'It is inconceivable that a conference which supports terrorism, and is opposed to attempts to bring peace and stability to Northern Ireland, should be allowed to take place in Coventry, or anywhere else in the United Kingdom.'
('Keep them out', *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, 11 February 1981)

'Mindless conferences of the kind proposed. . .can do nothing but harm any attempts to defuse the situation and could lead to real trouble from those who oppose such sentiments.'
('Insensitive', *The Birmingham Post*, 23 February 1981)

The official labour movement has failed to support the demands for political status of republican prisoners of war in the Six Counties of Northern Ireland.

Yet the British TUC interferes in the affairs of the Irish people through the Better Life For All Campaign and the call for a Bill of Rights. TUC Irish policy is simply a cover for its complicity in British repression throughout the Irish War.

Support the campaign to change TUC Irish policy in 1981 into support for the national liberation struggle against British rule!

'They want their heads examining'
(Desmond Heath, Lanchester Poly director, *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, 23 February 1981)

TRADES UNION CONGRESS, CONGRESS HOUSE, GREAT RUSSELL STREET, LONDON, WC1B 3LS

FROM THE TUC FOR THE PRESS

GENERAL SECRETARY: LIONEL MURRAY OBE
PRESS OFFICER: BRENDAN BARBER
TELEPHONE: 01-636 4030

RELEASED FOR PUBLICATION

COVENTRY CONFERENCE ON IRELAND

The General Council today endorsed the decision of the Trades Councils Joint Consultative Committee to inform all trades councils that they should have no association of any sort with the March 14 conference in Coventry with the title 'TUC Hands off Ireland'. The General Council considered that no trades council could associate itself with the conference and continue to be recognised as a local body of the TUC.

***

TUC hands off Ireland!

30p

Smash the Prevention of Terrorism Act Campaign

Private and Confidential

TCJCC 3
February 9 1981

TRADES UNION CONGRESS

MINUTES OF THE THIRD MEETING (1980-81) HELD IN CONGRESS HOUSE, GREAT RUSSELL STREET, LONDON, W C 1 ON MONDAY, FEBRUARY 9 1980, AT 2 00 pm

30 COVENTRY CONFERENCE ON IRELAND

The Committee were informed that the Stop the Prevention of Terrorism Act Campaign, which was run by the Revolutionary Communist Tendency, was holding on March 14 in Coventry a Labour Movement Conference on the Irish War, with the title "TUC Hands off Ireland". The circular letter issued by the campaign (copies of which were distributed to the Committee) was under the signature of the so-called secretary of Tameside Trades Council which had been removed from the TUC's recognised list in 1980. The circular letter was being sent to Trades Councils and other union bodies and included in the list of sponsors was Salford Trades Council.

During discussion, the Committee recognised that Trades Councils had an interest in discussing developments in Northern Ireland and in discussing aspects of Congress policy in this field. However, any such involvement must be balanced by the responsibility Trades Councils had to the TUC to work for and support the implementation of Congress policy. It was also a requirement that Trades Councils must not associate with organisations, and their representatives, whose policies or activities are contrary to those of Congress.

The Committee took the view that the title, the contents and tone, and the text of the model resolution in the circular letter went far beyond what was acceptable in terms of trade union and TUC policy. It was clear that no Trades Council could associate itself in any way with the conference and continue to be recognised as a local body of the TUC. It was suggested that a circular be sent to all Trades Councils, informing them that it would be quite contrary to their rules, and to their responsibilities to the TUC and to trade union and Congress policy, for Trades Councils to associate in any way with the "TUC Hands off Ireland" conference. The circular would also make clear that the Committee would recommend to the General Council that any Trades Council which did associate with the conference should be removed from the recognised list.

IT WAS AGREED to proceed accordingly.

Revolutionary Communist Pamphlets No 8

Revolutionary Communist Tendency

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TUC HANDS OFF IRELAND!

