

DEMOCRATIC PROGRAMME OF DÁIL ÉIREANN

Adopted by the first Dáil, 21 January 1919



WE DECLARE in the words of the Irish Republican Proclamation the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland, and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies to be indefeasible, and in the language of our first President, Pádraig Mac Phiarais, we declare that the Nation's sovereignty extends not only to all men and women of the Nation, but to all its material possessions, the Nation's soil and all its resources, all the wealth and all the wealth-producing processes within the Nation, and with him we reaffirm that all right to private property must be subordinated to the public right and welfare.

We declare that we desire our country to be ruled in accordance with the principles of Liberty, Equality, and Justice for all, which alone can secure permanence of Government in the willing adhesion of the people.

We affirm the duty of every man and woman to give allegiance and service to the Commonwealth, and declare it is the duty of the Nation to assure that every citizen shall have opportunity to spend his or her strength and faculties in the service of the people. In return for willing service, we, in the name of the Republic, declare the right of every citizen to an adequate share of the produce of the Nation's labour.

It shall be the first duty of the Government of the Republic to make provision for the physical, mental and spiritual well-being of the children, to secure that no child shall suffer hunger or cold from lack of food, clothing, or shelter, but that all shall be provided with the means and facilities requisite for their proper education and training as Citizens of a Free and Gaelic Ireland.

The Irish Republic fully realises the necessity of abolishing the present odious, degrading and foreign Poor Law System, substituting therefor a sympathetic native scheme for the care of the Nation's aged and infirm, who shall not be regarded as a burden, but rather entitled to the Nation's gratitude and consideration. Likewise it shall be the duty of the Republic to take such measures as will safeguard the health of the people and ensure the physical as well as the moral well-being of the Nation.

It shall be our duty to promote the development of the Nation's resources, to increase the productivity of its soil, to exploit its mineral deposits, peat bogs, and fisheries, its waterways and harbours, in the interests and for the benefit of the Irish people.

It shall be the duty of the Republic to adopt all measures necessary for the recreation and invigoration of our Industries, and to ensure their being developed on the most beneficial and progressive co-operative and industrial lines. With the adoption of an extensive Irish Consular Service, trade with foreign Nations shall be revived on terms of mutual advantage and goodwill, and while undertaking the organisation of the Nation's trade, import and export, it shall be the duty of the Republic to prevent the shipment from Ireland of food and other necessities until the wants of the Irish people are fully satisfied and the future provided for.

It shall also devolve upon the National Government to seek co-operation of the Governments of other countries in determining a standard of Social and Industrial Legislation with a view to a general and lasting improvement in the conditions under which the working classes live and labour.

Connolly Youth Movement

A young voice for socialism

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The origins of this revolutionary programme for government

THE first all-Ireland parliament met on 21 January 1919 in the Mansion House in Dublin. The composition of the Dáil was the Republican TDs who abstained from the British Parliament following the 1918 general election. Republicans won 73 of the 105 seats—a clear indication of the people’s aspiration for a united, independent and progressive Ireland.

Dáil Éireann was a clear threat to imperialism’s rule and ambitions for Ireland and so was soon driven underground, but not before it issued to the Irish people and the world its vision of what a free Ireland should be like.

The members of the Dáil set about issuing a Declaration of Independence, which sought international recognition of their mandate as elected representatives of the Irish people. The only foreign state to recognise Dáil Éireann and the Irish Republic was the socialist state of Soviet Russia.

The Dáil issued another document that day, the Democratic Programme. This programme, socialist in content, declared that “the Nation’s sovereignty extends not only to all men and women of the Nation, but to all its material possessions, the Nation’s soil and all its resources, all the wealth and all the wealth-producing processes within the Nation, and . . . that all right to private property must be subordinated to the public right and welfare.”

This represented a true threat to foreign interference in Irish affairs, in that it sought to end not only political and military subjugation but the far more fundamental exploitation of the resources of the nation—natural, material, and labour.

The Democratic Programme was drafted by Thomas Johnson, a socialist and member of the Labour Party, but before adoption it was edited by the more conservative Seán T. O’Kelly. O’Kelly deleted the following sentence from the draft: “The Republic will aim at the elimination of the class in society which lives upon the wealth produced by the workers of the nation but gives no useful social service in return and in the process of accomplishment will bring freedom to all who have hitherto been caught in the toils of economic servitude.” Thus the programme lost its more outright Marxist socialist direction.

