

# **SOCIALISM FOR THE WELSH PEOPLE**



**gareth miles &  
robert griffiths**

**Foreword by**  
**Dafydd Elis Thomas MP**

**£1**

# CONTENTS

FOREWORD by Dafydd Elis Thomas .....	3
Introduction .....	5
THE MARXIST INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY .....	6
THE FEUDAL ORDER .....	7
CAPITALISTS, ENGLISH AND ANGLICISED .....	8
THE WELSH ELITE .....	10
A Break with Britishness	
WALES AND THE BRITISH LABOUR MOVEMENT .....	14
Welsh Workers and Home Rule	
THE WORKING CLASS AND INDEPENDENCE .....	17
Who Subsidises Whom?	
The Encroaching Corporate State	
THE SOCIALIST ROAD FOR WALES .....	23
A Separate Welsh State	
Reforming Plaid Cymru	
Opposing Imperialism	
Promoting the Welsh Language	
Reclaiming the Land	
Progressive Politics	
Towards a Revolutionary Philosophy	
The Way Ahead	
A WELSH SOCIALIST REPUBLICAN MOVEMENT .....	30

# FOREWORD BY DAFYDD ELIS THOMAS M.P.

There is only one thing worse than political theory divorced from practice: it is political practice devoid of theory.

The first, an autonomy of intellectual labour from material labour, leads to the kind of useless teaching so prevalent in the University of Wales; if political theory is divorced from the actual making of political movements and events, it becomes academic in the worst sense of the word.

On the other side, politics without a critical understanding of the social system within which (or deliberately outside of which) a political activist works, becomes the sort of pragmatism that reached its hey-day in Wilson-Callaghan Labourism.

**Socialism for the Welsh People** is the work of two activists. **Gareth Miles** is, arguably, the leading Marxist writer in the Welsh language; he is also the militant National Organiser of the only Welsh-based teachers' union. **Robert Griffiths** is a full-time researcher with Plaid Cymru; he has consistently refused to recognise any boundary between researching facts and campaigning to change them.

Their pamphlet is addressed to two typical and — in my view — equally false political positions taken by many Nationalists and Socialists in Wales. It challenges those Welsh Nationalists who consider Nationalism to be an all-embracing ideology: Nationalists of this persuasion (still dominant in Plaid Cymru) believe that the Nation is, like the bourgeois image of God, "above" the conflict of classes; that cultural policies, in particular the survival of a subjugated linguistic group, can somehow be fought for and fulfilled without regard to the economic system. This attitude ignores the real history of modern, submerged nations like Wales, and the historical links between the development of the oppressive Nation-states such as Britain, their imperialist role and the accumulation of Capital.

But this pamphlet also confronts those on the Left who, in an equally unhistorical fashion, deny the existence of a Welsh nation or of cultural issues; who espouse instead a dehumanised "economism" which seeks to propel an abstract unhistorical "working-class" into a new socialist dawn. There, no doubt, Welsh coal mines will still be run from London's Hobart House. Nothing better illustrates the deradicalisation of the Labour Movement, with some fraternal exceptions, than its leaders' law-and-order right-wing attitude towards *Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg*.

The belief that we as Welsh people, both Welsh and English-speaking, can only liberate ourselves as Welsh people inspires this pamphlet. Political liberation is meaningless without economic liberation — and cultural emancipation can contribute to economic liberation in Wales, as well as benefiting profoundly from it.

The recognition by Marxists and others of the essential link between Socialism and the National Question is taken for granted in the Third World, and increasingly appreciated amongst the submerged, Stateless nationalities of Western Europe and North America. National movements are embracing Socialist ideology as the only way of ensuring control by the working people of each nation of its own resources. Here is the only effective way to end domination by foreign capital.



At last, in **Socialism for the Welsh People**, the analysis of so many Third World Socialists and Nationalists is being applied to Wales; the kind of writing so powerful in the 1960s in Quebec is beginning to appear here, too. The struggle of the working-class in Wales, aided by its own intellectuals, is part of a world-wide struggle against cultural and economic domination. To be part of a counter-consciousness within Western Capitalism is the historic role and responsibility of Welsh "radicals" (and I use the word in its American New Left meaning, not in the Welsh *petty-bourgeois* sense).

The need for a mass movement outside Parliament, as an agent of social change, must be obvious to anyone who has listened to "Yesterday in Parliament". But such a movement, whether in Wales or elsewhere in Western Europe, must have a tough ideological analysis that does not baulk at the contradictions of a modern capitalism determined to maintain its control of the economy and cultural super-structure. The theory to sustain a radical movement must be forged in the struggle between the democratic forces of Welsh working people, and those which explicitly — or by their compromises as they run British ruling-class institutions in Wales like the BBC — perpetuate the status quo. They perpetuate a system which not only dominates Wales, but which has a vested interest in the economic exploitation and cultural domination of starving and deprived millions in Third World countries.

In struggling for our liberation in Wales we must reject the irrational operation of free market forces; but we must also beware the oppressive, bureaucratic regimes of many "Socialist" countries.

The recent lurch to the Right in Welsh voting behaviour indicates clearly that the self-styled "Welsh Radical Tradition" is dead. We now need vigorous self-criticism in the National Movement and on the Left generally. Because **Socialism for the Welsh People** is an unsparing analysis of our real position I am proud to endorse it. But this pamphlet will have been pointless if it does not lead to new initiatives on the industrial and political fronts — initiatives that recognise Wales as an internal colony of British and world-wide capitalism, a colony whose people must commit themselves to undermining the structure of domination.

DAFYDD ELIS THOMAS  
*Dolgellau, July 1979*

# SOCIALISM FOR THE WELSH PEOPLE!

## Introduction

For at least a century the world's people have possessed the skills which — were they applied purposefully to the world's natural resources — could eradicate most diseases and all deprivation. Instead, much of mankind's physical and mental ability has been exploited and utilised by an economic order ("Capitalism") which has ceased to play a progressive role in history. This system, with its consecration of private property, its inevitably centralised ownership and control of industry and capital, its panoply of social, cultural and legal relations, now retards progress towards a world free from deprivation, degradation and war.

Of course, in comparison, a small Western country like Wales does not suffer the same degree of social and economic misery as some other areas of the earth. Yet even here we can illustrate the absurd, restrictive and anti-human nature of Capitalism: for example, throughout the 1970s at least one Welsh house in every ten has been officially classified as "unfit", with over 40,000 people on council waiting lists, while — on the other hand — we have thousands of houses uninhabited, opulent holiday homes being built, luxurious but empty office blocks towering above slums, more than 10,000 construction workers unemployed and millions of bricks stockpiled. The legal, financial and governmental shackles forged by a cruel and crazy economic system prevent us from solving one problem by solving another: to squat in the holiday cottage could be "illegal"; to purchase the vacant office block with public money would require enormous "compensation" for the owners; to employ labour and materials is apparently beyond the financial capacity of private and public enterprise; the land needed for new housing might "belong" to some rich landlord or estate. So the social scars caused by bad housing and enforced idleness continue side by side, when they should be healing each other.

On a global level, the world's store of raw materials (oil, minerals, timber etc.) is being depleted. To avoid calamity for some generation in the future, it is obvious that the use of these resources — and their replenishment or replacement by alternatives — must be planned on an international scale. It is inconceivable that this momentous task will be undertaken by the multinational corporations and the States that serve their interests — plundering for profits in competition with one another. It can only be achieved by the world community of nations, sharing a socialist view of how resources should be conserved, extracted without exploitation, used methodically and distributed fairly.

Capitalism booms then slumps, produces wealth and maintains poverty, manufactures gluts and suffers shortages, scrambles for markets, creates rivalries and — every now and again — flares into warfare. But if we want to install general prosperity instead of poverty, security in place of instability and cooperation in place of competition, how do we overturn this system, Capitalism? With what do we



replace it? Where do we start — and how should we organise? Before we decide where we must go, let us understand the society we have inherited — and how that inheritance was created. Therefore it is essential to study history and to draw lessons from it. The future will be built by the materials at hand, guided by our understanding of history, its forces and dynamic.

# THE MARXIST INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY

This is a brief summary of the main Laws of History, according to Karl Marx:

## 1. The Basic Law

The human race has always striven to increase its freedom: this endeavour springs from the necessity to master the material circumstances of existence. Here is the Basic Law of History. Humanity cannot be free except to the extent that it is not bound by the material necessities of life. An increase in the freedom of both individuals and societies is therefore conditional upon their strengthening and expanding their control of their environment. This has always entailed an increase in production — although we can not be certain that increasing production will be possible, or even necessary, for all time in the future.

