

**Republican
lecture
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ECONOMIC RESISTANCE

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THE REPUBLICAN MOVEMENT seeks to establish a 32 county democratic socialist republic. Its two largest constituents, the I.R.A. and Sinn Fein, strive to hasten the institution of such a republic where 'all the children of the nation will be cherished equally'.

Both the I.R.A. and Sinn Fein play different but convergent roles in the war of national liberation. The Irish Republican Army wages an armed campaign in the occupied six counties while its elements in the 26 counties play a supportive role. Sinn Fein maintains the propaganda war and is the public and political voice of the movement. While Sinn Fein must support the war effort by nationalising the struggle in political terms, the organisation has a responsibility to advance the movement's social aims.

The movement must have a vital mass organisation of the Irish people on its side with which to confront the reactionary elements in the country who will attempt to stop us advancing beyond a British withdrawal situation and on to the socialist republic. Such a mass organisation will not be built purely by calling on the Irish people to support the I.R.A. The exploited masses must be made to identify with the national liberation struggle because they see a successful conclusion of the war as being essential for their own social and economic liberation.

The British enemy not only murdered our people and pillaged our national wealth. The British also imposed their economic system and cultural standards. While in the 26 counties the visible elements of the occupation have gone, the enemy's system prevails in all the 32 counties. They call it Free Enterprise, we call it capitalism. It is to hold Ireland secure for the native and multi-national exploiters that the British army stays in the 6 counties. It is to ensure their position of domination that the Orange and Green capitalists support British policy and repress those who oppose it.

It is the purpose of this lecture to identify the groups external to the Republican Movement who suffer under imperialist and capitalist rule in Ireland and to direct republicans as to how they can best organise such groups in their actual or potential resistance to injustice. Such organisation is not undertaken for opportunist reasons. The Republican Movement does not seek such involvement because of the laurels that might accrue, but because republicans have a duty, based on sound and long established, principled policy, to assist the people in their struggle.

The groups who most steadfastly have supported the Movement historically are the workers and small farmers. The significance of this should not be missed. Ever since 1798 it has been the poor who have constituted the bulk of the membership of the Republican Movement. In the first part of this lecture proper we will deal with these two groups. The reason for this is that small farmers and workers are repressed as social groups or classes. The other areas we will deal with, such as anti-nuclear power committees are 'interest' groups and as such require a different approach.

PART 1

The working class and trade unions

The working class is made up of wage and salary earners and their dependants. A wage earner is someone who sells his/her labour to the capitalist. People such as doctors are not working class. They mostly aspire to an upper class position. But leaving out the snobbery inherent in the professions, something else excludes them from the working class. The person who sells his labour is exploited by that alone, because such people are robbed of the wealth generated by their labour. In other words they are denied control over the profit from the sale of goods which could not have been produced but for their efforts.

It is the basic exploitation of wage labour by the capitalist class which means that no matter how good wages and conditions might be the worker is still exploited. This must be remembered while we move into the details of the repression of the workers. Every attack made on them is done in the interest of maintaining the highest possible profit margins.

The major burdens imposed upon the working class are:-

- LOW WAGES.
- BAD/NO HOUSING.
- UNEMPLOYMENT.
- POOR EDUCATION FACILITIES.

It is these evils which must be attacked. These four areas of repression are endemic. That is, they are inevitable under the capitalist system. While the degree of suffering depends on the boom/slump conditions pertaining at a particular time it must be noted that they are constant in capitalist society.

Low wages and unemployment

The mass organisation of the working class is the trade union movement, and it is to building in that area that we now direct ourselves.

There are some basic rules about building in the trade unions:-

- Join a trade union;
- Attend all your union meetings;
- Familiarise yourself with the union rules and structures;
- Attend any education or policy seminars run by your union or go to the evening courses on the trade unions;
- Examine any agreements between your union and employer.

If this line is followed an opportunity for nomination or election to shop steward or branch

committee level could be fairly easily attained. Republicans or sympathisers in a union locally or nationally should keep in touch with each other.

