

Sinn Féin, Why Sinn Féin says No to the Common Market

Caption: In 1972, Sinn Féin, the Irish nationalist republican party, warns the Irish against the repercussions of Ireland's participation in the Common Market.

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Why Sinn Féin says no to the common market

As the struggle to free Ireland from the grip of the dying British Empire is developing in the Six Counties Fianna Fail is preoccupied with an attempt to sell out to another empire, *the New Empire of Monopoly Capitalism* the Common Market, which has arisen in Western Europe.

The concept of the EEC is imperial and its purpose is to exploit. It was formed to compensate the West European colonial powers for the loss of their colonies in Asia and Africa by:

- a) *Providing an enlarged home market for each others products.*
- b) *Protecting each others investments in the former colonies and by avoiding competition abroad, maintaining control over the basic raw materials. In the modern Economic Imperialism, the EEC bloc is today the leader in the field in Africa and Asian*
- c) *Pursuing a policy of political union to form a militarily powerful third force in the world. As Hallstein, the first President of the EEC Commission put it "We are not in business, we are in politics".*

The economic policy of the EEC is based on the classic 19th century capitalist economics which enslaved millions of men, women and children in the industrial sweatshops of England and Western Europe *where they worked for 16 hours per day for starvation wages*. It was the same economic laws which are now employed in the EEC, which directly caused the famine in Ireland in the midst of plenty of beef and grain and prevented distribution of relief as it would interfere with the laws of supply and demand and interfere with the *"free play of competition"*.

The right of *"free play of competition"* is carefully protected in every clause of the Treaty of Rome. It is designed to help the strong and crush the weak. Smaller industries are taken over and shut down by the larger and even large industries are forced to capitulate before the giant international cartels. Similarly in the commercial field the smaller banking and finance houses and insurance companies as well as stores and supermarkets must yield to the huge EEC ones. Under the Treaty of Rome no special protection or safeguards can be given to any industries or commercial concerns. No tax reliefs or other incentives can be offered to induce industries to locate factories in any particular area.

The EEC economists are applying the same criteria to agriculture as they are to industry. The small farmers are to be eliminated as a deliberate policy and their holdings amalgamated. All existing subsidies will cease. In the EEC, only *"viable holdings"* will get any assistance and viable holdings will be those with a net income of not less than £4,000 per annum in present money terms. Farmers with less than this will be given incentives to go but none to stay.

A reading of the Treaty of Rome which established the EEC shows that what is involved is a complete surrender of the Irish people's sovereign right to rule themselves, *a commitment to European political and military integration thus losing our traditional neutrality; an end to controls on buying of land by non-nationals; loss of agricultural and export subsidies by farmers; a disastrous free trade situation which will force many Irish industries to close causing widespread unemployment and increased emigration; a massive increase in the cost of living with a big rise in food prices of 20% or more, and loss of national identity and cultural distinctiveness which must inevitably follow economic and political integration with larger and more power-full states.*

If Ireland joined the EEC the future of the country would be decided by undemocratic institutions in Brussels outside the control of any elected authority. The only advantage small countries have against big ones is the existence of governments which are able to defend their interests. Thus, an Irish Government in Dublin can take measures to develop the Irish economy which the governments and business concerns of other countries have no interest in doing. In the EEC however, the Irish government must surrender vital economic powers which are necessary to develop the Irish economy and achieve full employment in Ireland. The following are the principal ones affected:

1. *Ireland would lose the power to impose tariffs and quotas to protect sensitive areas of industry. And,*

despite all the arguments for free trade put forward by the big countries, and by the big industries in these countries, certain measures of protection are necessary for the economy of a country like Ireland, with its small home market, considerably less developed than its giant industrial neighbours, and with the majority of its firms small in size, by comparison with those of its main competitors. Free Trade with the whole of Western Europe including Britain, would be disastrous for much of Irish industry. Under the Common Market rules, the Irish government could put no obstacles in the way of foreign firms taking over much of the Irish home market and ruining numerous Irish businesses, putting thousands of Irish people out of work.

2. *Ireland would lose the power to sign trade treaties with other countries.* In the EEC we would have to adopt the same tariffs as the other members on goods imported from outside the Common Market. We would no longer have power to bargain independently in matters of trade or sign trade treaties with other countries. After 1972, all such trade treaties will be negotiated by the Commission. Ireland would thus lose an important means of diversifying our foreign trade and reducing our present dependence on Britain.