## 2. The Law of Class Conflict

To explain this key Marxist theory, we could not improve on William J. Rees' introduction to his Welsh translation of the **Communist Manifesto**:

*At a particular time in the history of society, society divided itself into a number of economic classes, each having conflicting interests. Class war arose from this historical and social basis. As regards this struggle, the prime objective of the ruling class is to retain control of government: it opposes social change, it increasingly hampers the progress of culture and production and it depends increasingly on armed force to consolidate its authority.*

*The prime objective of an oppressed class is to free itself from its subjection to the ruling class and to establish itself as a new ruling class; it supports changes in culture and production, it demands democratic rights, and from time to time, it will incite political reform or social revolution. The revolutionary period is that during which political power falls from the grasp of the ruling class into the hands of the oppressed class — a period of deep crisis when the old society is shaken to its roots and a period of chaos before the new ruling class succeeds in re-shaping society on lines more consistent with its own will. Marx and his disciples therefore insist that the fundamental factors which must be*

comprehended if we are to understand any historical phenomenon — be that revolution or social reform, political change or the actions of an individual politician, a novel, a play or a particular doctrine — are the methods of production employed during a particular period, and the comparative strength and inter-relation of the different classes.

This is not to imply that other factors such as geography, climate, nationality, religion, the talent or otherwise of leaders, are of no importance — only that the material factors referred to are the governing factors. For instance, it is totally impossible to understand any aspect of the history of Greece and Rome in the classical period properly if one ignores the fact that their economic systems were based on slavery, or religion and culture in mediaeval Europe without knowing something about feudal agriculture.

It is very important not to apply this doctrine in a mechanical and inflexible manner, but rather to bear in mind that although human consciousness is created by a combination of circumstances and material developments, this consciousness in turn can act upon its circumstances to change them.

# THE FEUDAL ORDER

**Feudalism** is the name given to the new order which supplanted the system known as "gentle" or "tribal". The feudal system developed from the tribal system by virtue of the fact that the aristocratic class, the military "*teulu*", managed to relegate the rest of the tribe to a subordinate position and create a state system that would enrich that class at the expense of the rest of society. Under the feudal order, the land which formerly belonged to the whole tribe became the property of the lord and his kinsmen, and the free men were degraded to the position of serfs forced, under threat of punishment, to labour on their master's land in return for the right to work for part of the week on their own land, to keep themselves and their families.

In spite of the efforts of Llywelyn ap Iorwerth and Llywelyn ap Gruffydd, a corresponding feudal system did not develop in Wales. Both these leaders and all other Welsh princes were tribal chieftains, not monarchs like the kings of England or France. Many Nationalists tend to see the virtues and failings of the Welsh society of this period, compared with what existed in England at the same time, as being typically Welsh characteristics, e.g. the Welsh method of sharing land between all the sons; the "liberal" attitude of the Laws of Hywel Dda towards women, divorce and punishment; the willingness of the whole tribe to fight against any would-be conqueror and, yet, the lack of Welsh national unity at crucial times. It is important to realise that these are not peculiarly Welsh characteristics but, rather, the characteristics of every tribal or "gentile" society. According to Gwynfor Evans, Wales was "*a country of small states*" in the period under review. This is misleading for there was no such thing as the State under the tribal system. **The State is a system which enables one class to despoil other subjugated classes, and the weapons used are the army, the police and the law.**



In Wales, until 1282, the land was owned by the nation, or the whole tribe, not by the aristocratic class — this is why it was shared among all the sons; and the law was a voluntary system which served the whole of society, as shown by Mr Dafydd Jenkins in his volume, **Cyfraith Hywel**:

*"In the context of the law of the nation, a law court was not a state institution for the administration of rules; it could be an assembly of the local inhabitants (or some of them) to make arrangements regarding all sorts of matters; or it could evolve as men voluntarily agreed that a particular man, well-versed in the law, should decide on any disputes which might arise between them."*

There was no army as such in that Wales: the people were the army, *"le peuple armé"* in the words of the French revolutionaries. And the comparatively privileged position of women in Welsh society was an echo of the old communism of tribal life at its most primitive, in the pre-historic period.

The feudal system was therefore immeasurably more oppressive than the tribal order. But it was immeasurably more productive and more wealthy and this, in the main, is why the Welsh were defeated by Edward I and his fellow-barons. When this happened, the feudal system was itself in decline and, accordingly, no form of Welsh feudalism was to develop in the wake of the Conquest either. Instead, the country stepped forward onto the next rung in the historical development of Western Europe, a capitalist system of agriculture, as the free men of the tribes became tenants of their chieftains.

## CAPITALISTS, ENGLISH AND ANGLICISED

Each social system contains within it the seeds of its own destruction. Gold, silver and bronze were the seeds of the new system that replaced feudalism: the gold, silver and bronze of the merchants and manufacturers who prospered because of the stability of feudalism.

In country after country the antagonism between the feudal ruling class, on the one hand, and the rising wealthy traders and financiers, the mercantile *bourgeoisie*, on the other led to civil war. This was the cause of the English Civil War in the 16th century and the French Revolution of 1789. Marx said that in such a way the bourgeoisie had played a revolutionary part in historical development. This is how he described the transformation of society by the victorious bourgeoisie:

*The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his "natural superiors", and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous "cash payment". It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of Philistine sentimentalism in the icy water of egotistical*

*calculation. It has resolved personal worth into exchange value, and in place of the numberless infeasible chartered freedoms, has set up that single unconscionable freedom — free trade. In one word, for exploitation veiled by religious and political illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation.*

Not infrequently nowadays, intelligent and cultured Welsh people may be heard to speak of the "Welsh middle-class" and its regrettable or praiseworthy influence on the Welsh schools/drama in Wales/Broadcasting/the Language/Plaid Cymru... and so forth.

The truth of the matter, of course, is that Wales does not today have, and never has had, a proper middle class that regarded Wales as its own fortress — a nationalistic **bourgeoisie**. In order to show clearly that Wales has been totally deprived of such a class, one cannot do better than quote a few additional sentences from Marx's famous description of it, as found in the **Communist Manifesto** of 1848:

*The bourgeoisie, during its rule of scarce one hundred years, has created more massive and colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together. Subjection of Nature's forces to man, machinery, application of chemistry to industry and agriculture, steam-navigation, railways, electric telegraphs, clearing of whole continents for cultivation, canalization of rivers, whole populations conjured out of the ground...*

It is perfectly plain, even to those who know nothing at all of the history of our country, that Wales has never possessed a native class of this kind, jealous of its own territory. If she had, her recent history would have been quite different.

A self-conscious and self-confident Welsh bourgeoisie would have been hard at work throughout the nineteenth century building linguistic, cultural, political and economic barriers around Wales, to protect it as a market and as a quarry of raw materials and human resources for their own use. As a result, the future of the Welsh language would be as secure as the future of any European language: Wales' contribution to modern European civilisation would be as great as that of other small countries such as Denmark, Norway and Czechoslovakia; we would have a Parliament and a host of national institutions of international repute — Universities, Museums, Galleries and Centres of Science and Technology — instead of a handful of British-orientated abortions, some of them scarcely worthy of the adjective "provincial".

Most important of all, a Welsh bourgeoisie would have created a Welsh proletariat stronger and more self-confident than the one we have today, because — in all probability — the Welsh working-class would have been less debilitated by the Depression and Imperialism. Hence the class struggle between an identifiable Welsh bourgeoisie and a more cohesive Welsh working-class would have been sharper and more consistent. Nationalism and the "national question" would exist only as a weapon of the Welsh governing class, not as a vital issue requiring so much of our energies and attention.

In the event, the employers and financiers who took root in Wales was either English in origin — notably the early ironmasters — or Welshmen (many of the coalowners) who swiftly became anglicized in speech and loyalty. True, in their younger days some of the Welsh Liberal capitalists did, like D.A. Thomas, toy with schemes of home-rule, but their Welsh nationalism was, in Saunders Lewis' words,



"the spare time hobby of corpulent and successful men". The class interests of Welsh capitalists resided in the British State and Empire (especially after the opening of Africa after 1880) where their investments were as well-protected as any English ones. Welsh steam-coal powered the Imperial British Navy. Put simply, the capitalists of Wales did not need to create their own national market or erect linguistic and State barriers of their own.

## THE WELSH ELITE

Welsh life in the nineteenth century was led by a **petty-bourgeoisie**, not a bourgeoisie: farmers, shopkeepers and craftsmen, not investors, industrialists and entrepreneurs. This petty bourgeoisie created in Wales the equivalent to England's Civil War: the Methodist Revival. The Nonconformists founded democratic religious institutions in every part of Wales — but they did not want or win a Parliament on Welsh soil. These Revivalists (Howell Harris, Williams Pantycelyn, Ann Griffiths, Robert Jones Rhoslan) were not proud and fearless Welsh patriots but respectable, servile and over-religious Britishers. Theirs was not a Welsh patriotic "revolution"; it was a religious revolution, English in inspiration and divinity. Its language was Welsh only because the **Werin**, the ordinary people, spoke no other.

It was not by defying England that these social, religious and cultural leaders took care of their interests and furthered their social, political and religious aims, but by becoming more anglicised and Britannicised; not through establishing an independent Welsh state but by crouching closer still in the embrace of the British state. And in payment for their loyalty and for leading the Welsh *gwerin* along the same servile paths, they were rewarded with a handful of petty privileges, petty offices and petty concessions in the sphere of religion, education and culture. A miserable but apt recompense for a petty-bourgeoisie.