Introduction

On 9 February the TUC's Trades Councils Joint Consultative Committee decided to expel any trades council found supporting an event it disapproved of: a labour movement conference on Ireland due to be held in Coventry on 14 March by the Smash the Prevention of Terrorism Act Campaign. A few days later the Committee issued a circular to all trades councils warning them to stay away. Soon enough the General Council of the TUC endorsed the Committee's decision, declaring that trades councils should have 'no association of any sort' with the Coventry conference. Any trades council sponsoring the conference, sending delegates to it or just going along to the proceedings would cease to be 'recognised' as a 'local body' of the TUC.

Why did the TUC take this extraordinary step? Why has the leadership of the trade union movement decided to proscribe a conference supported by numerous trades councils, union branches and active trade unionists – and, initially at least, by a Labour MP?

For the Smash the PTA Campaign, the Coventry labour movement conference is part of a campaign to change the TUC's policy on Ireland. We organised the conference because we wanted to launch a debate on Ireland in the labour movement. Our aim is to convince British workers that they should support the Irish national liberation struggle. In our view the TUC leaders responded hysterically to the conference because they feel it is their responsibility to maintain working class support for British rule in Ireland. In this pamphlet we examine the TUC's peculiar sensitivity to the war in Ireland and appeal for your support for the objectives of the Coventry labour movement conference.

'The TUC believes that the conference, organised by the Prevention of Terrorism Act Campaign, directly conflicts with Congress policy, which does not for example favour withdrawal of troops from Northern Ireland.'

('TUC tells trades councils to shun H-Block meeting', *The Times*, 23 February 1981)

The peculiarities of the Irish War

Everybody in Britain knows that violence – riots, shootings, explosions – is an everyday feature of life in the Six Counties of Northern Ireland. Many also know that, over the past 12 years, thousands of Irish men and women have been arrested, tortured, detained without charge and imprisoned without proper trial. It is obvious that Britain can only keep a semblance of law and order in Ireland by force of arms. Without the British army the local paramilitary forces (the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Ulster Defence Regiment) would be unable to contain the anger of the nationalist population of the Six Counties.

Anybody who has read and thought about the conflict in Ireland, or visited Belfast or Derry, knows that the two main adversaries in this war are the republican movement and the British state. And yet the media always present 'the troubles' as a sectarian feud between Catholics and Protestants. The first peculiarity of the Irish War, therefore, is that its real character as a national liberation struggle is always obscured and denied in Britain.

Anti-guerrilla operations in Ireland form the most important engagement for the British army since the Second World War. More men and resources have been committed to fighting the Irish people than to any other action during the last 35 years; more soldiers (over 300) have died in Ireland than in any other colony. Moreover, British military strategists anticipate a long campaign: as former commander of the British forces in Ireland Sir John Hackett put it, the Six Counties contain an 'explosive mixture', one which promises to 'continue to exist into the foreseeable future more or less as before' (quoted in *Hibernia*, 9 August 1979). But despite all this, the conflict in Ireland is always portrayed as a question of lawlessness, a problem for the policeman rather than the soldier. The British press disguises the reality of the War and depicts Irish freedom fighters and prisoners of war as psychopaths and common criminals. This is the second peculiarity of the Irish War.

The issue of Ireland is peculiar in one other respect. It is the one political issue that never causes dissension in Parliament. Labour, Tory and Liberal politicians agree that Ireland is too important to become a focus for political debate. As James Callaghan told the House of Commons when he was Prime Minister:

'. . .there are some issues on which the opposition seems desirous of ending what should be a national approach. . .In the case of Northern Ireland I hope that a national approach can be sustained and maintained as it has during the last seven years.' (*Hansard*, 2 February 1978)

Callaghan had nothing to fear from the Tories. Margaret Thatcher herself noted: 'We have never used Ulster as a political football between the parties. Events there are too deeply tragic for any of us to do that ' (*Financial Times*, 21 April 1979). Indeed after the 1979 General Election, one of the first things Humphrey Atkins, the new Tory Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, did was to pledge his commitment to upholding the policies pursued by his Labour predecessor. 'Of one thing' he said, 'you can be sure: I shall not relax the efforts which are being made to bring to justice the violent men who are creating havoc and personal misery throughout the Province' ('Bipartisan tactics on Ulster will continue', *The Daily Telegraph*, 9 May 1979).