3. *Ireland would lose the power to give State aids to Irish industry or special tax reliefs to attract foreign capital at home.* To quote from the Irish Government White Paper (par.4 24); “*State aids which distort or threaten to distort competition are, to the extent to which they adversely affect trade between member States, deemed to be incompatible with the Common Market. The Commission subject to the overriding authority of the Council, decides what aids can be allowed and which have to be eliminated or adapted*”. In other words, policy regarding tax reliefs, investment grants, adaptation grants and the like would no longer be decided by an Irish Government and Dail for such measures could discriminate against outsiders and in favour of ones own national industry, and they are accordingly against the rules of the Common Market.

4. *Ireland would lose the power to establish new State industries in the Common Market.* The EEC is currently calling on the French and Italian governments to break up their oil and tobacco monopolies. The Rome Treaty effectively prevents any Government taking an industry into whole or part public ownership where this might be socially desirable. Nor can new State industries be, in practice, set up without discriminating against foreign private concerns, which is against the rules of the EEC. Existing state industries such as CIE would have to be broken up, thus jeopardising the jobs of 10,000 workers. There is a common transport policy which lays down that there can be no discrimination against private transport companies of other member states.

5. *Ireland would lose the power to prevent non-nationals buying Irish land.* Laws to control this would have to be dismantled, for they discriminate against nationals of other member States. Present Irish controls on foreign landbuying would have to go if we join EEC and, as the general level of land prices is much lower in Ireland than in the rest of Europe, one could expect a big increase in foreign land buying when such controls disappear.

6. *Ireland would lose the power to prevent the outflow of Irish savings and capital.* Thus for example, the special taxreliefs now given to Irish insurance policy holders to induce them to do business with an Irish company would be against the Rome Treaty rules, as would any other measures to control the movements of capital. At present there are £1,000 million of Irish capital invested in other countries and more funds flow abroad every year because they give bigger returns to their owners abroad than they would if invested at home. Any attempts by an Irish Government to curb this flow in order to increase investment and employment in Ireland would be unlawful under the Treaty of Rome.

7. *Ireland would lose the power to control the influx of foreign workers to Ireland.* Skilled English, German and Dutch workers could come here to work and it would be unlawful for the Irish Government to seek to reserve employment in the interests of Irish trade unionists. Foreign owned factories would send over their own Nationals to work here. Most of our large industries are foreign owned. Even Guinness Brewery is not Irish owned. Policy is decided in London and they would naturally give the best jobs to Englishmen. Similarly with all the major English building firms operating here, such as Wates and Wimpeys. Other European firms will also be free to operate here and bring their own technicians and tradesmen with them.

8. *Ireland would lose the power to protect and develop her inshore fisheries.* Even if the Norwegian proposals were accepted in full it would mean that foreign trawler companies would only have to register in Ireland and set up an office here. *They could then fish our waters at will with their own fishermen and sell their catch in Ireland or any of the member countries.* They would operate out of Irish harbours but this would be the only benefit which would accrue to Ireland.

9. *Ireland would lose the power to decide its own taxation policy.* The Commission in Brussels will decide common taxation policies for all member states. Taxation could no longer be used as an instrument for ensuring a more equal distribution of wealth in accordance with Irish needs and conditions.

The net result of all this is that Ireland would have no hope of developing an independent economy. We would simply become one state in a union, with no more power than *Georgia* or *Alabama* have in the USA. The Brussels Commission and Council would be given the right of enforcing here, by law, decisions not yet known or even contemplated, without the need of subsequent approval by an Irish Dail or government. *Surrender of sovereignty in this sense would be quite unparalleled in our history since the Act of Union.*

A number of other factors which SHOULD induce us to oppose the EEC are:

1. *The rate of development and growth in the EEC decreases in direct ratio to the distance from the centre.* In spite of many plans and fine speeches there is no regional policy in the EEC because it is contrary to the Treaty of Rome to interfere with the Free play of competition. The remoter regions such as Southern Italy and Brittany experience only stagnation, emigration and decay, Ireland would be the most remote region in the EEC if she joined.

2. There is free movement of capital, goods and labour, and freedom of establishment in the EEC, for businessmen, professions, technical and tradesmen and farmers. Article 60 of the Rome Treaty makes special provision for the "*free supply of services*" and states "*services shall include in particular:*

- a) *Activities of an industrial character.*
- b) *Activities of a commercial character (ie banks, insurance, shops, transport etc).*
- c) *Artisan activities (i.e. plumbers, bricklayers, plasterers, painters, carpenters, welders etc.).*
- d) *Activities of the liberal professions (i.e. doctors, lawyers, teachers, engineers, architects etc.).*

3. *The EEC abolishes democracy and enthrones bureaucracy. Its Constitution is the Treaty of Rome.* It Overrides all national constitutions which must be amended to conform to it. Its government is the Commission appointed by member governments every four years. It is elected by no one and is responsible to no one. Only the Commission can initiate legislation.