The first of their aims was the right to hold their religious meetings without interference or persecution from the "*mindless gwerin led by its squires, its clergymen and its government officials*", to quote R.T. Jenkins. The second was to steal the allegiance of that *gwerin* from the Anglican Church and turn Wales into a Nonconformist country.

The third historical aim of the Welsh petty-bourgeoisie was to provide an educational system which would thoroughly anglicise and Britannicise their children, thus enabling them to take full advantage of the civil and political privileges of the British State and of the many opportunities for the acquisition of wealth and for "getting on in the world" that England created in the heyday of the Industrial Revolution and the Empire. Ironically enough or naturally enough, it was the **Treason of the Blue Books** (in 1848) that awakened in the Welsh Nonconformists their insatiable desire for an English education. It is true, as Frank Price Jones shows in **Radicaliaeth a'r Werin Gymreig**, that the "Treason" radicalized them and kindled fires of patriotism in their hearts for the first time ever, but many people would maintain that the most important outcome of all the fuss was that the

Nonconformists and the *Gwerin* set to work energetically, from that period until the present day, to provide for the children of Wales, from primary school to University, the very educational remedy recommended by the authors of the **Blue Books**.

Following the Industrial Revolution, the working-class being forged in the ironworks, coalmines and woollen mills was thoroughly Welsh in speech; meanwhile, the landlords, capitalists, soldiers, State officials and Established Churchmen were generally English (or so anglicised as to make no difference). The danger of national/cultural separateness aggravating the conflicts surrounding food shipments, landlordism, tolls, the Charter, wages and work-conditions in Wales was understood by the governing class. Parliamentary proceedings, Privy Council reports, Royal Commissions and "*Times*" Editorials attest to the English Establishment's desire to extinguish the Welsh language and so obliterate Welsh nationality. The Welsh elite played an indispensable part in suppressing their own native tongue: in growing proportion they comprised the education committees, governing boards and teaching staff who excluded Welsh from schools. They were not compelled to ban Welsh by the 1870 Education Act — that is a myth fostered by Nationalist historians — but did so because (1) Welsh did not fall within the "payment-by-results" State Education Codes between 1861 and 1890; and (2) whether Welsh was discriminated by the Codes or not, it was regarded as a badge of inferiority or a waste of time. As Schools Inspector W. Edwards told the first Welsh Language Society in 1899:

*A kind-hearted teacher would occasionally encourage his pupils with a few Welsh words on their admission, to facilitate their obedience to his commands, or afterwards to help them over a difficulty; but he would think he was doing his duty most thoroughly when he reduced to the barest minimum the resource to the mother-tongue. As is well-known, special devices were adopted to prevent children from speaking to one another in Welsh while they were within the school premises.*

*The curious inadequacy of the recognition given to Welsh in the schools may be excused, as being due to the helplessness of the teachers in the face of an unsympathetic regime. This again, was due not so much to a deliberate policy on the part of the controlling authority as to the fact that, in those days, no demand for special treatment came from Wales itself... English is still the prevailing medium of instruction even in the Welsh-speaking districts.*

The fourth aim of the Welsh Nonconformists was to smash the oppressive yoke of the landowners, and the fifth, the sixth and the seventh were to supplant these as the political leaders of the *Gwerin*, to strip the foreign Established Church in Wales of its privileges, and to participate as fully as possible in the government and administration of Kingdom and Empire. These aims were very tightly linked and were all achieved, bar the sixth, between the 1868 General Election and the end of the First World War. In 1922, like a crown — albeit a pretty wilted one by then — on all the campaigning, Disestablishment was achieved.

So there was Wales, a complete nation once again! The bitterest irony of 1922 in the history of the Nonconformist petty-bourgeoisie was that the period during which its deepest desires were realized — the Prime Ministership of Lloyd George and Disestablishment — was also a period of far-reaching change which served to crush its economic foundations in rural Wales and to shatter its political influence in the valleys of the south.



## A Break With Britishness

It was not until 1925, the year which saw the formation of the Welsh National Party, that a section of the Welsh Nonconformist petty-bourgeoisie abandoned the traditional British allegiance of its class. It is hardly surprising that the most prominent and influential members of this small group were intellectuals since it was only they, at that time, who were able to discern something more of the past of their nation than was revealed by the educational system of the conquering state.

The growth of the party was slow, for the following reasons:

1. The thorough penetration of British imperialist ideology among the members of the class to which they belonged.
2. Their inability to gain the support of industrial workers because of:
  - (a) their cultural and academic conservatism and their attachment to the individualistic, puritanical, rural ethos of their class.
  - (b) the influence of the Labour Movement, its Englishness and internationalism — sometimes honest, sometimes a front for Britishness — on the working class.

So Plaid Cymru started its political career as a reactionary party, albeit with a socialist fringe (mainly refugees from the disintegrating Independent Labour Party). As the British Empire dissolved in the post-war years and as England declined in importance in political and economic terms, there was a growth of national consciousness among the Welsh petty-bourgeoisie and the working-class. This has been reflected in the growth of Plaid Cymru, now under the mellow and more populist leadership of Gwynfor Evans, and in the limited successes of *Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg* and other pressure groups. Yet the mass of the Welsh people have remained unmoved, if not untouched, by appeals to their Welsh nationality.

Part of the explanation lies in the nature of the party's appeal, itself derived from its leaders' conceptions of "Nationalism". In 1923 **Saunders Lewis** presented his Nationalism as follows:

*Another name for nationalism is conservatism. In essence, nationalism and conservatism are one and the same... Now, the national movement is a reaction — an attempt to nurture a Welsh conservative party, and to safeguard the civilisation in which we share.*

(Y Faner, 6 September, 1923).

The terminology was unfortunate; and the obsession with conservatism, "standing still", could hardly have appealed to a Welsh working class determined upon change. Singing the praises of "civilisation" found little echo in mining valleys suffering the cruelties of capitalism.

Half a century later, **Gwynfor Evans** offers this "definition":

*Nationalism varies so much from country to country that there are nearly as many nationalisms as there are nations, each one taking its character from the nation's history and circumstances.*

(Barn, August 1979).

We reject the "stagnation" definition of nationalism and the second, nebulous one. Both are uselessly abstract and ambiguous. For us, **Nationalism is a philosophy fashioned by an economic class, using nationality to establish or maintain a State in pursuit of their own economic, political and social objectives.** No Welsh State exists because no class has, in modern history, considered it essential to its class interests.

Owain Glyndwr and his followers succeeded in setting up an independent Welsh State at the beginning of the 15th Century. It was short-lived: within years of that heroic venture the noblemen of Wales had struck upon a surer way of furthering their interests, namely by enlisting in the armies of the English King and dissolving themselves into the English aristocracy. This process received the royal seal of approval with the Acts of Incorporation under the Tudors, themselves of Welsh aristocratic descent.

By 1925 the political, social and economic aims of the Welsh petty bourgeoisie had, like the Welsh aristocracy before it, been largely fulfilled within a British framework. Hence Saunders Lewis and his companions could scorn "materialistic" Welsh Nationalism from their position of comparative, material comfort. No, the Welsh State they desired would perform a moral and sublimely civilised role: the aim was not independence, declared Saunders Lewis in his **Principles of Nationalism**, not even unconditional freedom, but just as much freedom as would be necessary to safeguard "Welsh Civilisation". And today, for many well-heeled Welsh Nationalist academics, broadcasters, littérateurs and clerics — "*Cymry da*" — their Welshness and command of the Welsh language is a decoration, worn on their sleeve to set them apart from and above the non-Welsh speaking "materialistic" herd; often Welshness is the vessel for their spiritual and religious values, supplying a meaning and source of daily anguish to their otherwise uninteresting lives.

Of course, meeting the needs and aspirations of the common people, in Wales or England, is another matter entirely. This could not be done by the British State without transforming its very foundations — changing from a system based on exploitation and production for profit, to one producing for use in a people's commonwealth. Even in its most harmonious and socially-accepted period, from 1945 to the mid 1960s, British Capitalism failed to eradicate unemployment or to satisfy the requirements of workers and their families in such areas as housing, education and social services. The prospects for the next quarter-century at least are no more favourable. History has proved and the future will confirm: unlike other classes, those who live by their labour alone have a vested interest in fundamental change, in building a Socialist society. Similarly in Wales, only the working class holds interests that are intrinsically in conflict with those defended by the British State. **So the issue is whether the mass of the Welsh people should — or indeed, can — strive for economic, social and real cultural liberation on an exclusively British/European/global scale, or whether they should add another dimension to one or more of these: the drive for a Welsh Republic.** The case for opening up and concentrating upon this front is, we hope, proposed in the remainder of this pamphlet. But where we must start is with the political consciousness of the Welsh working class, past and present.



