prospect of mobilising support on a class basis. The problem with this point is also that it does not imply or state any criticism of republicanism, just its use of elitist methods - be that electoralism or armed struggle - and a suggestion of methods it could attempt to use that, if we follow this reasoning, would find more favour with anarchists. This is not the type of reasoning we could support or see any benefit in for the working class.

22. Sectarian divisions continue in the north today. We recognise that many of the protests that take place around these divisions are intended to inflame them and further divide the working class rather than solve them. Often this is for the electoral gain of local politicians or to provide a continuing role for paramilitaries.

We are not neutral on these issues. We do not support the right of any group to determine who may or may not live, work or pass through 'their area'. The one exception we make to this is the parades of the Orange Order and related institutions because of the role they continue to play in inflaming sectarian hatred. But we argue opposition to the Orange Order must be built on a class rather than religious basis. This means great efforts should be made to winning workers from a protestant background to opposing the order.

We generally support all calls for public enquiries and all attempts to limit police powers even where we disagree with the politics of those who are the victims of the repression.

We argue for integrated housing and schooling and the removal of all religious and nationalist symbols from public buildings and streets by those who use them. We argue for the ending of any clerical input into any school or hospital that receives public funding in the north just as we do in the south.

The first two points are fair enough although in the absence of a more militant, let alone revolutionary labour movement it is difficult to imagine how opposition to the Orange Order could be built on this basis at present. It should also be noted that the areas in which the Order has been involved in confrontation that it has bucked the trend toward decline and actually seen some growth. A statement of "general support" for public enquiries probably needs more critical analysis and comment - particularly given the nature

of public and independent inquiries in the north (and most other places they have taken place that we are aware of). Perhaps anarchists could and should start to develop our ideas in relation to other forms of inquiry. Attempts to limit police powers are less problematic but we must realise that they are in a very real sense limited and reversible - and in an international climate of 'anti-terrorism' actually getting less and less likely as the type of policing which to some extent set Northern Ireland apart becomes more and more the accepted norm in the west.

We agree with the final section of this point.

23. As anarchists we work for unity both between Catholic and Protestant workers and between British and Irish workers. The potential for unity has been demonstrated on a number of occasions in the history of the north including the 1907 Dockers strike and the outdoor relief strike of 1932 when the Falls and Shankill rioted in support of each other. More recently we have seen united actions in defence of the National Health Service and against sectarian intimidation. Smaller examples of such unity are constantly thrown up in workplace struggles in the north.

No real disagreement with the specific points although there is still a refusal to acknowledge the identification as British of workers in the north which places British workers firmly and exclusively on the other side of the Irish Sea.

24. We recognise that although Protestant workers have marginal advantages over Catholic workers these are far outweighed by the disadvantages faced by the division of the working class which means northern workers, both Catholic and Protestant are worse off in terms of housing, unemployment and wages than any comparable sized area in England. These are the fruits of partition.

The working class as a whole is worse off now than in any other comparable area in Britain as a whole or the Republic of Ireland. We would refer you to the Democratic Dialogue report, Bare Necessities, published in October 2003 for an in depth study of poverty in Northern Ireland. Again it seems to be a leap of logic to assert that this can be explained as being the "the fruits of partition".

25. It is therefore in the interests of Protestant workers to break with their Protestant bosses and



loyalism and fight alongside Catholic workers both in day to day industrial struggles and for an anarchist Ireland.

This sets out a view of working class Catholics and Protestants in the north that is not particularly related to reality. There is no longer any significant section of Protestant/unionist employers but more fundamentally it sets Protestant workers as those tied to, as you have described it earlier, a reactionary ideology which they must break with while no similar demand is made of Catholic workers in relation to Irish nationalism. It also seems to be saying that Catholic workers are the section of the working class that is involved in "day to day industrial struggles" and Protestant workers are by implication missing from those struggles. More ludicrous is the idea that Catholic workers be joined in the fight "for an anarchist Ireland". Do the Catholic section of the working class realise that they are fighting for this? Again the reference to an "anarchist Ireland" is in keeping with nationalist historiography and the myth of the nation-state, or as it explicitly states "anarchist", in keeping with the sanctity of Ireland as a polity which is bound up in this version of history and mythology. This is not to mention the fallacy of suggesting that we can have an "anarchist Ireland" any more than Russian workers could benefit from Stalin's "socialism in one country". Surely we are internationalists struggling for the establishment of a global anarchist society.

26. In the past the national question has been used before by northern bosses to split common struggles of Catholic and Protestant workers. It is therefore not possible to maintain the unity won in economic struggle without breaking the Protestant workers' commitment to loyalism and committing them to the fight for an anarchist Ireland.

27. Our strategy should be geared toward involving ourselves in the struggles of Northern workers and in the course of these struggles breaking the loyalties tying the workers to the bosses of either religion and so enlisting them in the fight for an anarchist Ireland.

