



Down with Racist Anti-Traveller Attacks!

For Trade Union Centred Defence Of Traveller Halting Sites!

After weeks of defiance in the teeth of incessant cop harassment, vindictive court orders and reactionary "local resident" mobilisations, members of the Irish Travelling community were violently driven from their temporary halting site in Cabinteely, South Dublin by a carefully orchestrated cop raid on the morning of Tuesday 12 August which even the racist anti-Traveller bourgeois press were kept from witnessing. *We in the Dublin Spartacist Group call for urgent mobilisations by the workers movement in defence of Traveller halting sites and to put a stop to racist cop and vigilante attacks on Travellers! Hands off the Travellers!*

Throughout the summer Travellers in South County Dublin have faced a barrage of court orders and injunctions designed to give legal cover for driving them from their halting sites. Amidst this racist state vendetta High Court orders for the arrest of Travellers who have refused to "move along" were issued on 29 July. As one Traveller aptly summed it up, "We can't be running all the time. We are being shoved all over the place" (*Irish Times*, 31 July). So, on Tuesday 29 July over 30 Traveller families converged on Cabinteely Park in the notoriously anti-Traveller Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown Council area to take a courageous stand in demanding their elementary right to halting site provision. The Travellers braved cop and vigilante harassment for days while their caravans were vandalised, their water was cut off and their halting site was laid siege to by a combination of cops, council workers and "local community" vigilantes who turned up with earth-moving equipment and a lorry load of slurry.

The Travelling community faces brutal oppression from the Irish clericalist state. The myth of Mary Robinson's "tolerant" and "racism-free" Ireland is exposed for the lie that it is by the wave of savage attacks against Travellers in the recent period. Travelling people face constant eviction, driven from their sites and forced onto waste land in dangerous locations (often near public tips) without even elementary sanitation. Infant mortality rates are high, life expectancy low and Traveller children are often denied even basic education. In November 1994, there was a horrific attack on Travellers' homes and a pub which served Travellers in Glenamaddy, Co Galway. A month later in Bantry, vigilantes used forklift trucks and iron bars to wreck caravans, leaving two families homeless. And in Dublin local residents have mobilised to block development of new halting sites.

The government's "law and order" "anti drugs" campaign — kicked off in the first place by the "Rainbow Coalition" with the full support of the Labour Party and Democratic Left — means the strengthening of the repressive powers of the capitalist state which will be used against workers, women's rights activists, Republicans and Travellers. Youth Defence Blueshirts feel the wind in their sails and have targeted the Mary Stopes women's clinic. There has been a rise of community-based vigilante groups which necessarily act as auxiliaries of the racist bourgeois state, particularly the cops. Ireland's growing number of refugees and immigrants — including from Eastern Europe — will be targets of the state and vigilante terror now meted out to Travellers. In the wake of capitalist counterrevolution in the

Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, immigrants and minorities are under increasing attack. Fleeing from racist reaction, poor immigrants including large number of Gypsies are attempting to move to Western Europe. They face vicious racism and deportation when they arrive. Our comrades of the Spartakusowska Grupa Polski, Polish section of the International Communist League, in a protest statement issued in response to a vile racist roundup and deportation of Roma and Sinti (Gypsy) refugees by the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) government stated "the deportation of the Roma is part of a plan which includes the opening of new `deportation centers' financed through an agreement with the German Fourth Reich to keep `undesirable immigration' out of "Fortress Europe" (*Workers Vanguard* no 648, 5 July 1996). **Full citizenship rights for all immigrants and refugees! Smash anti-Traveller vigilantism!**

The fake left bear their share of political responsibility for the recent attacks on Travellers. The Socialist Party of Joe Higgins TD are up to their eyeballs in the ruling class's reactionary "law and order" crusade. In his April 1996 local election campaign in Blanchardstown – with its large Traveller population – Higgins pandered directly to anti-Traveller vigilantism when his election leaflet announced that "The local community has the right to publicly identify regular offenders and apply community pressure to stop them." In the context of Ireland, such appeals are thinly disguised code language for inciting lynch-mob hysteria against Travellers such as was witnessed in Cabinteely.

The Workers Solidarity Movement essentially views with favour the "self-activity" of the community and supports the "anti-drugs" campaign which helps fuel anti-Traveller vigilantism, though they may wring their hands at "problems with some of their tactics, especially when they degenerate into self-appointed gangs running personal vendettas" (*Workers Solidarity*, Spring 1997). As for trade union action, the WSM calls for defence of local authority trade unionists who refuse to be involved in evictions, but say not a word about the need to mobilise the trade union movement in defence of Travellers' halting sites! As for the Socialist Workers Party, they did not even mention the Traveller question or the woman question (burning questions in this country) in their recent election campaign.

As we Spartacists said seven years ago at the founding of our group "...the defence of the horribly oppressed Travellers' community is an "acid test of Irish revolutionaries" (*Ireland: Workers to Power*). Urgently necessary is the fight for a revolutionary workers party to combat all forms of capitalist oppression on the road to smashing the rotten capitalist system and establishing workers power throughout these islands. For an Irish workers republic, part of a socialist federation of the British Isles.

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For more information, contact:

Dublin Spartacist Group
International Communist League [Fourth Internationalist]

P.O. Box 2944, Dublin 1
Tel: 01 855 8409

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