# WALES AND THE BRITISH LABOUR MOVEMENT

In this century, the concentration and centralisation of industry and finance, and Capital, has required a corresponding response from the forces of organised Labour. Independent regional trade unions have fallen casualty to this inevitable development, hence the incorporation of the North Wales Quarrymen's Union, the South Wales Miners' Federation, the South Wales Tinplate Workers' Union and others into the big "British" unions. This "British" factor is crucial: Britain's position as an imperial power enabled the State's ruling-class to buy off the militancy of an oppressed working-class and, in particular, to bribe labour leaders with money (a comfortable life), status (respectability), and limited power at court (but unlimited "responsibility" to uphold the status quo). True, the spoils of Empire were distributed with less generosity to some parts of the Kingdom, but overall the British working-class has not suffered the same poverty and deprivation experienced in those European countries with less extensive empires.

The effect of British Imperialism upon the working-class has been to nurture **Economism** (an obsession within the trade union movement with wages and work conditions, to the exclusion of such matters as theory, and working-class history and culture), **Reformism** (bargaining in Parliament and the work-place for improvements within Capitalism, not fighting to install Socialism), **Philistinism** (an aversion to or sneering contempt for intellectualism and culture of any kind) and **British Nationalism** (a fear or dislike of "foreigners" and an ignorance or animosity towards Welsh, Scottish and Irish nationhood).

Anglicization has helped enormously to infuse Wales with Britishness, thus further exposing the Welsh people to these tendencies under imperialism. Certainly, these influences would not have gained much currency in a Welsh working-class conscious of its history, determined to preserve its language, culture and national identity — hence in conflict with the English/British State, and, like the Irish and John Maclean's section of the Scottish working-class, struggling for an Independent Republic. But, as we have illustrated, that kind of working-class had little chance of developing in Wales.

Instead, the majority of our working people have — since 1918 — given their allegiance to the political party established and sustained by the British Trade Union movement, the **Labour Party**. Naturally, this Party has embodied and reflected those tendencies fertilized by imperialism. The grip of "parliamentary cretinism" (Lenin's words) on the British Labour Movement was hugely reinforced by the debacle of the 1926 General Strike. Then, the very trade union leaders who had led the working-class to defeat used that aborted display of workers' power to discredit revolutionary and militant trade unionism. The TUC bureaucracy prefer to work with Labour governments (or Tory ones if their rank-and-file will allow it) to win concessions, rather than change society fundamentally. Symbolic of this degeneration was the dropping of workers' control of industry as an explicit objective of the Labour Movement, in favour of State capitalist bureaucracy, in 1932.

The result is that selective nationalisation has been undertaken in the interests of British capitalism since 1945; the compensation, pricing and contract policies of State industries have been to the benefit of shareholders and private enterprise. Hence the nationalisation of key industries run down by private owners, e.g. coal and the railways, have long been accepted by the Tories and big business. Indeed, Conservative governments have occasionally undertaken nationalisation themselves (e.g. Rolls Royce). At the same time, the Capitalist Press and politicians have always abused state-run industries in order to discredit the general principle of public ownership. Overall, the performance of the Labour Party in Government up to now was summed up concisely by Tony Benn, when he told the House of Commons: "Three times the Labour Party has saved capitalism in this country" (21/05/79).

The integration of Wales into this British Labour Movement and its "parliamentary cretinism" acquired an additional urgency after the 1931 General Election — when Labour was decimated in England, while little Wales supplied half the new Parliamentary Labour Party! Obviously any area of Britain which could guarantee enough Labour M.P.s to offset a Tory majority in England (as Wales did in 1950, 1964 and February 1974) should not be encouraged to opt out of the Westminster game of musical chairs.

## Welsh Workers and Home Rule

Yet the desire for Welsh Home Rule has ebbed and flowed through the history of the Welsh labour movement. The early leaders of the S.W.M.F. echoed the call for a Welsh Parliament; immediately after World War One — once Liberals and pacifists had revived the Home Rule issue — all the major Welsh Labour organisations declared in favour: the North and the South Wales Labour Federations, the S.W.M.F. and the N.W.Q.U. At the same time, these Labour Home Rulers — especially those on the Left — had no use for a classless nationalism; as Morgan Jones, later the I.L.P. MP for Caerffili, warned: "**The Labour Movement must be careful lest Home Rule should come to be regarded more as an end in itself, than as the means to the ends of social reconstruction and emancipation from economic thralldom.**" The same year — 1918 — militant miners' agent George Barker explained more fully in **Welsh Outlook**:

*Why not go in for the real essential thing — a Parliament for Wales — this would fire the zeal of every Welshman. Devolution is bound to come, and the sooner the better; and a real live Welsh party would hasten it. Why should Wales go cap in hand to England for everything she wants?*

*A Welsh National Party would win the support of Welsh workers — if it supported miners' ownership and control of the mines, steel and tinplate workers owning the mills, and so forth.*

*We want economic freedom; sweet, ample homes for the people, with plenty of garden space, and a Parliament in Wales so that her people can govern themselves.*

The support from socialists in the inter-war period for some measure of Welsh



self-rule was sincere and widespread. But, understandably if mistakenly, they never put this demand as a top priority — or considered it central or essential in any strategy to win Socialism. Their acceptance of Britishness, which they could not disentangle from working-class unity with England, inhibited them from placing Welsh national demands in an anti-imperialist context. Labour did not even try to take control of the Welsh Home Rule Movement — a task they could have accomplished with ease. Instead, the reins were left in the hands of Liberals, a few landowners, anti-socialist Nonconformists, local government empire-builders and romantic intellectuals, thereby ensuring the movement's collapse in the early 1920s. Ironically, one of the biggest stumbling-stones for Home Rule unity was the fear of some North Wales reactionaries that a self-governing Wales would be dominated by the "Bolsheviks of the South".

Whereas a Welsh National Labour Party (as advocated by E.T. John, David Thomas and others) might have gained popular support in the 1920s, the Welsh Nationalist Party which arrived in 1925 alienated most of the potential working-class support for Home Rule. Indeed, the politics and predilections of the dominant element in Welsh-speaking Nonconformity and the Nationalist Party widened the gap between the Labour Movement on one hand, and Welsh aspirations and patriotism on the other. Due to this and other previously-mentioned forces at work, by the early 1950s both the Welsh Regional Council of Labour and the N.U.M. South Wales Area had decisively rejected a Parliament for Wales. Only the electoral threat posed by Plaid Cymru, capitalising on a deepening disillusionment with Labour/London government, prompted the Labour Party and the N.U.M. to re-adopt devolution in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Even today, as the anglicization of Wales brings Toryism in its tow, the Labour Party is too British, too centralized, too bureaucratic and too corrupt and bankrupt to appreciate the need for a Welsh State or a devolved parliament — for the sake of Labour as well as Socialism: Labour's failure to protect working-class communities and defend the Welsh language and identity has sapped the Party's source of strength and inspiration; far worse, it has set back the cause of Socialism by leaving the Welsh people more exposed than ever to right-wing propaganda, philistinism and British Nationalism.

Nor is Labour any longer the "mass party of the working-class" (if we might infringe *Militant's* copyright): in the May 1979 General Election in Britain about 47% of working-class voters (manual and non-professional white-collar workers and the unemployed) and only 35% of the working-class electorate voted for Labour; in Wales the figures were nearer 60% of working-class voters and just under half the working-class electorate.

In many parts of Wales, Labour has degenerated into a creaking electoral machine cranked by naïve idealists, Trotskyist infiltrators, petty careerists (usually lecturers or barristers), lazy or corrupt councillors, arrogant English settlers and native Uncle Toms. Its M.P.s — flattered by the Westminster Press lobby and unknowing English socialists as left-wing, internationalist rebels — are centralist, British Nationalist place-seekers almost to a man. Because in the past it enjoyed the allegiance of the Welsh working-class, Labour has, more than any other party, helped the British State towards one of its early aims, namely to wipe out the identity of the Welsh nation. By integrating Wales into Britain, by failing to counteract the economic and ideological forces which undermine the Welsh language and identity,

Labour has done much of capitalism's anti-Welsh work for it.

The greatest service to Socialism and the Welsh working-class that could be rendered by those Labour Party activists who fall outside the categories above is this: they should, of course, continue the struggle for socialist policies and greater party democracy — but under no illusions that the Left would take and maintain control of the Party, that a Left-wing manifesto would ensure a General Election victory or — even if it did — that the heralded Left Labour Government of the Future could legislate for Socialism; they should argue against all manifestations of British Nationalism — and argue uncompromisingly for the Welsh language and for a Welsh State or Socialist Republic.

## THE WORKING-CLASS AND INDEPENDENCE

In the last century the leaders of Welsh society did not wish to lead Wales towards self-government. For the last ten years or so, an increasing number of the present-day heirs of that class — teachers, lecturers, students, lawyers, administrators and broadcasters — have willed that end, but they are neither numerous enough nor sufficiently strong economically to achieve that aim.