Relevance of the Democratic Programme today

READING this document, one could imagine it was written today, such is its relevance to the current economic and political crisis and such are its recommendations on how an economy should be run in a democratic society. But, alas, this document—the proposed programme for government of the first and only nationwide elected Irish government—has never been implemented nor made a reality for the people of this island.

The aspiration for a democratically controlled economy that benefits the people of Ireland and not a handful of imperialist elites has long been a demand of working people. This was evident in the opposition to the Cromwellian invasion and to the destruction of native communal property relations; it was clear in the peasant justice movement of the “Whiteboys”; it was expressed in the unity of Catholics and Protestants in the United Irishmen in demanding liberty, equality, and fraternity; it was organised in the Irish Land League, seeking to abolish landlordism and to empower working people; and ninety years ago it was declared in the Democratic Programme of 1919 by the revolutionary Irish government.

Amid the current crisis, though it is complex, it is easy to see how we got here. Read the Democratic Programme and see what has *not* been the focus of our economy: the people. Since the partition of Ireland and the victory of the counter-revolution in the Civil War, successive Irish governments, and direct-rule governance, have sought to protect private property and the powerful against democracy. Rule, both north and south, has been about profits for the minority.

Natural resources have been given away for nothing. Public services—those basics we are all entitled to have equal access to and that taxpayers’ money built—are being privatised, creating profits for the few and an apartheid provision of services favouring those with money. The highest-earners have paid less tax than middle-income families.

We could go on; but instead the Connolly Youth Movement wishes to propose an alternative, a “Democratic Programme for Today.”

If you agree with our demands, contact us and get involved.

The Democratic Programme for Today

PEOPLE on this island have long sought an economy based on needs and abilities. Central to all division and violence here has been the question of those who own and those who have been robbed. It was not by creativity or deserving hard work that the few became rich but rather by physical force, violence, and robbery. For centuries, different forms of state structures have been used to uphold this robbery and suppress the cry for a fair, just and accountable society. Today is no different.

The economy this island needs, and that we propose, is one organised democratically, with people's control and accountability at the core of its structures. It is to be responsive to people's needs and to reflect the skills, talents and resources at this country's disposal. It must act with respect for our natural environment and seek to turn back the tide of environmental destruction. It must be used in conjunction with a foreign policy based upon solidarity with the oppressed and support for governments with similar democratic economies. And above all else, it must be sovereign, under the direct control of all working people living on these shores.

This democracy must

- **organise a state bank, providing a secure provision of loans and protection of savings and pensions, with union representation on its board,**
- **nationalise and control natural resources, to be used for the benefit of all, with profits reinvested in the economy,**
- **develop and support the emergence of new energy supplies, such as solar, wind and wave power, moving away from dependence on fossil fuel,**
- **redistribute wealth through progressive taxation of the wealthy,**
- **regulate, monitor and tax any transnational company producing profits from our country or its people,**
- **provide equal access and publicly responsive state services in essential areas, such as health, education, and transport,**
- **enhance local democracy, enabling vital debate over national policy and initiatives at the local level, with structured channels to meaningful power,**
- **support and encourage union membership and participation as another essential channel of democratic debate and enforcement,**
- **construct a legal system and judiciary process that have as their very fundamentals the protection of a collective right to the basics of life and opportunity.**

To achieve this Democratic Programme, firstly the demand must be made. To make it a reality people must voice their opposition to the present system and sign up to an alternative—an alternative that is realisable only through sovereign control of our futures.

No longer must we be held back by the “competitive needs” of transnational corporations and the demands of an unregulated market economy. No longer must we be blackmailed by the threat of lost jobs. No longer must we kneel before foreign governments because they are too important economically to us—most blatantly exposed in the continuing use of Shannon Airport by US troops and the illegal rendition of torture detainees.

We have seen this policy fail and now we must make the alternative a reality.

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CLÁR DAONLATHACH DHÁIL ÉIREANN

Ar ghlac an chéad Dáil leis, 21 Eanáir 1919

DEARBHAÍMID, i mbriathra fhorógra Shaorstát Éireann go bhfuil sé de cheart ag muintir na hÉireann sealbh na hÉireann do bheith acu agus cinniúint an náisiúin do bheith faoina riar, agus nach féidir an ceart sin a bhaint díobh; agus faoi mar a dúirt ár gcéad Uachtarán Pádraig Mac Phiarais, dearbhaímid gur ceart go mbeadh, ní hamháin fir agus mná na hÉireann, ach ábhar maoin na hÉireann faoi riaradh an náisiúin, idir talamh agus gustal na hÉireann, gach saghas maoin agus gach gléas chun maoin a sholáthar dá bhfuil sa tír; agus athfhógraímid an rud a d'fhógair an Piarasach gur dual go mbeadh tosach ag ceart an phobail chun leasa an phobail ar cheart an duine chun seilbhe faoi leith.