These seem to simply reflect progressively worse rephrasing of point 25. The national question has not only been used by the northern bosses to split workers, it has been used by both nationalists and unionists, by both sets of clergy and effectively by anti-imperialists. The insistence on ending partition (with the implication that the prods will come to their senses) as a prerequisite to class unity and class struggle splits workers in struggle just as effectively as any set of bosses have.

Again Protestant workers must be split from Loyalism but Catholic workers do not need to be won away from Irish nationalism. "Anarchist Ireland" is becoming mantra like in its repetition and like most mantras it is essentially a hollow and meaningless expression that detaches us from the revolutionary vision and goal of global social revolution and transformation.

28. In order for this approach to succeed we must never hide our opposition to repression and our anti-imperialism, we must attempt to link these with the on-going struggle.

No, we must never hide our opposition to repression but we have still not been presented with a definition of anti-imperialism or imperialism that is unproblematic in application to the north.

29. The struggle to achieve workers' unity in the North can not be separated from the struggle to build an anarchist workers' movement in the south. Such a movement in the south attacking both capitalism and the dominance of religious law will be a great spur to winning over Protestant workers in the North. The Catholic Church's position of power in the South has been severely weakened over the last decade. However it still maintains a dominant role in crucial areas such as education and health. The complete smashing of this dominance will help in the building of common links between northern and southern workers.

Undoubtedly the struggle for workers' unity in the north cannot be separated from the struggle to build an "anarchist workers' movement" in the south. Nor can it be separated from working class struggles or the building of such a movement in England, Scotland and Wales, or for that matter internationally. We cannot accurately predict however where the inspiration and example that will be a 'spur' to workers will come from geographically. It may well be the case that the advance of such struggles could emerge in the south or north of Ireland, anywhere across these islands or elsewhere. While a working class movement committed to workers' control and an end to clerical domination in the south would be welcomed it seems unlikely that this movement would win much support or act as a spur to many Protestant or unionist workers if it held the ending of partition as a central tenet. It is more likely to be seen as, and certainly would be portrayed by unionist politicians as, Irish nationalism in another guise. Something which would surely hinder its likelihood of winning large sections of workers to a battle in pursuit of their common class interests.



30. We should aid British anarchist groups in developing a clear perspective on the national question committed to breaking British workers from any support for the Rule of the British State in Ireland.

First of all we need to see a clear perspective developed by anarchists in Ireland. We do not believe this WSM position paper represents one. The use of the phrase "national question" implies in and of itself that a non-existent unitary nation-state has an inherent claim to legitimacy - this is a truly strange notion for anarchists to support. What we should be doing is uniting with workers - 'British' (wherever they live), 'Irish' and workers across the globe - in our struggles and advancing these struggles towards the elimination of capitalism and all states.

#### Short Term Perspectives

1. The political organisations linked to loyalist paramilitaries have become more active since the 1994 loyalist ceasefire. While the Progressive Unionist Party claim to be socialist it is important to remember where they have come from. They are the public face of the UVF, which waged a blatantly sectarian war against the nationalist population of the six counties for two and a half decades. Unless and until they renounce these actions, they cannot be considered part of the socialist movement.

We do not, however, agree with the position that socialists should not enter into debate with members of these parties. It is only through such debate that the ludicrousness of their position of claiming to be socialist while at the same time pledging loyalty to a monarchy can be exposed. In order to win Protestant workers in the six counties to the fight for anarchism we must first convince them to break with the sectarian ideology of loyalism/unionism.

#### 2. Reform of the 6 county state.

We previously held that the 6 county state was irreformably sectarian. However the current peace process may result in a state apparatus that is divided into feuding sectarian forces on the one hand and the encouragement by these politicians of communalist sectarian conflict on the other. It appears that capitalism being unable to step

forwards has stepped side-wards in a manner that does nothing to resolve grassroots sectarian conflict but overall results in a 'parity of intervention' by the state in these conflicts.

As regards the first section of point 1 could we not apply the same reasoning to Sinn Fein and the IRSP, the paramilitary wings of which, albeit on a smaller scale, also engaged in blatant sectarian attacks. Again the absence of any desire to break catholic workers from Irish nationalism is in essence sectarian. It would also seem as much a pre-requisite to committing these workers to the fight for anarchism as breaking protestant workers from Loyalism. Or is the important goal at this stage the undoing of partition before any attempt at workers unity, class struggle and advancing the struggle for libertarian socialism can be made?



**Stages Theory and Stages Theory Restated.**

The "Partition of Ireland" position paper while it includes statements of opposition to a stages theory effectively restates the stages theory and as such remains trapped in the same position of not being capable of building links across the divisions in the working class on the basis of common class interests. Class interests are made subservient to the task of ending partition, of "removing the British presence", of ending the "British occupation", which is in reality the prioritising of the Irish national project above class interests and unity of struggle. We cannot hide our opposition to the northern state, or the British state, but we should not express that opposition as one that takes its place atop a hierarchy of opposition. As anarchists Organise! are opposed to the northern state, in whatever form of administration may eventually be devised, the British state and the Irish state.