Certain pitfalls should be avoided at union meetings:-

- Don't speak on an issue unless you are familiar with it;
- Never personalise disagreements with union representatives or management;
- Don't move motions of a contentious nature without some prospect of success;
- Never preach at meetings or confine yourself to motions in pursuance of current republican aims;

Certain policies should never be departed from:-

- Oppose centralised wage bargaining on a principled basis;
- Build democracy within the trade union movement;
- Never pass a picket;
- Support the nomination of republicans and progressive individuals within your union;
- Engage with solidarity committees in support of militants in other unions;
- Never pass a chance to gain an elected position;
- Be discreet when lobbying or forming caucuses;
- Resist anti-union legislation;
- Fight police and court interference in industrial disputes.

Low wages and unemployment are caused directly by governmental policies in capitalist countries. This is proven by the fact that in time of economic recession real wages drop and unemployment rises while the supernormal profits of the major capitalists are maintained. A central aspect of such policies is the 'National Wage Agreement' type of agreement between the unions and employers. When opposing these agreements republicans will be confronted by political elements who vigorously uphold them. A strong bureaucracy exists within the ICTU. These are people who seek to reform the capitalist system and who refuse to take effective action against its excesses.

The NIC-ICTU is equally misled and currently supports the British government by de facto recognition of imperialistically imposed rule. Paralleling the revolutionary position on economic issues, republicans must also oppose the pro-Brit position of the unions.

The following work should be undertaken around economic issues:-

- Establish or join trade union committees against unemployment;
- Organise public meetings against monetarist government policies;
- Compile information on local unemployment figures;
- Press for the improvement of social welfare and health benefits.

Housing

Because of the primacy of investment by the private sector in house building, and the reluctance of successive governments to impinge upon this profitable area, there is a severe housing shortage in both parts of the country. The general shortage is worsened occasionally by the redirection of investment into office blocks, etc. As the statutes on house maintenance by private and public landlords are not enforced even within their limited powers, the housing stock is continually degenerating. The failure of both states to provide adequate public housing means that thousands of people have no home at all and thousands more live in appalling conditions in rack-rent accommodation. Those who do own a home are obliged to pay crippling mortgages. Many householders are still subject to ground rents.

In order to get involved republicans should join Tenants and Housing Action committees and pursue the following line within them:-

- Nationalisation of all building land;
- Nationalisation of investment capital;
- Emergency programme of state sponsored building;
- Strict control over private rents;
- Community control over planning;
- Charter of tenants' rights;
- Abolition of ground rents without compensation;
- Provision of special housing for the old and disabled.

These demands are of course being made on people who are opposed to them. But they fit in with republican policy, and the reason for posing them in a pre-revolutionary situation is that they are of immediate concern to the people. It is the working class that is worst hit by the housing crisis and who have a revolutionary potential which can be aroused around the seminal issue.

Education

In this section as in the preceding ones we will deal with education as it affects the poor. The current education system is not geared to suit the interests of ordinary people and with regard to vocational training is quite anarchic.

In conditions of extreme unemployment thousands of young people are thrown onto the labour market with no regard having been given to their future prospects of employment. The system is geared to producing sufficient numbers of adequately trained youngsters who will then be suitable as factory fodder. The higher level secondary school exams are the little bit of flexibility which are required to allow the especially gifted or monetarily secure youth to go on to some kind of third level education. At no stage is the arrangement geared to best equip each individual so as the individual and the nation may be better served. The universities do not relate to society and have an elitist attitude based upon the class origins of their governors.

Most schoolrooms are overcrowded. Many schools in rural areas do not cater qualitatively or geographically for the needs of the community. Hundreds of schools are run down or ill-equipped. The over-emphasis on exams alienates many pupils. The entire system is geared to perpetuating the values of our enemies who are opposed to progressive ideas of any kind and republicanism in particular. Our history is distorted and re-written.

In order to resolve this situation republicans should seek the following:-

- Diversion of major funds to education;
- Maximisation of community control over schools;
- Progressive education programme.

Small farmers

The problems encountered by small farmers are comparable in severity to those of the working class. Similar social and economic injustices are borne by them. But the rural areas suffer handicaps which are peculiar to them.