Its Senate is the Council of Ministers with a Minister from each member country. It can only consider and decide on proposals sent to it by the Commission. Its assembly is composed of representatives appointed by each of the member parliaments. It is NOT an elected assembly and it has no powers. Its court is the European Court of Justice whose decisions override all national Courts.

4. *Membership of the EEC involves an almost total surrender of National Sovereignty.* To advocate membership is in fact to advocate subversion of the Constitution of the 26 County State and subversion of the constitution of the historic Irish Republic as enshrined in the Proclamation of the Republic in 1916.

a) *The 1937 Constitution of the Free State would require amendment of at least 7 articles to make it subject to the Treaty of Rome.* These articles would include article 5 which states that Ireland is a sovereign, independent, democratic state. (See Government White Paper, par. I.5.).

b) The most fundamental principle of the 1916 Proclamation is the Declaration of the "*right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies to be sovereign and indefeasible*" This declaration would be set at nought by entry to the EEC. The ownership of Ireland will pass into the hands of the highest bidders, who will not be the Irish, and "*control of Irish destinies*" will be

handed over to a bureaucratic Commission who will regulate our lives. It is significant that the Proclamation of 1916 stated that *“this right can never be extinguished except by the destruction of the Irish people.”* This is what is involved in EEC membership.

5. *Ireland has traditionally followed a policy of military neutrality so far as conflicts between European states are concerned.* While the Rome Treaty contains no direct reference to defence and involves no specific military commitments, one must recall Hallstein's remark about the EEC being in politics rather than in business and recognise the increasing emphasis being put on developing a *Political Community* to complement the economic Community. Military commitments of some kind must therefore arise.

The Government have made no bones about this and appears to be quite willing to commit the Irish people to military obligations. Mr. Lemass said *“we make no reservations of any sort including defence”*. Mr. Lynch said *“if the group (i.e. the EEC) was attacked, I do not think we could opt out of our obligations to defend it. It is not a question of neutrality but of meeting your obligations within a complex of that nature...”* Neutrality in the context of the EEC would not be the old conception of neutrality at all. Dr. Hillery said *“we would have to participate in common action even the defence of the new Europe”*. All the existing members and all of the applicant countries, except Ireland, are members of NATO. *(France is not at the moment a formal member but she attends their meetings and accepts their decisions)* Ireland would soon be forced to join and allow NATO bases to be established at Shannon, Cork and elsewhere.

There are four applicants for the EEC and there is considerable resistance to the applications in all four countries. The Dublin government is negotiating for the 26 county region against mounting opposition from workers and farmers. Eventually a constitutional referendum in some form must take place, so the final decision will be in the hands of the people.

The Westminster government is negotiating for the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. In this situation the Belfast government has no voice whatever in the negotiations and there will be no referendum of the people. The people of the 6 county region must therefore devise their own tactics to bring maximum pressure to bear on the Westminster government to ensure that their position is taken into account in the negotiations for the EEC.

There are many good reasons why Britain may wish to join the EEC – economic, political and military. None of these reasons hold good for the 6 county area which has its own peculiar economic and political and military difficulties. There is widespread opposition to the EEC both among the Unionists and anti-Unionists in the North because they clearly see the danger to their farm subsidies and to their industrial incentive schemes. The campaign against has not however gained any momentum because there is no clear cut demand behind which all could unite. All has been left to Mr. Heath.

The Norwegian government, in its negotiations, is fighting for exclusion of the farmers of Northern Norway from the terms of the Rome Treaty. If sufficient pressure had been mounted Britain could have been forced to negotiate for an *“exclusive clause”* for the North of Ireland. A campaign for a referendum in the North on this question could have forced the issue. It may well be that the EEC Commission would have been receptive to such an idea as they have some degree of awareness of our economic and political difficulties and may think they would be better off without them in the EEC.

There would certainly be many economic difficulties facing the Irish people if we remain outside the EEC. But these are difficulties which we would be quite capable of overcoming by retaining our planning powers, *stopping the outflow of capital; keeping the nation's wealth and resources in Irish hands and using accumulated capital for investment in Ireland only; bargaining for trading agreements with those who wish to sell us their products, including Britain and the EEC and opening up new trading links with the developing countries.*

It is clear, however, that if we join the EEC we would face extraordinary economic difficulties and we will have lost the powers needed to protect ourselves from their effects. In addition to these economic difficulties we will also face grave social, political, constitutional, military and cultural difficulties. The whole fabric of

our national life will be torn to shreds, and the vital decisions affecting our daily lives and our future as a nation will be made in a faraway city.