Many nationalist and more specifically left-republican assumptions have been left largely unchallenged; at best we seem to have a halfway house, an image of a process of changing attitudes and analysis that has not been brought to its logical conclusion. Some of the amendments that have gone through actually seem to represent the success of a tendency going in the other direction and seeking to preserve the left-republican analysis much in evidence in this document. Until this is resolved this position paper, while containing elements of progress, will not develop into a workable or accurate analysis and statement of intent or provide a workable strategy for uniting northern workers, let alone northern and southern workers, in struggle.

**The Colonial Relationship.**

Some historians have attempted to portray the Act of Union of 1801 as an attempt at ending the colonial relationship through integration into a single political unit. For some this is seen as an exercise in consolidating an increasingly centralised state power, and while this approach can be taken the ongoing colonial nature of the relationship between Westminster and Ireland between 1801 and 1922, and Northern Ireland from 1921 up to the present day is undeniable. From the establishment at the time of the Union, or perhaps more accurately maintenance, of an appointed administration at Dublin castle, along with a supporting civil service (something not included in the terms of reference of the Act of Union itself), through to the more recent implementation of direct rule and the proroguing of Stormont in 1972, to the present day period of direct rule which sees direct rule ministers implementing wide-ranging changes to local government and attack after attack

on the working class in the north, provide evidence of this. Westminster still exerts an influence that overrides local political opinion and organisation, both unionist and nationalist, when Westminster feels this is necessary. The greatest victims of this colonial attitude in recent times may well prove to have been the Unionist 'community'. However the existence of such a colonial relationship does not necessarily lead to automatic support for Irish nationalism even in the guise of anti-imperialism. Many Unionists have identified the colonial nature of the relationship between Westminster and Northern Ireland as a problem. Yet for Unionists the 'solution' is usually presented in terms of full integration and participation in the government at Westminster, or alternatively in terms of greater devolution and more meaningful local control. The present phase of direct rule is also providing our local politicians with the enviable luxury of ineffective semi-permanent opposition. They were never adverse to implementing cutbacks, or giving certain cutbacks a distinct sectarian twist, but they must in reality relish the fact that the direct rule ministers seem intent on getting the worst of the attacks out of the way before there is any re-establishment of the Assembly.

**No War But The Class War**

Opposition to partition is traditionally nothing more than the desire to see the establishment of a unitary Irish nation state governed from the Dail, while the opposed view which wishes to see partition maintained is expressed in terms of preserving the Union or more negatively as opposition to the Irish nationalist project.

Both sides stake claims to legitimate government while we as anarchists surely reject Statism and regard all forms of government as illegitimate. Surely it is more useful for anarchists to be developing ideas about the possibilities we see for the future in changed economic and social relations and how we develop, as opposed to set obstacles in the way of, working class unity in a struggle aiming towards real freedom across these islands and internationally. We should do this on the basis of our own tradition, stressing our belief in workers control, federalism and internationalism. Instead of tinkering about with particular ideological histories set firmly in the 'dual narrative' of Irish history we should strive instead to challenge the constructions and myths of our history/histories. These are the myths that have lain at the heart of all attempts at creating and maintaining nation states and of binding us more successfully to our masters and exploiters. We believe that the slogan 'no war but the class war' provides a good guide to the attitudes of the global and local bosses, and the



Organise!, Anarchism & 'The Partition of Ireland' - a response to the WSM Position Paper on Partition.

politicians who carry out the agenda of global capital. It is an attitude that we must adopt as our own. This does not translate into ignoring oppression and discrimination but opposing it with the same resolve no matter what quarter it emanates from. We believe that ending partition cannot be prioritised over the smashing of both states in Ireland, nor do we believe it to be a necessary, effective or even desirable precursor to social revolution. We hope we can work together with members of the WSM in struggling towards and promoting our joint goal of successful social revolution. At present however this position paper offers no more opportunities for building effective class unity in the north than have various other variations on the stages theory that have gone before it.

**No War But The Class War**

Some analysis that has not been brought to its logical conclusion. Some of the amendments that have gone to represent the success of a tendency in the other direction and opposition to partition is traditionally nothing more than the desire to see the establishment of a unitary Irish nation state governed from the Dail while the opposed view which wishes to see partition maintained is expressed in terms of preserving the Union or more negatively as opposition to the Irish nationalist project. Both sides claim to legitimate government while we as anarchists surely reject Statism and regard all forms of government as illegitimate. Surely it is more useful for anarchists to be developing ideas about the possibilities we see for the future in changed economic and social relations and how we have long opposed to set obstacles in the way of working class unity in a struggle aiming towards real freedom across these islands and internationally. We should do this on the basis of our own tradition, stressing our belief in workers control, federalism and internationalism. Instead of tinkering about with post-war ideological histories set firmly in the dual narrative of Irish history we should strive instead to challenge the constructions and myths of our history histories. These are the myths that have lain at the heart of all attempts at creating and maintaining nation states and of binding us more successfully to our masters and exploiters. We believe that the slogan 'no war but the class war' provides a good guide to the attitude of the global and local masses and the period of direct rule which sees direct rule ministers implementing wide-ranging changes to local government implementing