

Irish Transport and General Workers Union, No to EEC

Caption: In 1972, in the run-up to the referendum on Ireland's accession to the European Communities, to be held on 10 May, the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union publishes a note in which it opposes Irish accession to the Communities.

Source: Irish Transport and General Workers Union. No to EEC. Dublin: 1972.

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No to EEC

1. COMPETITION

Our developing economy is far too weak to compete in free trade conditions with the industrial giants of Western Europe

It was only in the 1960's that Ireland began to build up an industrial sector. That sector is still small and weak. Our agricultural sector is largely healthy and thriving but in the modern world, agricultural prosperity is no match for the vast wealth of the great industrial networks of Western Europe.

The measure of new wealth created in a country is what economists call Gross National Product — GNP. Just look at how our GNP per head of population compares with that of EEC countries and decide for yourself whether we can compete with them in conditions where no holds are barred.

| | |
|-------------|--------|
| Denmark | £1,328 |
| Belgium | £1,106 |
| Germany | £1,262 |
| Britain | £ 906 |
| Norway | £1,224 |
| Netherlands | £ 998 |
| Luxembourg | £1,222 |
| Italy | £ 713 |
| France | £1,210 |
| Ireland | £ 550 |

But you might say, in the EEC we would become richer and the gap would close. The opposite is the case. A recent report, published by the EEC Commission itself, showed that while all areas in the European Community did increase their wealth in recent years, the amount of growth in the poorer areas was far slower than in the richer industrial areas. The gap is widening considerably year by year.

That is only what can be expected to happen when you have open free competition without any real effective measures to protect weaker areas. The only measure that could offset this trend would be a comprehensive and detailed regional programme. But no such programme exists in the Common Market. They have been talking about it for years, but nothing concrete has been done. Ireland could not afford to enter a community where there is only talk about protecting the weak.

2. JOBS

There will be widespread unemployment as a result of completely free entry of mass produced foreign goods into our home market

We will have a 50,000 increase in jobs by 1978 if we join the EEC, says the Government's White Paper. No reasons are given; no evidence is produced. But then comes the most amazing assertion of all — "Unlike assessments in the Government development programmes, direct consultations with individual industries were not considered appropriate because of uncertainty involved and the difficulty of devising a framework of assumptions..."

The figure of 50,000 was just pulled out of the air. Even the most pro-Common Market champions were

highly embarrassed at the way it was produced.

On page 49 of the White Paper we were told that the rate of growth in the economy to produce all those jobs would be an average of 5% a year between 1970 and 1978, higher than we ever achieved in the best years of the 1960's. The Irish economy grew at a rate of 1½% in 1970, 3% in 1971, and now the independent Economic and Social Research Institute tells us it will grow at only 1½% in 1972 — as in the worst years of unemployment and emigration in the 1950's. The institute also predicts a further loss of 13,000 jobs in 1972 on top of our present critical 80,000 out of work.

What is the great miracle that the Government predicts will increase employment by 50,000 overnight? The money coming into farmers from higher food prices and reinvested in industrial development? That is the greatest nonsense. Professor Bristow of Trinity College recently criticised those who exaggerated this claim that new income for farmers would have such a marvellous "spin-off" effect. Remember no industrial economy in modern times has been developed out of capital coming from agriculture.

There will be no increase of 50,000 jobs if we enter the EEC. There will be critical unemployment. Just look at the figures on the next page. We did not pull them out of the air. They are estimates made by Congress after consultation with affiliated Unions, industry by industry.

List of manufacturing Industries expected to have reduced employment after Irish membership of EEC (from estimates made by Irish Congress of Trade Unions)