The only class that can carry through the task of establishing a Welsh State is the working-class. But would Welsh self-government, independence or to use the current bogey-word — "**separation**" be in the national interest of workers, besides being a matter of their self-respect as Welsh people? If not, then there is no prospect of self-government, just as there is little chance of a distinct Welsh nationality surviving far into the next century.

A specifically Welsh and Marxist analysis of British capitalism and its effects was pioneered by William Rees in a 1950 discussion paper: **The Problem of Welsh Nationality and the Communist Solution**. We draw deeply from it in the following account:

In the economic sphere, a hundred and fifty years of rule by the bourgeoisie has brought Wales the benefits of a capitalist industry — immense powers of production in coal, iron and steel, oil refining, chemicals, vastly improved communications, large towns and a greatly increased population. It has also brought the evils universally associated with that system — the exploitation of working people, straggling and unplanned towns and villages, booms and slumps and unemployment, and death on the imperial battlefields.

The evils inherent in the capitalist system have been greatly aggravated in Wales, however, by the fact that capitalist industry has grown, not on a national basis as in other countries, but to meet the requirements of the British bourgeoisie regardless of the existence of Wales as a national unit. In two ways, this has had disastrous economic effects.



In the first place, the main communication systems have been built, not to connect Welsh industrial areas with each other, but to connect them with neighbouring English industrial areas and with London. While these communications are entirely necessary and are, indeed, in need of further development, this is no justification for the absence of all worthwhile communications between north and south Wales. The result of this neglect has been the creation of what can only appear from a Welsh standpoint as an irrational economic structure, consisting of separate industrial areas in North and South Wales, both dependent on more powerful neighbouring areas, both unconnected with each other and largely unconnected with their own surrounding rural areas.

In the second place, the industrial development of south and north-east Wales has been overwhelmingly and almost exclusively based on a few specialised industries, notably the heavy industries of coal, iron and steel. From the point of view of the British bourgeoisie, this could be "justified" on the grounds of essential specialisation in production. From a specifically Welsh point of view, it was and still remains entirely indefensible. The result has been, and still is, that whenever these industries undergo structural changes, as inevitably they must do in the course of history, there are no alternative industries in Wales itself to absorb displaced labour and to take the place of the older industries as exporters of manufactured goods.

These two factors taken together have made it inevitable that in the general crisis of capitalism in the present century, the Welsh industrial areas have suffered more heavily than any of the other industrial areas of Great Britain. In times of prosperity and depression alike, the unemployment rate in Wales is twice the British average. Moreover, given the present structure of Welsh industry, there is no possible alleviation of this problem apart from migration to England. In the decade before 1939 nearly half a million of the younger generation of Welsh men and women, about one fifth of the total population, left Wales in search of employment in England. Not even the post-war boom from 1945 onwards in any way arrested it. The rate of migration since the Second World War is even higher than for the inter-war period taken as a whole. In 1970, the last year for which figures are available, over 40,000 people left Wales for England.

As a source of mobile labour for the British State's metropolitan core, they are fulfilling one of Wales' functions as an **internal colony**.

Wales is a **colony** because three quarters of its private industry is owned from outside, and all of its public sector is controlled from outside; one-fifth of Welsh land is either a military playground or is under water for the benefit of English conurbations (and the salvation of undrowned English valleys); cultural hegemony is imposed by an English (and largely anti-Welsh) Press and by the British Nationalist broadcasting machine; and Wales lives under a governmental and education system which is overwhelmingly English in language and entirely British in sentiment. Wales is an **internal colony** because, as individual "Britons", the Welsh possess the same political and civil rights as any other inhabitants of Britain. As a nation, however, we are recognised only in a token fashion (e.g. our "National" University) in a harmless sop to our national identity (e.g. our sports teams) or as a matter of administrative convenience (e.g. the Welsh Office). Welsh speakers, of course, do not enjoy full civil rights for as long as they insist on using, seeing and hearing their own language as well as English.

For as long as they are imprisoned in this internal colony, the Welsh people will

suffer higher unemployment, poorer housing, lower living standards, even shorter life-expectancy, than most regions of Britain. Only a reorientation of the Welsh economy, under the control of workers and their communities can offer the opportunity of ending these inequalities. Such a restructuring of the economy will never be attempted by the British State, or by the EEC — it could only make sense to a Welsh State. Furthermore, the only Welsh State capable of carrying it out would be one in control of the country's economy and resources — a Socialist State. Obviously, Wales can not escape the effects of international crises; nor could Wales hope to flourish as an oasis of Socialism in the desert of Capitalism. But a Welsh State could at least have the protection of Wales as a priority in an international storm. The reconstruction of the economy could commence, even if its pace and fulfilment would depend ultimately upon the triumph of Socialism in other industrialised countries. We cannot afford to wait: without self-government the Welsh people remain in the grip of an alien State, subject to instant hiring-and-firing by outside bosses, wandering in search of jobs in the more prosperous regions.

## Who Subsidises Whom?

Unfortunately, the challenge to break out of this strait-jacket frequently meets with fears and objections like: "Wales could never afford to run itself", that we are dependant on State hand-outs, kept afloat by English charity. As British Nationalist and anti-Welsh language M.P. Neil Kinnock once declared in *Tribune* (April 8, 1977): "We are a nation that can't pay its bills." He elaborated in a speech in the House of Commons (April 4, 1978):

*Here we are, a nation in deficit, dependant on the generosity — not necessarily the spontaneous generosity — of the tax-payers of the rest of the United Kingdom which, because of the deficits run by Northern Ireland and Scotland, means the generosity of the people of England, which in turn, because of the unfortunate circumstances of people in the North-East and Merseyside and of the stranded rural areas and the decayed inner city slums of much of England, actually means the people of relatively prosperous South-East England.*

So there it is — the Home Counties, where so many South Wales Valleys M.P.s reside, subsidise the industrial and agricultural regions of the rest of Britain!

Whether politicians reinforce the Welsh inferiority complex for personal and political ambition, or whether they are unwitting prisoners themselves of that complex, the point remains that such arguments are as profoundly anti-Socialist as they are anti-Welsh. It is as if their proponents know nothing of the **Labour Theory of Value**, an essential component of socialist understanding. Briefly, this theory holds that "labour" is the source of a commodity's value (except for such "commodities" as art treasures which become, in effect, capital). Under Capitalism, the value of work applied to a commodity by a worker is generally greater than the wage paid to sustain the worker and his/her family. The "surplus value" extracted by the employer realises itself in profits (including unwarranted employers' "income"), rent, and interest to bankers and shareholders. Thus the distribution of wealth does not correspond to the contribution made by those who create it; working people do not enjoy all the fruits of their labour. In fact, the Royal



Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth reported in 1977 that the richest 20% of the population in Britain own a staggering 82% of all personal wealth (mainly property, land and financial assets). Only a "bionic" 1/5th of the population could have supplied 4/5ths of the mental and physical labour used in creating this wealth.

Of course, inequality in the distribution of wealth is fundamentally a matter of economic class. But what has also occurred over a period of centuries is that the power of Capital has become geographically concentrated: the centre of capitalist power — hence of political power also — is the South-East of England and, inside that, London. Thus in South-East England today only 34% of their working-population are engaged in actually producing wealth (in agriculture, manufacturing, construction, mining and quarrying) or providing essential services (such as gas, electricity and water); the remainder are mostly in jobs which owe their existence to wealth-creating labour (administration, transport and communications, distribution) and/or live off the surplus value extracted from labour (finance and commerce, ownership of dwellings). In the rest of the United Kingdom the wealth-producing proportion of the work-force is 48%; in Wales it is 47% and in North-East England, 50%.

So, in claiming that the South-East subsidises the other regions and countries of Britain, Kinnock and his confederates are turning Socialist economics on their head! Who is supposedly subsidising the workers of Tyneside, Merseyside or south Wales — the Stock Exchange? Or the Bury St. Edmunds banker? Or the Kingston-upon-Thames chartered accountant? Or is the Home Counties working-class subsidising the working-class everywhere? — That is equally daft. The simple truth is that working people everywhere maintain and sustain the whole of society.

No, what we have here — and from so many other pundits — is a regurgitation of capitalist economics, its values and its accounting tricks. The argument runs as follows: "The gulf between public spending (by local and central Government, nationalised industries etc.) and public revenue (rates, taxes and duties, National Insurance contributions etc.) in, say, Wales is wider than in South-East England. Therefore Wales is in deficit, and this 'extra' public spending which Wales receives without finding from its own pocket is financed by the generous tax-payers of South-East England" ... Forget which class actually produces wealth, and the class composition of countries and regions. Forget where profits, interest and rent are generated — and to where they might be transferred. Forget that the higher incomes accruing to the labour-dependant and labour-exploiting classes enable them to pay higher rates and taxes, so reducing the "deficit" in those regions where they form a higher proportion of the population. Forget that the South-East is in deficit also, and that the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement (the State's deficit) for Britain as a whole is some £10 billions a year — although nobody asks whether Britain could afford to continue to govern itself. Forget that the higher public spending might be a direct consequence of the density of wealth-producing labour in a region, or of the region's function as a settlement for retired people, or as a play-ground.