Dearbhaímid gur mian linn an ceart, an tsaoirse agus cothrom do chách a bheith mar bhuntacaí rialú na tíre, agus ná fuil d'urrús le buanú Rialtais ná saorthoilíú na ndaoine chuige ach é.

Dearbhaímid go bhfuil sé de dhualgas ar gach fear agus gach bean a bheith umhal, dílis, freagrach agus freastalach don Phoblacht; agus go bhfuil sé de dhualgas ar an náisiún féachaint chuige go mbeidh caoi ag gach duine sa tír ar a cheart agus a acmhainn féin a chur i bhfeidhm ar mhaithe le leas an phobail. Mar chúiteamh ar fhreagra is freastal na ndaoine, dearbhaímid in ainm an tSaorstáit, gur dual do gach duine a cion féin de thoradh shaothar an náisiúin a bheith aige.

Is é an príomhchúram a bheidh ar Rialtas an tSaorstáit ná gléas a sholáthar chun leas corpartha, leas spioradálta agus leas intleachta na



leanaí a chur in áirithe dóibh; féachaint chuige

nach mbeidh an t-ocras ná an fuacht ag goilleadh ar aon leanbh de cheal bia, éadaigh ná díon tí; ach go bhfaighidh siad gach cóir agus gléas is gá dóibh chun teagasc agus taithe cheart a thabhairt dóibh i gcomhair na hoibre a bheidh le déanamh acu mar chomhaltaí den Saorstát Gaelach.

Is follas do Shaorstát Éireann nach foláir an dlí gránna iasachta a bhaineann le Tithe na mBocht in Éirinn agus gach a ngabhann leis de chéim síos is de náire, a chur ar ceal, agus plean éifeachtach éigin a cheapadh a bheidh oiriúnach don tír chun aire cheart a thabhairt do sheandaoine agus do laga an náisiúin, daoine a thuilleann freastal agus buíochas ón náisiún in ionad tarcaisne agus neamhshuime. Ina theannta sin, beidh sé de chúram ar an Saorstát gach gléas is áis dár ghá a chur i bhfeidhm chun sláinte an phobail agus leas corpartha an náisiúin, agus leas anama an náisiúin dá bharr a chur in áirithe dóibh.

Beidh sé de dhualgas orainn cabhrú le méadú ghustal an náisiúin, an talamh a dhéanamh níos torthúla agus níos insaothraithe; mianach na hÉireann, a portaigh mhóna, a cuid iascaigh, a bealaigh uisce, agus a cuanta a chur chun críche i gceart chun tairbhe mhuintir na hÉireann.

Beidh sé de dhualgas ar an Saorstát gach ní is gá a dhéanamh chun ár ndéantúis a athbheochan is a neartú agus féachaint chuige go saothrófar iad de réir “comhar oibre” ar an gcuma is fearr is is oiriúnaí is is mó a rachaidh i dtairbhe do chách. Cuirfear feidhmeannaigh ó Éirinn go tíortha thar lear d'fhonn ceannaíocht agus tráchtáil a chur chun cinn idir Éirinn agus na tíortha úd, a rachaidh i leas don tír seo agus do na tíortha eile. Nuair a thabharfaidh an Saorstát faoi thráchtáil an náisiúin, idir díolaíocht agus ceannaíocht, a riaradh, beidh sé de dhualgas ar an Saorstát gan bia ná earraí eile a bhfuil gá leo a ligean thar lear ó Éirinn go mbeidh a leordhóthain faighte ag muintir na hÉireann, agus a saith i dtaisce acu i gcomhair an ama le teacht.

Beidh sé de chúram ar Rialtas an Náisiúin, leis, iarraidh ar Rialtais tíortha eile cabhrú agus comhoibriú ar comhchéim leo chun dlíthe i dtaobh ghnáthshaol agus ghnáthobair an phobail a cheapadh a chuirfidh feabhas mór ar an gcóiriú saoil is saothair a bhíonn le fáil ag lucht oibre.

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Guth óg ar son an tsóisialachais
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