Because of the increasing domination of land ownership by large ranchers and the massive investment in land purchase by the banks, thousands of small farmers are unable to acquire enough acreage to hold economically viable farms. Those who do, face massive financial handicaps. With the inequity of farm subsidies between large and small farmers imposed by the E.E.C. most small farmers find it hard to maintain themselves above the poverty level and a significant number cannot even manage that. Thousands have left the land. These uprooted people have to build new lives in the major towns and cities or emigrate.

Two major factors dominate the small farming community. One is the crushing effect of unfair competition with the essentially industrialised big farmers and ranchers. The other is the social decay and its attendant problems caused by the economic factors touched on above. Because of market pressures and the heavy demand for agricultural produce, investment and subsidies overwhelmingly favour the larger agricultural units to the absolute detriment of the small farmers.

Outside of these market forces of the system, there is also a deliberate governmental policy to wipe out the small farmer so that the best land may be exploited by large combines with a loose relationship to the processing industry. The rural unemployment caused by this process causes a drift to the already imbalanced population on the eastern seaboard.

The historic manifestations of these social and economic forces are:-

- Mass emigration of youth;
- Decimation of rural communities;

- Extreme centralisation of population and administration;
- Underdevelopment of the social and economic infrastructure.

The small farming community has been, down the years, a pillar of the national struggle. The problems having been identified, we must proceed to deal with the issues around which organisational work may take place. These issues are:-

- Equitable distribution of land;
- Progressive regional policy;
- The development of co-ops related to locally based processing industry;
- Opposition to the expropriation of land and water;
- Exclusive right to our fisheries.

In the socialist republic many people will be needed for work on the land. Republicans must ensure that this role in the new Ireland will be played by and in the interests of the great mass of the rural population, the small farmers and farm labourers. (Though this document contains no specific analysis of fishermen's problems, the same general difficulties face them also.)

PART 2

Women and Youth

We will now deal with those major aspects of imperialist capitalist repression which effect those elements of our people who are not repressed as classes but still could be considered as other than the 'interest' groups mentioned earlier on.

These are women and youth.

Women

Women in Ireland today, as in every society dominated by capitalists, are repressed as a sex. That is, because of their physical difference from men they are subjected to a submissive and secondary role in life. Vast pools of human resource and talent are wasted. Approximately two thirds of Irish people are divorced from an effective and fulfilling role in the development of the nation and in the decision making process.

Sexist and male chauvinist notions prevail in the popular view of women. Women are 'silly' and 'weak', not quite up to the mental and physical standards that men have.

'Girls don't need an education'. 'Women belong in the home', are comments heard too often.

Girls and women are told in the education process and in the media that they can only fulfill themselves in relation to men and in serving men. Men are tough and assertive while women are gentle and passive.

Equal pay is still more a slogan than an actuality. Because of high levels of unemployment women are denied proper access to work.

Inadequate childcare facilities are the norm. Nearly all industrial and amenity complexes do not cater for creches. Most areas do not provide day care for pre-school children.

At all levels of society and at every level of most organisations women do not get the chance to attain positions of control or influence.

The majority of adult women, housewives, are isolated in the home. Women suffer terribly from this isolation. This is evidenced by the degree of depression among such women.

Women are essentially unpaid domestic workers and childminders. Those women who do work outside the home are usually in menial and underpaid jobs which reflect the drudgery they suffer in the home.

Capitalism cynically uses these unpaid workers to reproduce the values of the capitalist system. This may sound extreme but because of the social isolation and the barrage of propaganda directed at women most mothers, due to some degree of maternal concern for their children, tend to inculcate in their families the idea of a safe and undistruptive role in life.

How can this cruel and terrible suppression of women be ended?

Apart from promoting women internally within the Movement republicans should do the following:-

- Advance the cause of women's liberation;

- Condemn the repression of women at all possible forums;
- Join and support feminist organisations and advocate their policies so long as they fall within the policy of the Movement;
- Remember that working class women suffer most under this repression.

Youth

Children are the most vulnerable people in any society. No child can choose its place of birth. Lifelong poverty or prosperity depend on the circumstances into which the child is born.

Whereas the social and economic situation which an infant is brought into depends on luck, the future of that new person can be much more controlled.

As socialists we fight to ensure that such control is exercised to the maximum benefit of all.