What is so special about the Irish War that its existence has to be denied? Why do all parliamentary parties make an exception of Ireland, sink all their differences and unite in a common front against the Irish people? The answer is simple. *The War in Ireland is an immediate and mortal threat to the British ruling class.*

Britain's domination over Ireland is exercised through the division of the country into two parts and the integration of the Six Counties into the machinery of the British state. The struggle to free the Six Counties from Britain's grip thus amounts to an attack on the British state itself. Over the past decade one British politician after another has reiterated the basic point that Britain cannot afford to lose this war; that defeat in Ireland would mean social instability in Britain. Labour ex-Minister Stan Orme said it all to delegates at the 1979 Labour Party conference. The chaos brought to British capitalism in Ireland could, he argued, 'overflow into the cities of Britain, into the Liverpools and the Glasgows and the Londons, the Birminghams and the Manchesters' (*Labour Party Annual Conference Report*, 1979).

With this kind of worry dogging them, representatives of the bourgeoisie don't take too kindly to domestic opponents of British rule in Ireland. That is why MPs of all parties voted for the Prevention of Terrorism Act when Labour first proposed it and why they have renewed it at six-month intervals ever since. They are

prepared to see thousands of people detained and hundreds deported because they want unanimous public backing for their oppression of the Irish.

Coventry's Labour council has recently proved itself just as worried about Ireland – and just as repressive towards that nation's allies in Britain – as Parliament. Justifying its refusal to allow its premises to be used for our labour movement conference, it expressed concern that such a gathering would undermine 'harmony' in the community. It was right. The objective of the conference *was* to undermine the harmony between the working class and the ruling class that is so vital to maintaining British domination in Ireland.

The battle lines in Britain

The British bourgeoisie cannot afford to lose in Ireland; and nor can the Irish people. The British war machine, with its high technology and vast resources, its concentration camps and interrogation centres, has failed to crush the aspirations of the Irish people for national independence. The popular support for the actions of the republican prisoners in the H-Blocks and Armagh – for the refusal to wear prison clothes, for the dirty protest and for the hunger strikers – show the resilience of the Irish struggle against British repression.

In Ireland the battle lines are clearly drawn. In Britain they are not. The British working class is a party to the Irish War: broadly, it plays the part of passive support to the British occupation. But, like all wars, the Irish War presents workers with two, equally stark alternatives. Workers can go on propping up the status quo, or they can turn their strength against their ruling class and strike out against Britain's oppression of Ireland. We believe that British workers must become an active party in the War – active in support of the Irish people. The interests of the British working class lie squarely with the Irish people. We have every interest in seeing our ruling class defeated and weakened. The weaker the British state becomes, the easier it will be for workers to defend their interests and to wrest power away from the capitalists.

This campaign to win working class support for the Irish people cannot be left to some future date. As long as workers accept the right of the state to oppress the Irish people, they will be unable to free themselves from their own oppressors. Indeed, the British Government *already* uses the lack of labour movement support for the Irish struggle to make its attacks on workers in Britain appear legitimate.

Every time Ireland hits the headlines the media reminds us that we are British first and workers second. The press hysteria that greeted the escape of republican Gerry Tuite from Brixton Prison last Christmas shows how the state uses the Irish 'threat' to its own advantage. Within hours of Tuite's departure the police launched a massive publicity campaign. Posters declaring 'Terrorist alert – this man must be caught' were distributed in tens of thousands. Meanwhile newspapers, television channels and radio stations all joined in the man-hunt. Their aim? Not to catch an (unconvicted) prisoner, but to whip up hostility against the cause of Irish freedom at just the moment that its most courageous defenders – the men on hunger strike in Long Kesh – were nearing death. Not to track Tuite down, but to distract British workers from rising unemployment, falling wages and the most reactionary Government in decades.

We have to break the British consensus on Ireland. Putting Britain first on the question of Ireland means putting it first on everything else. To defend our livelihoods and fight for our class interests we have to speak our own language – not repeat the lies and apologies of the British bourgeoisie. British workers will only act as an independent class, when they elect to stand *with* the Irish people *against* the British state.