| <i>Industry</i> | <i>1968/69 employment</i> | <i>Estimated loss of jobs</i> |
|--|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Bacon Factories | 4,580 | 2,290 |
| Jams, Jellies, Fruit, Vegetables, etc. | 3,819 | 1,909 |
| Bread, Biscuit and Flour Confectionery | 10,115 | 2,023 |
| Cocoa, Chocolate and Sugar Confectionery | 5,020 | 1,005 |
| Miscellaneous Food Products | 1,017 | 200 |
| Brewing | 5,150 | 208 |
| Woollen and Worsted | 7,384 | 2,215 |
| Linen and Cotton | 3,597 | 720 |
| Boots and Shoes | 5,542 | 2,770 |
| Men's and Boys' Clothing | 5,146 | 1,050 |
| Shirtmaking | 2,810 | 560 |
| Women's and Girls' Clothing | 8,323 | 2,436 |
| Miscellaneous Clothing | 1,156 | 200 |
| Made-up Textiles | 819 | 165 |
| Furniture and Fixtures | 4,093 | 820 |
| Printing, Publishing and Allied Trades | 10,132 | 1,010 |
| Oils, Paints, Inks and Polishes | 1,405 | 280 |
| Metal Trades | 11,078 | 3,880 |
| Machinery (non-electrical) | 2,482 | 500 |
| Ship and Boat Building | 1,146 | 500 |
| Road and Land Vehicles | 6,865 | 4,000 |
| Other Vehicles | 1,520 | 150 |
| Miscellaneous Manufacturing | 9,238 | 1,800 |

For more information on estimates of job losses in the EEC read the ICTU campaign paper "Economic Freedom".

3. PRICES

The cost of living will rise so high as to cause grave hardship to large sections of our community

Let us look at a comparison of typical Irish and German food prices. Germany is chosen because it has the largest consumer market in the EEC. This is what the housewife would face in the Common Market.

| <i>Items</i> | <i>Irish Price</i> | <i>EEC Price</i> |
|--------------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| 1 lb. plain cheese | 20p | 45p |
| 1 lb. apples | 12p | 15p |
| 1 pt. milk | 4½p | 8p |
| *8 oz. instant coffee | 76p | 110p |
| 1 lb. sugar | 5½p | 10p |
| *1 lb. tea | 40p | 120p |
| 1 lb. butter | 28p | 45p |
| 1 lb. loaf | 7p | 9p |
| 1 lb. fillet steak | 60p | 130p |
| 5 oz. packet jelly | 5½p | 20p |
| 1 lb. pork | 34p | 56p |
| 1 lb. salt | 3½p | 10p |
| 1 lb. cod fillet | 18p | 34p |
| 16 oz. packet cornflakes | | 13½p 27p |
| 12 eggs | 25p | 45p |
| *1 lb. oranges | 9p | 18p |
| 1 lb. tin custard | 9p | 22p |
| 1 lb. potatoes | 1½p | 6p |
| ½ pt. cream | 14p | 22p |

*The prices for tea, coffee, salt and oranges in the above list reflect differences in taxation and customs dues. This should be borne in mind in making comparisons. The Common Market however, intends in due course to harmonise taxation rates, which should lead to higher rates of taxation on food items here.

There is an estimated increase of at least £3.50 in the food bill of the average Irish household. But this does not include further increases due to inflation, the tendency for price increases which will result from the introduction of Value Added Tax (VAT) or the increases resulting from food-processors, wholesalers and retailers covering the higher costs of food to themselves and their employees.

Food prices must reach EEC levels within 5 years; there is no such provision for wages or salaries. The tendency will be to depress incomes so that manufacturers can survive in the new free-market competition.

Families with low incomes spend a large part of their income on food. Families with higher incomes spend more on non-essentials and luxuries. Some luxuries — motor cars, cameras, electrical mod-cons, spirits will be cheaper, but the ordinary worker will not benefit significantly from this.

4. INDEPENDENCE

We will lose full control over our future in Economic, Social, Cultural and Political affairs

The referendum on May 10, is to decide whether or not we want to change our Constitution. The change is for one reason only — to allow the EEC institutions (a) to make laws and regulations binding Ireland and (b) to make effective in Ireland over 12,000 regulations made by the EEC over 14 years, in which we had no hand, act, or part and which have not yet been published in Ireland.

No matter how you look at it, this is a loss of sovereignty.

Why do we want to retain sovereignty? To allow us to decide our own future. To allow our own elected Government to take any measures it deems necessary to protect jobs (80% of Irish jobs depend on the home market) and create more, to discriminate in favour of Irish manufacturers and Irish farmers, to protect Irish land, fisheries, natural resources, amenities, property, wholesale and retail outlets from foreign speculators. To foster industry, agriculture, services and exports as we wish, without let or hindrance. To have our own foreign policy and protect our neutrality.

