



INC NEWS

Winter 2001 / 2002 Comhdháil Náisiúnta na hÉireann PO Box 2814, Dublin 7.

REBUILDING THE INC

Well the AGM is over and the good news is that the Irish National Congress will continue. The purpose of this years AGM was to encourage more of our members to become more actively involved by joining the National Executive and this endeavour was somewhat successful.

Over 30 people from across the country attended this years AGM. People travelled from Cork, Waterford, Tyrone, Derry, Limerick, Louth, Mayo and, of course, from all parts of Dublin to be there. 30 people may seem like a poor turn out for an annual general meeting but given the fact that we had not advertised any well know guest speakers, as is usually the case, the turn out was brilliant. The decision not to advertise any guest speakers in advance was deliberate. This was done so as to attract only those members interested in rebuilding the INC, the diehards if you please. As it happens, we had a guest speaker, Johnny Connolly of the Columbia 3 campaign. His brother Niall is one of 3 Irish citizens detained in Columbia, a country renowned the world over for its human rights abuses.

The meeting got underway at 12 noon and lasted about 6 hours. Acting Cathaoirleach Cathal Óg McCarthy welcomed those assembled and opened the proceedings. Once the financial and activity reports were given it was suggested from the floor that the meeting be opened up for some Q & A concerning the continued existence and future role of the INC. Some were concerned that the INC might have outlived its usefulness that it was doubling up on the work of Sinn Féin, but it was pointed out that as a lobby group the INC is free to say and do things that political parties do not. A good example of this was the protest at the unveiling of a plaque commemorating the Orange Order in Dublin last May. At that time the INC was the only organisation willing to challenge this civic endorsement of sectarianism. Some felt that the INC should campaign for decentralisation and others thought we should campaign for a federal republic, along the lines of "Éire Nua". The overall consensus was that INC was needed now more than

ever, that we should continue to exist as an independent organisation to lobby the political parties.

The meeting then adjourned for a short break and returned to a more informal setting, with everyone sitting in a circle. The meeting then heard the motions, of which there were two.

1: "In view of the Columbian governments poor human rights record and in the belief that media coverage has prejudiced the possibility of a fair trial, the INC supports the families' calls for the immediate repatriation of the 3 Irish citizens currently detained in Columbia."

2: "The INC calls on the Irish government to fulfil its commitment to the INC and its responsibility to Irish citizens in the North of Ireland by implementing their proposal to have 5 of the Taoiseach's 11 appointed Senators directly elected by the electorate of the 6 Co.'s."

Johnny Connolly spoke for the first motion, which was passed unanimously. He then answered questions regarding the political situation in Columbia and how the campaign to bring them home was progressing. Paul McGuill spoke for the second motion, which was also passed unanimously. There was then a discussion centred on the document "An INC Plan of Campaign 2001 - 2005". The discussion focused for the most part on the section dealing with representation for northern citizens in the Oireachtas. It was unclear how this might best be campaigned for. One suggestion was a poster campaign to place the demand in the mind of the public consciousness. The plan of campaign was broadly accepted and it was decided that the incoming National Executive should work out a way in which it could best be implemented.

The INC, now in it's 12th year of existence, is committed to rebuilding itself as an independent nationalist and republican lobby / pressure group, campaigning on issues centred around the national struggle. The INC is unequivocally opposed to the use of violence, in all its forms and from all quarters. Our ultimate objective remains the establishment of a 32 county Irish Republic through peaceful, constitutional and democratic means.

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE

The National Executive of the INC meets once monthly in either Dublin or Limerick. The incoming National Executive is:

- Ann McCluskey – Derry
- Tom Cooper – Dublin
- Paddy Maguire – Dublin
- Angela O'Mahony – Dublin
- Cathal McCarthy – Limerick
- Cathal Óg McCarthy – Limerick
- Paul McGuill – Louth

Many others gave a commitment to attend the quarterly meetings of the National Executive that will be open to all members of the INC who wish to attend.

NEW INC PHONE NUMBERS

As part of our policy of rebuilding the structures of the INC, two phone numbers are being made available. These are: **087 – 62 870 65**, a mobile number; and **061 – 44 07 54** a Limerick based landline. These numbers, which will hopefully be permanent, will become operational from November 20th.