It is this spectre of independent working class action that so haunts the bureaucrats of the TUC. When trade unionists began putting their names behind the Coventry conference, they signalled their unwillingness to be dictated to by Congress House. The TUC recognised this for what it was: a challenge to its political authority, not only on Ireland, but on every other issue affecting the working class.

'The City Council respects the right of people to meet and discuss issues freely, but I realise that people in this city with relations who have served or are serving in the armed forces in Northern Ireland might find it very offensive for the City Council to allow this conference to proceed on City Council premises.'

(Councillor Jim Cunningham, Chairman of the Leisure and Recreation Committee, in consultation with Vice-Chairman Councillor Arthur Waugh (Junior), in a letter to the Smash the PTA Campaign, 26 February 1981)

'We feel they should discuss Ireland in a more responsible context. You have to draw the line somewhere.'

(Stuart Slater, assistant secretary, Organisation and Industrial Relations section of the TUC, *The Observer*, 22 February 1981)

The TUC's pro-British Irish policy

The TUC has not had much to say about Ireland. Following its Parliamentary masters, it likes to keep the question out of union debates. However, it has been unable to ignore the matter entirely. Many workers are genuinely concerned about the violence across the water and the TUC itself has many members in the Six Counties. Thus the TUC has been forced to make pious pleas for the restoration of peace and democracy in Ireland.

However when the TUC talks about peace and democracy what it really means is social stability on Britain's terms. The TUC fully accepts the premise that Ireland is Britain's concern; it assumes without question the right of the British state to run the Six Counties. The objective of TUC policy is simply to encourage the British state to reform its oppressive institutions in the Six Counties.

The TUC has always rejected the right of the Irish people to determine their own future, and has regularly denounced Irish freedom fighters as madmen and murderers. But the TUC has also called on Westminster to introduce a Bill of Rights to the Six Counties. Its 1971 Congress came out in favour of British rule, but asked the very same state that is responsible for the denial of basic democratic rights in Ireland to become the instrument of social change there. As ever, the TUC played the British game: telling the Irish what's best for them.

The TUC could get away with its hypocrisy because of the peculiar way the Irish issue has been presented in Britain. Nobody ever called on America to introduce a Bill of Rights in Vietnam. There the true character of the war was apparent: there was no pretence that the Washington regime could bring about a democratic solution while it was trying to annihilate the national liberation movement.

In 1976, however, the TUC modified its approach to the Irish War and, in an effort to redefine the problems facing the Irish people, put forward the Better Life For All Campaign. This campaign avoided all talk about Britain's war of oppression, and concentrated on social and economic issues instead. No wonder that Labour Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Roy Mason strongly supported it!

The 6 aims of the Better Life For All Campaign

1 The right to live free from violence, sectarianism, intimidation and discrimination
2 the right to security of employment and well paid work
3 the right to associate freely and to advocate political change by peaceful means
4 the right to good housing accommodation
5 the right to equality of educational opportunity
6 the right to adequate social services to protect the well being and living standards of the aged, the young, the sick, the unemployed and the socially deprived.

Both the Bill of Rights and the Better Life For All Campaign ignored the one right that really matters in Ireland: the right to national self-determination. Who was going to create a 'better life' anyway? The same British Government that has been terrorising Ireland for hundreds of years!

Many people have criticised the Better Life For All Campaign on the grounds that it is unrealistic. It is, of course; but the campaign is more insidious than that. It exploits the yearning for peace and economic security of the brutalised population of the Six Counties to gain acceptance of British oppression. Indeed the TUC initially presented the campaign as an alternative to the national liberation movement. After the motion supporting this campaign was passed the President of the TUC noted:

'I am sure that the voices and ideas that have been expressed from this rostrum will be heard in Northern Ireland and the people on the streets in Northern Ireland will conquer the maniac and the gunman who have been shooting down so many trade unionists.' (*TUC report 1976*)

More recently Len Murray told Irish trade unionists that the TUC would continue to 'assist trade unions in securing social change by peaceful means, thus providing an alternative to the bullet and the bomb' (TUC Press Release, 27 January 1981). But what does this 'alternative' amount to? British domination once again.