If you vote YES in the EEC you surrender Irish independence. There is no doubt about that.

Precisely at this difficult stage of our national development we need all the powers we have to win through. Our representation on the decision-making bodies of the EEC is so small as to make what some people call "extending our sovereignty" sound like a joke in poor taste.

And what about neutrality and military commitment?

"Swedish participation in an economic and monetary union, which implies abandonment of the national right of decision-making in important fields, is not compatible with a Swedish policy of neutrality... our neutrality is not negotiable"

Swedish Prime Minister, Olof Palme, 1971

"We would have to act closely in political as well as economic affairs and would have to participate in common action, even the defence of the new Europe"

Dr. Patrick Hillery, May 1970

5. FARMS

The small farm community will go to the wall

The small family farm is the backbone of our rural community. It is the policy of the EEC to do away with small struggling holdings. Many Irish farmers already under pressure in the poorest parts of Ireland will be forced to leave the land, even at a faster rate than at present. It is deliberate EEC policy to reduce the size of the farming population by more than half. Only the big, efficient farmers will benefit from the high food price policy. What is to happen to all the men and women who leave farming? In Europe there have always been jobs in industry to absorb redundant farmers. In Ireland they can only add to the swelling ranks of the unemployed, which economists predict will amount to almost 100,000 in 1972 anyway.

6. EMIGRATION

Unemployed Irish emigrants will be forced into the slum labour ghettos of Common Market cities

Why are so many Irish workers so vulnerable to the effects of free unbridled competition in the EEC? The

reason is that most industrial workers are employed in the large weak industrial sectors like textiles, clothing, food-processing, metals and engineering, shoe and leather production, which depend heavily on the home market. The new growth export industries are still only a small part of the total industrial scene. The obvious conclusion is that most Irish workers are particularly vulnerable to free trade.

Because there is no regional policy at work in the EEC to inject major capital assistance into weak areas, Irish workers will be forced to look for work in the central industrial complexes.

Conditions for migrant workers in these centres are a scandal. Europe has 4 million migrant workers who live in the most degrading conditions. National governments have done little to help. They plead they cannot cater for the accommodation needs of workers who may not be wanted if unemployment in the EEC increases. Thousands of migrant workers in Europe live as third class citizens in slums, or in wired-off settlements, guarded by guards and dogs where wives and children may not enter. These migrant workers who make up Europe's third world are used by employers to depress wages and to undermine trade union bargaining.

7. CULTURE

The oppressive open competition of European society does not suit the Irish people

The thinking behind the free-trade, free-enterprise economy and social structure of the EEC is one which promotes the strong and efficient and allows the weak to go under. That certainly produces faster growth with greater wealth and prosperity. But it does not promote justice.

As Bishop James Moynagh puts it: "Certainly if one thought the EEC was the benevolent Christian society envisaged in *Mater et Magistra* or in Pope Paul's recent apostolic letter, there would be no question of our remaining outside. But if it is a power bloc bent on great concentrated wealth and power at the expense of the happiness of the people, it would bring ruin to Ireland".

Certainly EEC membership could conceivably bring great wealth to Ireland, but it will be wealth for the few. The rest will only have the pickings or will have long gone to rear their families in Dusseldorf or Antwerp. Like James Connolly, we believe that Ireland without her people has no meaning.

8. ALTERNATIVES

There are alternatives

We are not isolationists. We believe any Irish government of competence and imagination could negotiate some form of trading association with the EEC countries. This would stop short of full membership and allow us to direct our own affairs to the best advantage of the Irish people.

All the EEC countries sell more to Ireland than we sell to them. They need our beef and mutton not at the exaggerated prices now offered, but at world prices which would still be generous to the farmers. Britain knows we are her third best customer. They would all be prepared to negotiate a deal with us. Like Sweden, Spain, Finland, Austria, Switzerland, Portugal, Greece and a host of other countries, we will not crumble if we do not become full members of the Common Market.

All we need is imaginative leadership to explore the way and negotiate the deal that will help us to greatest advantage now and in the future.

The challenge for us and for our children is at home. It is not to be found in rubbing shoulders with the industrial giants who are in a different league. Vote NO in the referendum.