Please note that both of these numbers have "playback" facilities. If your call is not immediately answered, simply leave your message or request after the "tone". Both numbers will be checked on a daily basis, and you will be contacted if necessary. You can also contact the INC by e-mail at: inc32cne@eircom.net, or in writing at: **Irish National Congress, P.O. Box 2814, Dublin 7**. The P.O. Box is checked regularly.

QUARTERLY MEETINGS

The AGM passed a resolution, which called for the holding of general meetings of the organisation every three months. Basically, the idea behind this decision is to provide for a regular forum and meeting place for non-executive INC membership. We have not had a branch structure inside the INC since the Articles 2 & 3 campaign debacle in 1998. These quarterly assemblies – which will be open to all existing and new INC members – should help to fill this vacuum. These meetings will organise campaigns and will deal with the ongoing work of the INC. We are aiming to get more of our membership involved in activity. Obviously, matters of policy making can only be decided at an A.G.M.

Our first all-Ireland members quarterly meeting will take place on **Saturday 23rd February**, at the **Teachers Club, 36 Parnell Square, Dublin**. The meeting will start at **12.00 noon**. If you think you would like to attend this first meeting, please note the above details, or otherwise keep this newsletter in a safe place. There will be no further INC mail-outs until our next newsletter in April. Closer to the February date, you may use the INC contact telephone numbers to confirm the above details. Simply leave your name and a telephone number that you can be contacted at. We will then follow this up. It is important that members from outside Dublin check arrangements before travelling.

INC CHRISTMAS RAFFLE 2001

With this newsletter you will find a book of raffle tickets for our Christmas raffle. The INC National Executive wishes to apologise to our members for the delay in sending out this correspondence. This was due to the necessity of holding a November A.G.M. As with previous draws, there are three prizes. Winners will be notified immediately, prizes will be delivered to anywhere in Ireland. We would urge our members and supporters to post in money and completed stubs as quickly as possible, to be in before the draw on Saturday, December 15th. The raffles have been a lifeline for the INC, the income they generate allow us to produce this newsletter. Without this money the INC would not be able to function at all. Thank you for your support.

THE UNINVITED

The INC members who attended the AGM were astonished to discover that Garda officers of the Special Branch, the armed political police of the 26 Co.'s, were monitoring our meeting. For a full five hours two individuals in a grey Ford Mondeo, reg. no. 98-D-68641, who were watching the building and noting those who coming and going. This is the first time in years that the INC had an obtrusive secret police presence at any of its indoor meetings. Clearly, somebody out there doesn't like us. As an organisation dedicated to the establishment of a 32 county Irish Republic it is somewhat flattering to be considered a threat to the state. However, the INC is opposed to the use of violence and campaigns through peaceful and non-violent means. We are concerned at the use of armed Gardaí to monitor our AGM and worried that this might signal the start of Garda harassment. In due course, a written complaint will be lodged with the Minister for Justice.

Activity and Organisation Report: February 2000 - November 2001

British Embassy Protest:

April 24th 2000: 84 years to the day and hour that the Easter Rising began. About 40 people participate at an Easter Monday picket at the British Embassy in Dublin organised by the INC, to protest at British governments unilateral suspension of Belfast Agreement institutions. Three newspapers reported the event.

Belfast Conference:

20th May 2000: A small INC delegation attended and participated in a conference entitled; "Republicanism - The Way Forward". The purpose was to discuss how "modern democratic republican government could come to Ireland". The proceedings were chaired by Belfast priest, Des Wilson - an INC member - and by Bill Rolston, and academic and political activist.

Orange Order "Bicentenary" protest:

28th May 2000. About 50 people participated in one of the most effective protests ever recognised by the INC. The protest was staged in opposition to the civic status that was being bestowed on the Orange Order with the unveiling of a plaque commemorating the "200th anniversary" of the founding of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland in Dawson Street, Dublin. INC placards carried the message; "Challenge Sectarianism - Don't Celebrate It". There was unprecedented television, radio and newspaper coverage of the INC protest. We completely overshadowed the event planned by the political establishment grouping that had foolishly extended an invitation to the sectarian Orange Order.