TUC Irish policy is a soft version of the coercive strategies pursued by both Labour and Conservative Governments in the 'sixties and 'seventies. Never questioning Britain's right to rule in Ireland, the TUC dishonestly peddles the idea that the British state can play a progressive role in the Six Counties.

Why oppose the TUC's Irish policy if it's so unrealistic? After all, the TUC has done little to promote its own positions. Few workers have ever heard of the Better Life For All Campaign, and apart from its annual routine endorsement at Congress, it is scarcely discussed in the labour movement.

In fact the TUC's inactivity on Ireland does not mean that its policy is unimportant. Indeed, part of the function of the Bill of Rights and the Better Life For All Campaign is to dampen down interest

the next step

review of the Revolutionary Communist Tendency

Have Thatcher and Haughey got the answer?
Can Paisley stop them?
Will Bobby Sands win political status?
Can Michael Foot keep the Labour Party loyal?
How can we send Len Murray to Coventry?

The Irish War raises many difficult questions for the British labour movement. Every month *the next step* answers from the standpoint of unconditional support for the national liberation movement in Ireland. More than that, it points the way forward – through the activities of the RCT and the Smash the PTA Campaign – to building an anti-imperialist movement in Britain.

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in the Irish War, for the last thing the TUC wants is widespread debate on Ireland in the working class. But the importance of the TUC's Irish policy is greater than this. TUC policy on Ireland means that, should workers at any time show concern about the situation in the Six Counties, it has a ready-made system of ideas on hand to dispel it with. It means that potentially disruptive sympathy for the national liberation struggle can be safely directed towards lobbying the British state to implement reforms in Ireland.

The TUC's policy on Ireland is the Government's first line of defence against the emergence of a working class anti-imperialist movement. The TUC uses its policy to victimise members of the trade union movement who dare to speak out against British imperialism.

From Tameside to Coventry

The TUC's role as the policeman of the labour movement was clearly exposed in the Manchester area last year. In January 1980, Tameside Trades Council announced that it was holding a labour movement conference on Ireland in March. The goal of the conference – to win support for the Irish liberation struggle in the British working class – was summed up in its mobilising slogan 'Bring the War to Britain'. Almost instinctively local trade union bureaucrats and Labour and Communist Party politicians united to denounce the conference. On 26 February Tameside's Labour council refused to allow the conference to take place on its premises.

Three days later the TUC threatened Tameside Trades Council with disaffiliation. In response the executive committee decided to cancel the conference, and matters would have ended there but for the decision of the full trades council to reconvene the conference. The TUC promptly issued an ultimatum. It demanded that Tameside disassociate itself from the slogan 'Bring the War to Britain', promise to obey official TUC policy on Ireland and on other issues and hold no conference on the War without informing it about format, agenda and speakers. When Tameside rejected these restrictive terms it was expelled from the TUC.

The victimisation of Tameside Trades Council showed that the TUC was prepared to follow through its support for British imperialism with bans and proscriptions. It showed that the TUC's policy on Ireland, far from being the string of empty phrases it appeared, had serious consequences for British trade unionists sympathetic to the Irish liberation struggle. And, for the Smash the PTA Campaign, it showed something else too: that TUC policy had to be destroyed if an anti-imperialist movement was going to be built in the British labour movement.

Throughout the summer of 1980 SPTAC campaigned for the reaffiliation of Tameside Trades Council. Although the TUC stuck to its guns, dozens of trades councils and union branches came to identify with Tameside's plight, and many marched with their banners to lobby the TUC in September in Brighton. In the later part of 1980, therefore, SPTAC decided to channel the feeling engendered by the affair into building a campaign to change TUC policy. Under the slogan 'TUC Hands Off Ireland!' we organised. . .the Coventry conference.

By January 1981 the conference had raised considerable interest in the labour movement. Resolutions of support raised by SPTAC supporters provoked debate on TUC policy in trades councils and union branches up and down the country. The TUC responded in its customary fashion. When the TUC's infamous circular banning trades councils from supporting the Coventry conference was made public in February, the labour bureaucracy threw its full weight against SPTAC supporters. The Communist Party in particular displayed tremendous zeal for witch-hunting anti-imperialists.