In short, the only way to argue that Wales is in beggary is to adopt an anti-Socialist view of how capitalist society operates. With just 5% of the U.K.'s population, Wales in fact accounts for 10% of U.K. agricultural produce, mines 9%

of the coal, refines 28% of the oil, generates 9% of the electricity, produces 23% of the iron, makes 29% of the crude steel and manufactures 99% of the U.K.'s tinplate; we have abundant land, water, mineral and timber resources, as well as deep-water port, fishing and offshore oil potential. To assert, then, that the people of Wales are "Kept", and could not afford to control their own economy is reactionary, anti-Welsh nonsense.

## The Encroaching Corporate State

Another reason for Wales breaking away from the British State is the feasible danger of reactionary totalitarianism taking over in Britain, as a result of the increasing crises and sharpening contradictions of domestic capitalism.

This is not an attempt at scare-mongering. All the necessary ingredients are in the pot and coming to the boil, namely:

- (a) The low productivity of the British capitalist system and its inability to compete successfully with that of its competitors, such as Japan, Germany, France and the USA.
- (b) The dangerous contradiction between the working-class and the capitalist class: the former in a position of immense power industrially, but politically helpless and lacking in leadership; the latter, although its economic system is tottering on the brink of disaster, will maintain a very firm hold on the reins of political and administrative power, and on its ability to influence the thoughts and feelings of the population through the press, the mass media and the educational system.
- (c) The support of large sections of the petty-bourgeoisie (small traders, farmers etc.) and many workers even, for the tireless drive of the capitalists to weaken the economic and industrial power of the working-class by "bringing the unions to heel".
- (d) Nostalgia for the Empire and shame at the "humiliation" of their country, strengthening the appeal of extreme British patriotism among members of all classes, this tendency receiving the enthusiastic support of the mass media and Right-Wing politicians.
- (e) The radicalism of the Right succeeding among the workers because of the ineffectiveness of the Left.
- (f) Convenient scapegoats at hand to promote British 'national unity' — e.g. The Common Market, coloured immigrants and the "separatists" of Wales and Scotland.
- (g) A general desire for order and social stability and for "a return to traditional values".
- (h) The plausible — although fraudulent — case being presented by State bureaucrats and other capitalist interests for introducing fast-breeder nuclear reactors: the "Plutonium State" means additional curbs on trade unionism, and a much larger police and military presence; North-West Wales is a prime site for nuclear reactors.
- (i) The State's use of Ulster as a training-ground for new techniques in intelligence gathering, riot control, military operations against civilians, police-army co-operation and other methods of suppression.



The pressure is building up for a permanent incomes policy, with Employers, Trade Unions and Government coming together to keep down wages and workers' living standards — and to maintain Capitalism. These "consultations" could develop into a more formal body, like the National Economic Development Council, backed up by statutory authority. Formalised class collaboration, pay laws, anti-trade union laws, restricted civil rights, increasing interference by the Armed Forces in industrial disputes and "security operations", a militarised police force (based upon the Special Patrol Group?) — these are the foundations of a Corporate State, "fascism with a human face". All this is far from incompatible with continued membership of the EEC. Many of the foregoing features are already found on the Continent. Corporatism in Britain could proceed comfortably alongside integration into the Common Market. NATO's "Eurogroup", "Interpol" — with its history of fascist connections — and the moves to develop a military dimension to the EEC (notably the establishment of a common armaments purchasing agency) are ominous cornerstones for any Western European corporate state, especially one being constructed under the umbrella of a "directly-elected European Parliament". Waving the Union Jack or flocking to the defence of Westminster is not the correct response: socialists should instead argue for the break-up of Britain, and challenge the EEC's bogus "ideals" with the case for a United, Socialist Europe.

The main reason why it is unlikely that socialism will be established in the countries of Britain without a period of violence and reaction, and possibly civil war and fascist repression is that the workers do not have a revolutionary party with the vision, the will, the determination and the boldness to snatch the reins of the British State from the hands of the ruling class, if the opportunity arises.

Once such a party had gained power, it would have to act repressively against the leaders of the old order, the great industrialists and the chief capitalists, the most reactionary politicians, Press, mass media and civil service chiefs, and the highest officers of the armed forces and the police. If it should not do that, **inevitable reaction** would follow, under the leadership of these gentlemen, smashing the labour movement and every other progressive movement, and imprisoning torturing and murdering thousands of workers and their supporters.

"Our soldiers and policemen would never do such dreadful things." you might say. That is exactly what the late Salvador Allende used to say.

When the foundations of a capitalist state are rocking, there are only two possibilities — a bourgeois dictatorship, that is to say Fascism, reinforcing these foundations with the bodies and blood of the workers, or a dictatorship of the proletariat, leading society as a whole towards socialism.

We believe that the ground is more fertile in Wales for revolutionary, socialist politics than in many other parts of Britain — provided the "national" dimension is appreciated and applied properly. The stronger class consciousness here, the absence of a native employer class, the distinct popular culture and the separate (often heroic) history: all give the National Question in Wales a progressive bias. Welsh nationality clarifies and emphasises the class basis of society, inequality, the exploitation of labour, the siphoning away of profits, and the nature of the British State. Socialists should employ it to heighten class consciousness and to unite much of the Welsh nation behind the socialist, anti-British working class of the future. Also, the forces hostile to a progressive or Socialist Government of Wales would be more easily identifiable, because they would emanate largely from

outside. This last factor confirms the necessity of working with Socialists in England, Scotland, Ireland and Western Europe generally. In the unlikely event of "British" Socialism triumphing without any separate Welsh dimension, we fear that both Wales and Socialism would be the poorer, culturally and economically.

## THE SOCIALIST ROAD FOR WALES

The late J. Roose Williams, a patriotic Welshman and a leading member of the Communist Party, said many years ago:

*Wales' misfortune is that the struggle for national freedom and the struggle for economic and social justice should have been separated for the last fifty years and more. As a result, both sides have only won a crumb or two here and there. Very little will come of our efforts as socialists or nationalists unless we manage to unite both struggles. When we manage to harness together the two most important dynamic forces in the life of the nation, the desire for freedom and the desire for a complete society, we will see some astounding changes...*

Many more nationalists would support these words today than when they were spoken, some fifteen years ago; so too, in all probability would many more of the members of the party to which T. Roose Williams belonged, and to both these groups may be added an increasing number of disillusioned ex-members of the Labour Party.

It is easy to criticize. But can a Welsh "New Left" offer a strategy which will be a more effective and more practical means of promoting Socialism in their country and its neighbour's?

This is an attempt to do so: one that is undoubtedly far from perfect. But a start must be made somewhere. And it's high time we made a start:

### A Separate Welsh State

Socialists must make a degree of separate Welsh Statehood an essential objective over the next decade: Welsh nationality, with the folk-culture and radical politics that infuse and define it, faces the direst threat to its existence. Welsh self-government would loose the grip of British imperialism on one part of its territory, would weaken the influence of imperially-derived attitudes on the working-class in England as well as in Wales, creating conditions in Wales favourable to progressive political developments.

The massive NO vote in the Referendum was not a verdict **against** the Labour Government's proposals as such: the Assembly and all its powers (or lack of them)



was hardly an issue. Rather it was a **repudiation** of watered-down Welsh Nationalism, and an **affirmation** of the Welsh inferiority complex.

Quite obviously, flag-waving, football-terrace Welsh Nationalism frightens and repels the majority of people when it enters the political arena — or bores them by its irrelevancy. Welsh nationalism — whatever size the dose — which does not challenge the enormous social and economic problems afflicting Wales will never attract a majority of our people, nor does it deserve to. The Welsh people are not interested in a pile of bricks with a Red Dragon fluttering overhead. Nor are they visionaries, prepared to support a toothless Assembly because it **might** evolve into a powerful Welsh Parliament.

SO THE ONLY WELSH NATIONALISM WHICH IS WORTHY OR LIKELY OF SUCCESS IS ONE WITH A STRONG SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONTENT. WE WOULD ARGUE THAT SUCH A NATIONAL MOVEMENT MUST ESSENTIALLY BE BUILT WITHIN THE WELSH WORKING-CLASS, AND FIRED BY THE IDEOLOGY, POLITICS AND POLICIES OF SOCIALISM.

But even this stream of Welsh nationalism will be held back by the Welsh colonial mentality, and by the British state which fosters it. Therefore, Welsh nationalism must not only be Socialist (which, by definition, includes internationalism) in content — it must also be thoroughly and unflinchingly anti-British and pro-Welsh.