Tens of thousands of Irish children exist below the poverty level. Because of the self-perpetuating nature of capitalist production this is a condition that awaits tens of thousands more.

Endemic unemployment, poor educational facilities and the anti-working class nature of capitalist society combine to ensure that most children will never gain their proper place under the sun. The majority of Irish kids face unemployment and if they are 'lucky' a lifetime of sweat, generating wealth for the thieves that rule our economic life.

Over 50% of Irish people are under 25 years of age. This statement has taken on the air of a cliché, but it is of great significance. The greatest threat to capitalism is its inherent inability to give our youth the prospect of even the most minimal of living standards or material comfort. The immediacy of this threat is shown when we consider that the burden of the war effort is being borne by the younger members of the Movement. Proof of this is the average of our prisoners, our prisoners who haunt the conscience of Ireland.

The victory of the Irish revolution will be the victory of our youth. But before we wax too poetic, let's look at some of the remedial measures we can take in the meantime.

The needs of young children parallel the needs of their mothers.

They are:-

- Ante-natal care;
- Creches and pre-school facilities;
- Increased allowances;
- Improved health care and clinics; and proper play facilities;
- School transport;
- Subsidised holidays/travel;
- Cultural and sports facilities.

For older children some specifics are required:-

- Organised recreational facilities, both social and sporting;
- Vocational advice;
- Free school at all levels;
- More social workers to cater for the problems of growing up;
- An end to garda/RUC harassment, etc.

Numerous groups putting these demands exist. On the question of education the USI is the most important organisation but members should also seek positions on local education and youth committees.

Young adults require the following:-

- Guaranteed time to finish at least second level courses;
- Free access to university or third level colleges;
- Intensive vocational guidance.

Most of these demands are obtainable to some degree in a pre-revolutionary Ireland. Realistic work on these issues is second, in the external activity of the Movement, only to trade union work.

PART 3

Culture and environment

The problems we have touched on so far are those which affect classes or groups. We must now deal with other areas, the bulk of which treatment will be merely to point out that work should be done in relation to existing organisations. Two areas that transcend social, sex, or age barriers, and which are of concern to all our people, are our culture and environment.

Culture

A major aspect of British rule was the attempted destruction of our language and culture. Many of the vestiges left to us since the partial withdrawal of enemy troops are being destroyed by governmental neglect and the destruction of the Gaeltacht areas by economic policy. A disastrous pastiche which could be called mid-Atlantic 'culture' now serves as a replacement of one of the greatest cultures seen in the world.

For work on culture and the language beyond practising what we preach, the best that republicans can do is to join Conradh na Gaeilge. This is not to dismiss lightly the issue but the Conradh is the only realistic area into which we can make a major input.

Environment

Many environment protection groups exist, such as An Taisce, and again the best that republicans can do is identify local attacks on the environment.

Areas of danger are:-

- Destruction of beauty spots;
- Pollution;
- Commercialisation of holiday places;
- Preservation of ancient monuments;
- Preservation of architectural history;
- Maintenance of our waterways.

Protection of our national resources, pending their nationalisation, is also essential. Republican policy on this should be propagated. The most important platform for this is within the trade union movement where much rhetoric must be turned into action.

The following issues also require a republican involvement notably the anti-nuclear movement. The rest which are simply listed have no revolutionary role, but membership of them

broadens our base and could assist our work at various times:-

- The G.A.A.;
- Other sporting associations;
- Drama and artistic organisations;
- Wildlife preservation groups, etc.