Within hours of the news breaking, the

'The TUC is not attempting to stifle discussion. But the tone and language of this campaign goes far beyond legitimate discussion of TUC policy.'

(Sir David Perris, Secretary Birmingham Trades Council, *The Birmingham Post*, 21 February 1981)

'We don't want disaffiliating from the TUC. We are trying to build up good links with the community and people will not want anything to do with supporting the IRA.'

(John Catterall, Communist Party Chairman Salford Trades Council, *Salford City Reporter*, 27 February 1981)

chairman of Salford Trades Council, a Party member, threatened to victimise a SPTAC supporter. Despite a democratic vote at the trades council in favour of the conference, he took it upon himself to disassociate Salford from it. Next day the Coventry Labour Council announced that it had refused to allow the conference to be held on its premises. Desperate to prevent the conference from taking place, it put pressure on the local polytechnic – at which the meeting was due to be held – forcing the students' union to withdraw its offer of facilities for SPTAC.

The problem: Tories or TUC?

After a week of hostile publicity Labour left MP Ernie Roberts, who had originally agreed to sponsor the conference, informed us that he was withdrawing his support. He told us that it was a 'tactical mistake' to provoke the TUC; the task was rather to oppose Tory Irish policies. The advice was repeated by a number of left-wing trade unionists embarrassed by the TUC's reprisals but fearful of taking a class position on Ireland. Let us look at it a little closer.

We think the left's counsel – 'unite against Tory plans for Ireland and leave the TUC for another day' – is shortsighted and dangerous. First, there are no distinct Tory plans for Ireland. The Thatcher Government pursues a policy identical to that of the last Labour Government – and its policy of oppression is also supported by the TUC. To restrict our campaign to Tory policies would mean giving credibility to those of the Labour leadership. This would mean giving the TUC free rein to dominate the labour movement with its pro-imperialist solutions.

Second, whether you seek it out or try to avoid it, any serious campaign on Ireland in the labour movement will come up against bitter resistance from the labour bureaucracy. The labour leaders will use every means at their disposal to prevent the emergence of a forceful anti-imperialist current. The TUC is clear where it stands, for any threat to the British state is also a threat to the cosy relationship it has established with that state.

Those who want to restrict solidarity with the Irish struggle to a campaign against Tory policies in reality aim to build a movement outside the working class. For the labour movement will only come to oppose Tory Irish policies when it is prepared to oppose the identical policies of its own leadership. Workers will only break with the British state when they see that it is in their class interest to support Irish liberation.

And if we don't build an anti-imperialist movement in the working class, then we won't build an anti-imperialist movement at all. Intellectuals, vicars, liberals and bourgeois feminists may from time to time express indignation at a particularly extreme example of British brutality in Ireland: the B-Specials, mass internment, Bloody Sunday, Castlereagh interrogation centre, the H-Blocks and Armagh. But only workers have the power and the class interest to fight all manifestations of imperialist oppression all the time. The Irish liberation movement is a threat to the capitalists, but it is the real ally of the working class. It is because we believe that an effective anti-imperialist movement can only be built in the working class that we have directed our attack on the official leadership of that class – the TUC.

Don't let them call the shots

At Tameside the labour bureaucracy objected to the slogan 'Bring the War to Britain'. At Coventry the TUC's manoeuvres were aimed not against a slogan but directly against the right of trades councils to organise in opposition to official policy. The minutes of the TUC's Trades Councils Joint Consultative Committee make this point clear:

> 'It was suggested that a circular be sent to all Trades Councils, informing them that it would be quite contrary to their rules, and to their responsibilities to the TUC and to trade union and Congress policy, for Trades Councils to associate in any way with the 'TUC Hands Off Ireland' conference.'

The TUC has not yet indicated what rules can prevent trades councils and trade unionists from meeting to campaign against its policy on Ireland. But then the union bureaucrats are not noted for their commitment to union democracy. For them the issue is not rules and regulations but silencing opponents of British imperialism in the labour movement by any means necessary.