Among other implications, this means we can not shrink from the issue of Royalty. The Monarchy is both the product and the source of inequality and unearned privilege. It is a corner-stone of British Nationalism and the prevailing economic order; it is a weapon wielded with cunning by the English ruling-class to inspire loyalty to the British State (formerly the Empire) among the subject nations and oppressed classes. In Merthyr and Dowlais in 1936, Aberfan in 1967, Caernarfon in 1969, we have witnessed members of the Anglo/German/Greek royal family striving to fulfil the role they are so lavishly paid to perform by the Establishment. Of course, an anti-monarchist stance is likely to unpopular, certainly in its early stages: but it is essential if Britishness is to be challenged, and Welshness and egalitarianism exalted in its stead.

## Reforming Plaid Cymru

We should not be surprised that a large element in Plaid Cymru — especially the leadership — threw themselves wholeheartedly into this wasteful Referendum campaign. After all, the Assembly was a diluted version of their kind of Welsh nationalism — neither socialist nor uncompromisingly anti-British.

More significantly, the Labour Government's proposal fitted in with the strategy of winning self-government by stealth, without real conflict with Capitalism and the British State, so gradually that nobody will notice: **Step One**, a harmless Assembly to which nobody could reasonably object; **Step Two**, a law-making Assembly (gained by consensus and the help of non-Nationalist Assembly members); **Step Three**, the inevitable self-government. All this can come to be, they claimed, without any stand-up fight, any subversive activity, certainly without any violence (let the Welsh nation perish rather than that!) against the British State, its forces, institutions and ideology.

What characteristics other than compromise, cowardice, vacillation, gradualism and opportunism could we expect from a Party whose leadership and many of its most influential members are petty-bourgeois, Nonconformist and pacifistic? On industrial struggles, on Tryweryn, on the Investiture, on the Monarchy, on the British occupation of North-East Ireland, on the State conspiracy against the Welsh Language Society, Plaid Cymru has been virtually silent — desperate to avoid challenging these particularly arrogant or absurd manifestations of British and capitalist power.

A new leadership must be built to fight for — and become the expression of — a Plaid Cymru which is, at every level, socialist and consistently anti-British. This struggle is, in itself, worthwhile; but in the event of the "Rural Right" keeping its grip on the purse-strings and the internal levers of power, Socialists and Republicans in Plaid Cymru should have the courage — as well as the strength and organisation — to leave Plaid Cymru and contribute to the setting-up of an independent Welsh Socialist Party.

## Opposing Imperialism

Around the globe nations are fighting for the right to self-determination: they might need our help as we need theirs. We can learn from each other's experience. Stronger Welsh links with socially-progressive national and regional movements must be forged, especially in Europe where the possibility of breaking up the capitalist nation-states like France and Spain is now opening up. As Franz Fanon said:

*"Far from keeping aloof from other nations, it is national liberation which leads the nation to play its part on the stage of history. It is at the heart of national consciousness that international consciousness lives and grows."*

Even nearer home the British occupation of North-East Ireland must be opposed actively and unflinchingly: we support those forces working for Irish unity and a 32-County Socialist Republic.

The struggle against Capitalism and its State, Britain, in Wales cannot be divorced from the world-wide fight to overthrow international capitalism — "Imperialism". Since the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, Capitalism has been banished from an ever-increasing area of the world. Without condoning the injustices that have occurred in the non-capitalist world, we unconditionally defend these countries against Western imperialism. At the same time, leaving "human rights" campaigning to American Presidents or their British Foreign Secretary lap-dogs discredits Socialism and strengthens imperialism.

## Promoting the Welsh Language

Welsh has never been the language of a ruling class or its State. Rather, it has been sustained through the centuries of discrimination and adversity by the ordinary people of Wales, by the miners, the quarry workers, the farm workers. It is the



crystallisation of Welshness, the core of a unique culture that belongs first and foremost to the Welsh working-class. For that reason alone it is worthy of protection and preservation.

But more, the Welsh language is a wide chink in the British State's ideological armour; the Welsh language and culture have yet to be entirely taken over and manipulated by the State. It is an oasis of independent thought and activity in a sea of regimentation, official brainwashing and Anglo-American dross. Because **Cymraeg** has been in imperialism's sights, so it gives us an additional insight into imperialism and its ways. If the Welsh people allow this cornerstone of their identity, (whether or not they speak the language) to be shattered, there can be little hope that they will fight for their social and economic dignity and emancipation. We should ponder the judgement of the great Irish Revolutionary Socialist, James Connolly, on this relationship; in 1908 he wrote:

*Nations which submit to conquest, or races which abandon their language in favour of that of an oppressor, do so not because of altruistic motives, or because of a love of brotherhood of man, but from a slavish and cringing spirit.*

*From a spirit which cannot exist side by side with the revolutionary idea. This was amply evidenced in Ireland by the attitude of the Irish people towards their language. For 600 years the English strove to suppress that mark of the distinct character of the Gael — their language — and failed. But, in one generation the politicians did what England had failed to do.*

*The great Daniel O'Connell, the so-called liberator, conducted his meetings entirely in English. When addressing meetings in Connaught where, in his time, everybody spoke Gaelic and over 75% of the people nothing else but Gaelic, O'Connell spoke exclusively in English. He thus conveyed to the simple people the impression that Gaelic was something to be ashamed of — something fit for only ignorant people. He pursued the same course all over Ireland.*

*As a result of this and similar actions, the simple people turned their backs upon their own language and began to ape 'the gentry'. It was the beginning of the reign of the toady and the crawler, the seonin and the slave.*  
(The Language Movement)

Those words should find a deafening echo in modern-day Wales. Socialists and patriots here must be firm and uncompromising: enemies of Welsh are enemies of Wales and of her working-class. We want to see the Welsh language extended and promoted as never before, as part of the world's rich tapestry of human variety and achievement. That does not excuse us from the necessity to attack any chauviistic, introvert and anti-English tendencies in the Nationalist Movement.

Nor does it mean support for those who would divorce Welsh-speaking areas, economically and politically, from the rest of Wales. Special measures are necessary and practical to support Welsh in those parts where it still predominates: but it is divisive fantasy to imagine that an autonomous state in Welsh-speaking West Wales could sustain more than a small number of idealists, for a few decades, next door to a capitalist Wales, Britain and Western Europe. The battle for the Welsh language must be fought all over Wales; under capitalism, Wales is the smallest economic unit (with the industrial power of the south and north-east) that could underpin a state committed to restoring the Welsh language.

To those patriots who wish to see a new dawn for the Welsh language, but who spurn Socialism for whatever reasons, we must address these blunt remarks:

*The Welsh language has but a pathetic future under Capitalism. All that can be realistically expected is that it will stumble into extinction early in the next century, having been a battleground between you and a growing number of your non-Welsh speaking neighbours. Its death pangs will, of course, be soothed by London Government's grudging (and begrudged) sponsorship of the Urdd, the National Eisteddfod, Literature and Anglo-American TV programmes in Welsh.*

*Only an economic system which exists to meet the needs and aspirations of society in all their respects, rather than to swell the profits of a privileged few, could conceivably save the Welsh language. If you are not prepared to join the effort to establish such a system to serve the Welsh people, you might as well give up your committees, conferences, eisteddfodau, literary events and your masochistic anguish over the Fate of the Language — and get on with guiltless enjoyment of the job, status and comfortable living standards given to some of you by the British State.*

## Reclaiming the Land

"English culture is an urban culture; Welsh culture is a rural culture... the prosperity of agriculture and the success of rural crafts is essential if the Welsh nation is to live..." declared Plaid Cymru's earliest agriculture spokesman, Moses Gruffydd.

Obviously, agriculture and the countryside can not claim the central place in socialist, republican Welshness that it occupied in the early Welsh Nationalist movement. Nonetheless, use of the land is an issue of immense importance to any country. As socialists, we insist that land belongs to all the people, just as its raw materials and natural resources are the common property of the whole nation. Private ownership of these resources, and the market which accompanies it, have inflicted immeasurable suffering upon Wales and her people: despoilation, land speculation, the private leasehold system... the social, economic and cultural damage has been enormous.

On the other hand, we must understand and sympathise with the desire of farmers to own their farms and to pass them to their family heirs. Indeed, such continuity enables longer-term planning of agriculture and the rural economy to take place.

So how can the conflict be resolved between the aspirations of the farmers, and the rights and interests of the nation? —Through nationalising the land (although not into the hands of the British State) while, at the same time, instituting a public leasehold system. This would allow security of tenure and succession to farming families, in return for efficient and conscientious utilisation of the land they hold in trust. The small farmers of Wales, sources of super-profits for the companies supplying feedstock, equipment and fertilizer, have nothing to fear from this sort of socialism: their interests lie more with the industrial working-class than with big business and the Tory Party.

## Progressive Politics

The genuine links built up historically between the workers of Wales, England and



Scotland must be retained and the rank and file unity of the trade union movement enhanced. This can best be achieved by the construction of a more powerful Wales TUC, autonomous in finance, able to initiate industrial action and representing Welsh workers in international trade union affairs. This in no way represents a splitting of the unity of working people but rather their organising in the only way possible to do justice to all, and in the most effective way for fighting for trade union interests. This is the way to preserve unity not destroy it.