Orange Order Information Pack:

Following our success in May at countering Orange propaganda, the Orange Order Information Pack was devised as a dramatic means to provoke debate and challenge the notion that the Orange Order is a benign organisation. The pack consisted of a covering letter, a the spoof "Orange Card", a leaflet entitled "The Colour of Bigotry", an article from one of our newsletters entitled "The Massacre at Dolly's Brae - Placing Drumcree in an Historical Perspective", Peter Berresford Ellis' pamphlet "Orangeism - Myth and Reality" and the Pat Finucane Centre booklet "For God and Ulster - an alternative guide to the loyal orders". All of this was placed in a large envelope that had an "Orange logo" printed on it, giving the impression that it might have

come from the Orange Order, thus mocking the Orange Orders attempts to portray itself as a liberal but misunderstood organisation. Over 100 Orange Packs were sent to a variety of politicians and journalists. The pack received coverage in *Ireland on Sunday*, who credited the INC as being the only organisation that seemed prepared to counter Orange propaganda.

Limerick Controversy:

September 2000. The Irish National Congress took on the University of Limerick based "Irish Peace Institute" in a major controversy fought out in the pages of the *Limerick Leader*. The IPI, a secretive elitists grouping that is heavily in receipt of public funding, was accused by the INC of uncritically promoting Unionism and the Orange Order. The INC also accused the then chairperson of the IPI, of being a British Nationalist.

Issues Magazine:

September 2000: In a letter to the editor of *Issues* magazine, a Dublin based publication, the INC warned that it would organise a boycott campaign if *Issues* persisted in carrying recruitment advertising for the British Armed Forces. Members would be asked to donate £1 to the seller and refuse the magazine. No such similar advertisements have appeared in *Issues* magazine since.

Belfast Rally:

August 2000. INC members from Dublin, Limerick and Cork participate with banners at the 29th Internment anniversary commemoration march in Belfast.

Peter McBride:

January 2001. In a letter to the minister for Foreign Affairs, Brian Cowen TD, the INC stressed the importance of continued Irish government support for the family of Peter McBride, a Belfast teenager murdered by the British army in 1992, the INC letter also called upon the government to end so-called courtesy visits to the 26 counties by British Army, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force.

Derry March:

January 2001. An INC group from Dublin with an INC banner travel to Derry to participate in Bloody Sunday commemoration march.

H-Block Commemoration:

October 2001. INC members and supporters carrying a huge INC banner participating in the 20th anniversary commemoration of the 1981 hunger strike. The INC contingent was part of a 5,000 strong gathering in Dublin city centre.

Newsletter:

Between August of last year, until now, we have produced and posted out, four issues of the *INC NEWS*. Each production run is 1,000 copies. The cost per issue, printing and postage, amounts to over £500.00. The cost of postage can vary, depending on the weight.

Raffles:

In addition to membership fees and private donations, we organise an Easter and Christmas raffle each year to raise funds for continued campaigning work. This also provides the funding for the *INC NEWS*.

Membership:

Our mail out list consists of over 800 people in Ireland, Britain, Continental Europe and North America. We also send the *INC NEWS* to a select group of politicians and journalists.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Angela O'Mahony gave a financial report to the meeting. The Christmas raffle brought in £1,257 bringing the balance up to £1,486.80. £662.12 in outgoings brought the balance down to £824.68. A further £622.26 was spent on the Newsletter & postage, bringing the balance to £202.42. Donations and membership renewals brought the balance back up to £1,032.26. The INC over the next few months produced two more newsletters without holding any Easter raffle reducing the balance to £61.54. A cheque for £203 paid out for the postage of the last newsletter bounced. Thanks to Angela O'Mahony for covering the cost herself. Since the A.G.M., thanks to donations and membership renewals, the balance now stands at £331.54.



 **IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO JOIN THE INC, FILL IN THIS FORM AND RETURN IT TO:**

Irish National Congress, PO Box 2814, Dublin 7.
MEMBERSHIP FEE £10 WAGED / £5 UNWAGED

Name.....

Address.....

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e-mail.....

Irish National Congress
 Comhdháil Naisiunta na hÉireann

We would like to extend seasons greetings to all our members and supporters in Ireland and overseas

nollaig faoi sheán is faoi mhaíse