Support SPTAC! Support the fight for workers' democracy!

There are two good reasons why you should defend the right of the Smash the PTA Campaign to work in the British labour movement to change TUC Irish policy. First, the TUC's proscription of debate on Ireland is one aspect of its increasingly authoritarian role. Unable to defend jobs, conditions and living standards, the labour leadership has to resort to bureaucratic manipulations to keep its hold over the rank and file. The TUC's guidelines on centres for unemployed workers, published at the end of January, show how it aims to retain firm control over them: it lays down strict limits for what it calls 'permissible' activities for those out of work.

'We are not bothered what the TUC says. We shall be at the conference.'

(Mick Blair, Todmorden Trades Council, *The Observer*, 22 February 1981)

Unemployment, like Ireland, is a potentially explosive issue in Britain. Once again the union leaders step forward to help police the working class. By supporting the right of trade unionists to campaign for an anti-imperialist policy on Ireland, you'll be supporting the right of workers to organise to defend their interests on any issue and in any way they see fit.

But there is an even better reason for joining the Smash the PTA Campaign. The struggle for political status for the prisoners in H-Block and Armagh has acquired a new momentum. A new hunger strike has been started to force Britain to treat Irish prisoners as prisoners of war. British workers must make the cause of the hunger strikers their own, *not just out of humanitarianism*, but because a victory for the prisoners would represent a major blow against the British state. It would weaken the position of the ruling class and undermine its confidence in the struggles ahead.

For too long British workers have accepted the view that they have more in common with their employers than with the Irish people. For too long workers have made sacrifices in the 'country's interest'. The fight against TUC policy on Ireland will help put an end to this. It will show that the labour leaders line up with the bosses, not just on Ireland but on every issue of vital concern for the working class.

Help us force the TUC to withdraw its circular banning trades councils from associating with the TUC Hands Off Ireland campaign. Argue for the resolution below in your trade union branch or trades council.

'To remain silent, as the TUC bureaucrats would have you do, is to endorse the continued suppression of the Irish nation. British workers must realise that by fighting for the interests of the Irish people they are also helping to further the aims of the British working class.'
(IRSP POWs, the cages Long Kesh, open letter to the Coventry conference)

Motion

This branch/union/trades council

- **deplores the failure of the official labour movement to support the demands for political status of republican prisoners of war in the Six Counties of Ireland**
- **rejects TUC interference in the affairs of the Irish people through the Better Life For All Campaign and the Bill of Rights policy which are simply a cover for its complicity in British repression throughout the Irish War**
- **condemns the TUC's use of bans and proscriptions to prevent debate on Ireland in the labour movement and will fully support any trades council or individual trade unionist subjected to disciplinary action arising from the Coventry conference**
- **supports the campaign to change TUC Irish policy to support for the national liberation struggle against British rule**
- **agrees to support local SPTAC trade union committees to promote oppostion to TUC Irish policy in trade union branches, trades councils and at national trade union conferences**

Start a discussion on Ireland at your place of work and in your labour movement organisation. Pass resolutions in support of the Irish liberation movement and against the TUC's policy on Ireland. Help us realise our immediate objective of pushing anti-imperialist politics on to the agendas of national union conferences and the TUC.

Join the struggle against British imperialism. Don't let the prisoners in H-Blocks and Armagh struggle in vain! Fight for the immediate withdrawal of troops from Ireland!

Helen Swift

Labour movement conference
TUC HANDS OFF IRELAND!

Convenor: Dave Hallsworth (AUEW, Tameside Trades Council)
Speakers: Sinn Fein, Irish Republican Socialist Party, British trade unionists and socialists

The following organisations and individuals (all in a personal capacity) agreed to sponsor the conference, send delegates or attend as observers:

- **TRADES COUNCILS** Salford, Todmorden, Spennymoor, Hackney, Tameside, Wear Valley, Coventry
- **TRADE UNIONISTS** Dipak Basu (East London Teachers Association, NUT), Mick Blair (Chairman Todmorden Trades Council), Brian Capell (APEX, Coventry Climax, Warrington), Paddy Faherty (UCATT, Hackney Trades Council), Mick Honeyman (AUEW, Tower Hamlets Trades Council), Shirley Henshall (Tameside NUPE), Alex Lawrence (AUEW presidential candidate, Canterbury Trades Council), Stan Meads (TGWU shop steward, Faireys, Stockport), Jim Monaghan (North East Lancashire Committee FTAT, Todmorden Trades Council), Bob Montgomery (Sheet Metal Workers union, Tower Hamlets Trades Council), Jimmy O'Hara (National Committee Building Section, TGWU), James Robertson (ASTMS, Ferranti, Manchester), Vera Shieff (NUT, Islington), Paul Stonier (Tameside Staffs NUPE), John Villiers (TGWU ACTTS senior steward Jaguar, Coventry), Mick Wheeler (UCW, Warrington Trades Council), George Hope (Divisional Organiser, AUEW TASS, Coventry), Vin Murphy (TGWU 6/707 Eccles, Salford Trades Council), Dave Ayre (UCATT, Secretary Wear Valley Trades Council), Alan Cunningham (CPSA DHSS Rusholme), Jeff Hartnell (Spennymoor Trades Council), Rob Nichols (NATFHE, Chairman Guildford Trades Council), Gerry Flynn (ASTMS Branch secretary Luton), Tom Richardson (NATFHE Middlesborough)
- **TRADE UNION BRANCHES** NUJ Magazine, East London Teachers Association, NUT, AUEW Ashton No 2, Lambeth NUT, ASTMS City, TGWU ACTTS Manchester Social Action, UCATT Crook, BB145, AUEW Tower Hamlets
- **IRELAND** Phil Flynn (Deputy General Secretary Local Government and Public Services Union, Dublin), Paddy Logue (TGWU Branch Secretary, Derry), Brian Sullivan (NUPE District Secretary, Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast), all members of Trade Union Sub-committee National H-Blocks/Armagh Committee; Finbar O'Doherty (founder member of civil rights movement, Derry), Liam Carlin (ex-blanketman), Patsy (the cages, Long Kesh), IRSP POWs, the cages, Long Kesh
  IRISH SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGNS Bradford, Durham, Tyneside, Manchester Hunger Strike Committee
- **TROOPS OUT MOVEMENT** Coventry, Nottingham, Camden & Islington, East London, West London, TOM Steering Committee
- **PLUS** Ford Workers Combine, East London Workers Against Racism, Unemployed Workers Group (Lambeth), Councillor Alfred Home, Manchester, Jarnail Singh (Hackney Asian Association), Indian Workers Association, Coventry, Cllr Albert Spencer, Manchester

Smash the Prevention of Terrorism Act Campaign

The campaigns in Britain in support of the Irish hunger strikers are different from those in the United States and in other European countries. In these countries former blanketmen, now released from the H-Blocks, speak at meetings, rallies and demonstrations. But not in Britain. The reason? The Prevention of Terrorism Act.

The PTA makes sure that Irish victims of British rule don't get the chance to challenge government lies before British audiences. The British ruling class cannot tolerate ex-prisoners telling the truth of their experiences in the concentration camps in Ireland. And the PTA is ready to deal with anybody – Irish or English – who supports the prisoners and their fight against British rule.

The Smash the PTA Campaign organises resistance to the PTA. Our opposition to the PTA is not based – like that of some Labour MPs – on the conviction that it is an inefficient and ineffective means of suppressing the Irish liberation struggle. We reject the PTA because it is a barrier to building support for the republican movement in Britain.

The Smash the PTA Campaign organises pickets and protests when people like Liam Carlin (a former blanketman from Derry returning from the USA who was lifted from a plane at Heathrow last December) are detained in police stations and prisons. We support people like Gerry MacLochlainn (a Sinn Fein supporter in Cardiff who at present faces a series of trumped up explosives charges) when they come up in court. And we publicise the use of the PTA in relation to the War in Ireland and campaign in the labour movement to get it thrown out.

To carry out this work we need money. Please give generously. Send all contributions to: SPTAC, BM RCT, London WC1N 3XX.