We support and advocate measures which will increase the power and self-confidence of the working-class. Trade Unions are essential in this as they are essential for protecting workers' conditions and livelihood under capitalism. No interference by a State dedicated to preserving employers' prerogatives should be allowed in trade unions' internal affairs and organisation. Also, no wages policies should be tolerated under Capitalism — let employers try and implement wage restrictions on their own, without the fullest help of their State.

Prejudice and discrimination on grounds of race, religion, or sex must be combatted without compromise. The inferior position of women in different societies is worthy of far more attention than we can afford here. Their oppression under Capitalism has been particularly severe — and crucial to the profit system's survival. Indeed, the exploitation of women has intensified: besides "servicing" male labour — their original role — women now have to work directly for the capitalist also, in order to prevent a deterioration in family living standards. This need is illustrated by the table below, showing the time an average male manual worker (with a wife and two young children) has to work in order to earn enough for the purchase of life's weekly necessities:

ITEM	Number of minutes work required to pay for items		
	1945	1976	+/-
Ave. weekly council house rent	386	260	-126
Ave. weekly mortgage payment	464	750	+286
6lbs beef (sirloin)	260	430	+170
2lbs fresh fish	73	79	+6
9lbs potatoes	23	55	+32
5 large loaves	40	55	+15
20pts fresh milk	200	100	-100
1cwt coal	93	106	+13
4 gallons petrol	205	170	-35

(source: Written Parliamentary Answer 3.3.77)

Clearly the main reasons why living standards have not deteriorated substantially over the past 30 years is that (1) men work more overtime today; and (2) far more women now have to work outside the home as well as inside.

**Worker "participation"** in the running of industry is a trap: it is the enlistment of people's time, skills and loyalty in the running of the private enterprise system. Even **workers' control** is an illusion or a diversion in a non-socialist society, where

power has not been vested in a Socialist State. Genuine **co-operative enterprise** is a tight-rope. On the one hand, it can: allow more job satisfaction and better conditions for employees, heighten the confidence of people to run their own industries, offer a glimpse of the non-exploitative society, save jobs threatened by factory closure, unite local communities behind a work-force and — in exceptional cases in a capitalist system — it can provide better and cheaper goods or services (e.g. food wholesale co-ops). On the negative side, co-operatives can lead to demoralisation and discredit the concept of workers' control in cases of failure; they do not change the system fundamentally (co-ops might still depend upon banks, private investment, Government hand-outs and private suppliers, or suffer from unfair private competition); they might soften or postpone the impact of capitalist crises on newly-redundant workers, thus deflecting anger and criticism; and they can consume an enormous amount of time, energy and resources. Thus each case should be decided on its merits, while being clear that co-operatism can never be a **substitute** for striving to change the economic system at its base. Nor should it be imagined that models working elsewhere, often in special conditions (in the Basque country, Italy or Poland) could be built from scratch in Wales.

## Towards a Revolutionary Philosophy

"There can be no revolutionary movement without a revolutionary theory," said Lenin. The first step in formulating such a theory for Wales will be the creation of the synthesis mentioned by Brian Davies in his article in **Planet** (Number 37/38):

*One the one side we have a revolutionary working-class internationalism with no real sense of Welsh identity, and on the other a national consciousness which shuts out the historical experience of its own working-class, and therefore largely excludes the politics of the working-class. Some synthesis would be useful.*

Using the techniques of Marxism, then, socialists in Wales must undertake to analyse and interpret Welsh history, placing our socialism in the context of both Welsh and world-wide history.

We should grasp every opportunity of disseminating the results of our research and studies among the Welsh working-class, and those of us who are in academic, administrative or professional posts should be ready to be taught by other workers about the nature, methods, lessons and implications of Capitalism in its places of production.

The workings of Capitalism need to be exposed and explained: in particular the way that its values and ideology have become predominant in most industrialised Western countries must be understood. During the last century, and up to the Second World War in this one, the ruling class has kept people "in their place" with an armory of military, political, legal and economic weapons — with the army, the police, oppressive laws, hunger and unemployment. By today some of these instruments have either been blunted by the power of liberal ideas and the trade union movement, or they have been made redundant for long periods by the system's limited ability to create and slake a popular thirst for material goods ("consumerism"). Most importantly, the bourgeoisie has used the education



system, the press and broadcasting media to influence people in what they think, want, see, believe, say and do. This enormous ethical, cultural and moral hegemony must be broken before any significant and permanent change can be achieved. Socialists must use every skill and method to weaken the grip of the Establishment and its views on society: at the same time, the conviction must grow amongst the working class that they can — and should — become the ruling class, running an economic system which embodies and regenerates their revolutionary outlook, values and culture.

Because the working-class must install itself as a ruling-class, the people will decide the kind of socialist society they wish to create; they must also decide how to secure it. It is not for the authors of this pamphlet to map out the long march to this new order, nor to paint the Utopia in fine brush-strokes. What we seek to do, however, is to argue the necessity for change and to suggest the direction in which we believe it must go.

## The Way Ahead

We believe there might be many people — especially the young, so many of whom face wage slavery, the dole queue or emigration — who agree broadly with the politics of this pamphlet. There will be those who want to step up the struggle for Socialism and for all that is best in Welsh nationhood; there are many thousands more who could be won to our side. It would have been idle of us to have undertaken this study without proposing something solid in its conclusion. We therefore offer a definite programme to be fought for inside the existing political parties but, more important still in our opinion, we suggest a new interim organisation to bring people of like minds and hearts together: in a Welsh Socialist Republican Movement.

# A WELSH SOCIALIST REPUBLICAN MOVEMENT

The first step must be taken as quickly as possible in building a political movement in Wales which will unify the struggle for Welsh nationhood and international socialism.

A Welsh Socialist Republican Movement would bring together socialists and left-wing nationalists from the Labour Party, Plaid Cymru, other political groups and the oft-ignored army of people in no party at all. Such an organisation should aim to increase Welsh national self-confidence, expose the reactionary nature of "Britishness", and inject new militancy into socialist and nationalist politics in Wales — identifying and building upon the common ground that exists. To these

ends, we suggest that the Welsh Socialist Republican Movement should agitate and educate around the following programme:

● **Fight to establish a WELSH SOCIALIST REPUBLIC, with industry, land and commerce under the democratic control and ownership of the Welsh people.**

● **Promote and restore the Welsh language; Defeat the anti-Welsh bigots, whilst opposing all expressions of anti-Englishness.**

● **Defend the Trade Unions and living standards; Expand trade union democracy and build the Wales TUC into a powerful and autonomous Workers' Congress.**

● **Oppose Army recruitment; End British rule in north-east Ireland; Close the British and NATO military bases in Wales.**

● **Fight all forms of Racism; No platform for Fascists!**

● **Undermine and overthrow the biased English legal system; End the State conspiracies against Socialists, trade unionists, Welsh language and other civil rights campaigners.**

● **Only Socialism can guarantee full employment for all; only Socialism will use technology to liberate humanity; distributing leisure time evenly and planning for it in advance; Capitalism will continue to use technical innovation to try and boost profits and — in doing so — will increase inequality and chaos.**

The Welsh Socialist Republican Movement should not require its members to forsake membership of the established political parties, where such a programme as the above could be argued for and recruits to the Movement be won. Therefore, other possible justifications apart, the WSRM should not contest elections or declare its support for any political party. Instead, it should organise and participate in rallies and demonstrations, hold education classes and conduct research, and publish literature. Most important, it must forge links with socialist and progressive nationalist movements abroad — in recognition of the international context of the fight for Freedom.

We do not expect such a movement, campaigning on this type of platform, to attract immediate mass support: in all probability it will meet with hostility more often than with praise. More bearably, it will be the butt of much cynicism and a little ridicule for media pundits and establishment politicians. But, for the first time since the 1950s, the case for left-wing Welsh Republicanism will be carried to the people. Through any adversity that lies ahead, Welsh nationhood and principled socialism will be held aloft by one organisation at least. We must begin building a Socialist and Welsh Republican inheritance for future generations of our youth.



Thus our aim is a **WELSH SOCIALIST REPUBLIC**: we are inspired by the vision unveiled by Keir Hardie in Dowlais on October 14th 1911:

*The people of Wales fighting to repossess the land of Wales; the working-class of Wales taking over the ironworks and the furnaces, the railways and great public works generally, and working them as comrades — not for the profit of shareholders, but for the benefit of every man, woman and child within your boundaries. That is the kind of nationalism I want to see; and when it arrives we shall see the Red Dragon emblazoned on the Red Banner of Socialism, the international emblem of the world-wide Labour Movement.*

Striving for a Socialist Republic is the biggest direct contribution that the people of Wales can make towards the new international order — **SOCIALISM** — which will be infinitely more humane, democratic, varied and efficient than anything before it. For the first time, the world will belong to **all** the human race — not to a system created and maintained by a ruthless few.

Gareth Miles  
Robert Griffiths  
Cardiff, September 1979.