One Act of Union brought Ireland to her knees. The second Act of Union will send her to the grave.

What do you know about the Common Market?

Q. How many of the countries in Europe can you name?

A. Albania, Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Finland, France, German Democratic Republic, Gibraltar, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands (Holland), Norway, Poland Portugal, Rumania, Spain, Sweden Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Western Germany, Western Russia, Yugoslavia.

Q. Which of these countries belong to the Common Market?

A. Belgium, France, Italy, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Western Germany.

Q. Which countries are currently applying for membership?

Denmark, Norway, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and Ireland.

Q. If Britain joins and Ireland does not, does this mean that Ireland could no longer trade with Britain?

A. No. Britain needs Ireland to sell her produce, at present Ireland is Britain's third best customer and she also needs Irish produce to feed her population. Therefore, a trade treaty is feasible.

Q. Can countries have trade treaties with the Common Market?

A. Yes. Many countries including Yugoslavia, Greece and Israel have. Britain is negotiating special arrangements for trading with Commonwealth countries and could negotiate one to trade with Ireland.

Q. Could Ireland get a trade treaty with the Common Market countries?

A. Yes, if she would admit to being an under developed country. Ireland was offered a Trade Treaty in 1967 but refused and insisted she wanted full membership.

Q. What does the Common Market mean in terms of trade?

A. All members can trade freely with one another, but outside countries must face a tariff barrier, unless special arrangements are made by treaty.

Q. Does this mean Ireland could not export to the Common Market countries?

A. No. The average tariff barrier is only 7½% - less on some goods, more on others. However, at the moment the Government gives companies a 50% rebate on goods exported - which it would have to stop doing in the Common Market. This means that if Ireland were to become a member, she would not have to pay the 7½% tariff on goods exported to member countries but nor would exporters get the 50% grant - so it would cost them much more to export.

Q. Could they not continue to get the 50% grant?

A. No. the rules of the Common Market would not allow it.

Q. Does this mean many industries now exporting would have to close down?

A. Yes. All those industries which cannot compete without help from grants, would close down. This is what is meant by being "more efficient".

Q. What about the people who work in these industries?

A. They would become redundant. They could emigrate freely to the Ruhr in Germany or any other area of the Common Market that needed labour.

Q. Would they be welcomed in these areas?

A. Yes, by the industrialists short of labour. No, by the populations in these areas, who, like most settled populations, do not like emigrants. Trade Unions do not accept emigrant membership.

Q. Would many people have to leave Ireland?

A. It has been calculated that 200,000 would have to leave the land under the Mansholt Plan. A further 10,000 will be made redundant in industry. By the 1981 census the total population of the Republic should be reduced to 2 million.

Q. Would the situation be as bad if Ireland were not to join?

A. It need not be, if the existing economic and financial powers of the Government were used. Outside the Common Market Ireland would have control over her own economic destiny and could devalue her currency, give grants and tax reliefs where needed, and exploit herself her natural resources such as her mineral wealth and her Atlantic Ports, which are of global importance. Beef cattle will also be needed by the Common Market countries whether Ireland joins or not. At present Ireland is forbidden by the Irish Government to export beef cattle to Cession Market countries.

Q. Mr Lynch has said that the Treaty of Rome will be signed in January, 1972. Will this make Ireland a member of the Common Market?

A. No. The signing of the Treaty has to be ratified in the Dail. Than there has to be a referendum to change the Irish Constitution. If the people refuse to make the necessary changes, Ireland cannot join.

Q. Why has the constitution to be changed?

A. Because the constitution says Ireland is a sovereign, independent country and can make its own laws. These rights must be given to the Common Market Commission in Brussels, but the Irish people must approve of this gift.

Q. Cad a tharlodh don Ghaeltachtf ?

A. Admhaionn Coimisiun an Chomh-argaidh (Hans Van der Groeben - "Regional Policy in an Integrated Europe") go glanfar na daoine as aon cheantar nach bhfuil in ann brabach a dhean-amh san fadthearma chomh maith leis an gearrthearma. Deireann siad nach bhfuil siad sasta go dtreasnofar an polasai bhrab-aigh seo ar mhaithe le h-aon "national objective". De reir slat thomas an Chomhargaidh ni dheanfaidh an Ghaeltacht brabach go deo agus mar sin caith-fear na daoine a ruaigeadh.

Q. Would membership of the Common Market help to do away with the Border?

A. No. Members must recognise the existing boundaries of states within the market for all time. However, there would be no customs on the border as prices would be the same in Belfast and Dublin - higher than they are now.

Q. Could Ireland leave the Common Market at any time?

A. No. Unlike a trade treaty, membership of the EEC is for ever.