Summary

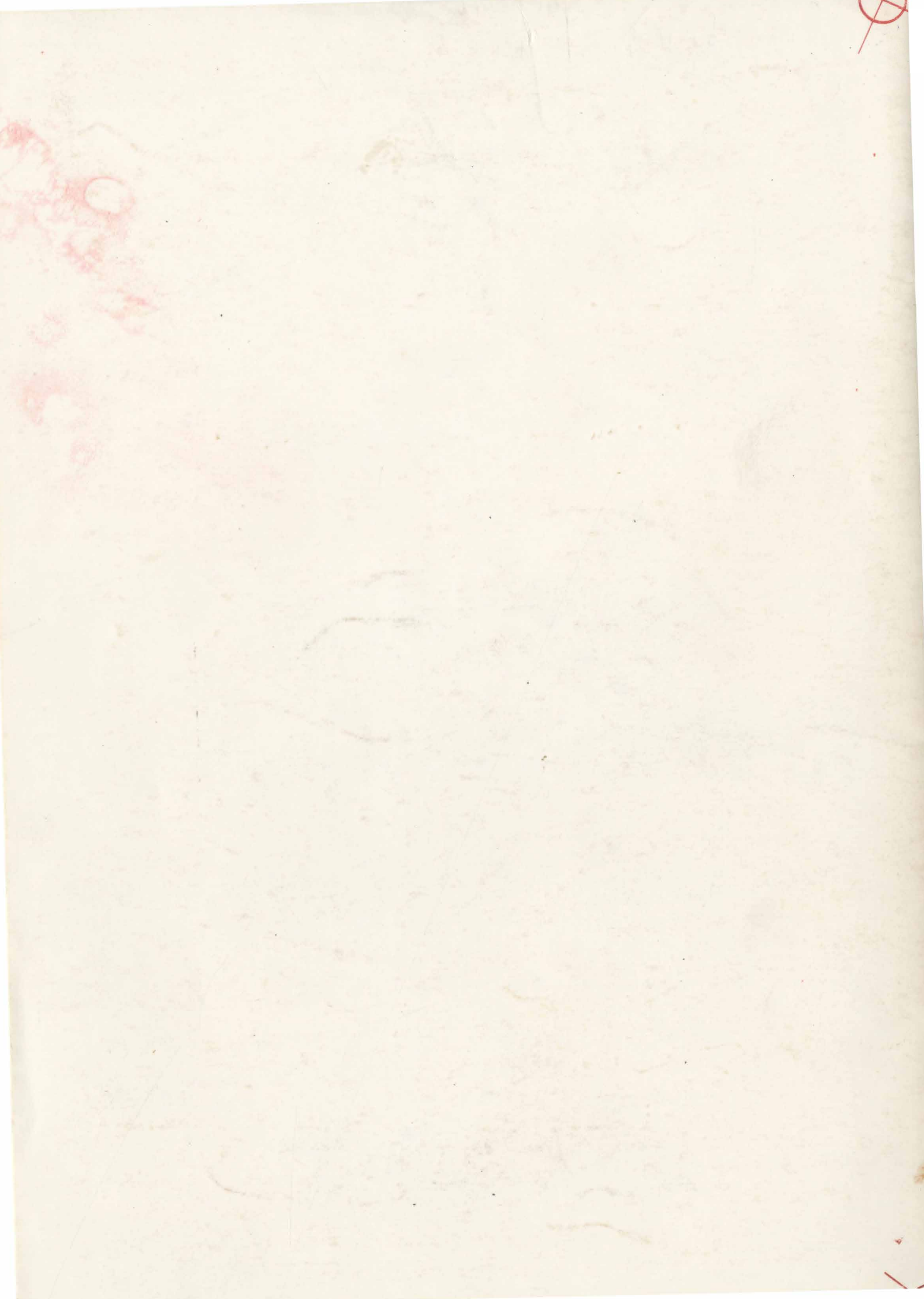
The lecture has attempted to point out the areas where republicans should move on social agitation. The lead in paragraphs of each section seek to justify such agitation while the points listed are a rough guide to more specific activity. In all the sections only sketches are provided of issues that are extremely serious and complex. A real understanding leading to effective involvement will really only result when republicans get to work on the issues raised.

It may seem that too much is being demanded, that resources will be stretched too far. Let's be practical. It is realised that in many areas the organisation does not have sufficient membership or experience to launch large-scale efforts on the topics dealt with in the lecture. It is necessary for every area to identify how best its resources and talents may be used.

Such social agitation raises the profile and credibility of the movement and will assist in recruitment and electoral support.

The Movement has long ago advocated the building of an Economic Resistance Movement and it is to such building that agitation must be directed.

The successful establishment of a mass Economic Resistance Movement will give us the weapon we need to attain complete victory and gives us the base on which to proceed to the consolidation of the 32 county socialist republic.



Title: Economic Resistance

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