INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION

RESTRUCTURING of the IRISH TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

Memorandum submitted
to the
IRISH CONGRESS OF TRADE UNIONS

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Preface

In 1974 it was agreed between the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) and the ILO that the latter would undertake a survey of the trade union movement in Ireland. The details of such ILO assistance to the ICTU were laid down in a memorandum which was approved by the ILO and by the 1974 Annual Conference of the ICTU. Its text is as follows:

"1. At the request of the ICTU and with the agreement of the Government of the Republic of Ireland, the ILO undertakes a survey of the trade union movement in Ireland and is prepared to give advice and assistance to the Irish trade union movement in their efforts aimed at rationalising trade union structures.

2. The main purpose of these efforts is as follows:
   (i) The better co-ordination of union activities within each industry, making due provision for the special needs of particular categories of workers, as well as for their common interests; the elimination of causes of conflict between trade unions, and the better allocation of union resources including staff;

   (ii) The equipment of the trade union movement with the specialist services needed at each level to assist trade unions in dealing with increasingly complex economic and social developments, including problems involved in worker participation in decisions at the enterprise level;

   (iii) The improvement of communications within the trade union movement and of other aids to effective decision-making; and

   (iv) In general, to enable trade unions to improve their services to workers and to play a more effective and influential role in industrial relations in the interest of the whole country.

3. ILO advice and assistance will consist of different stages. The first stage will be the following:
On the basis of a preliminary survey of the Irish trade union situation, the ILO will prepare a memorandum setting out the main findings of such survey and defining the principal issues and problems involved. This memorandum will be communicated to the ICTU before the end of 1974 and discussed, in

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Annex III

RECOMMENDATIONS ON TRADE UNION STRUCTURE
Formulated by the Committee on Trade Union Organisation and endorsed by the 1967 Annual Delegates' Conference

1. An industrial or services form of organisation is the most desirable basic structure for a modern trade union movement.

2. Only an organisation of reasonable size would be sufficiently viable to provide the staffing necessary to give specialist service in the wide range of activities visualised as necessary in the future.

3. The potential membership in many industries particularly in the changing industrial pattern, could not adequately support a viable union and a more broadly based umbrella should be visualised.

4. The Committtee appreciates the valuable contribution of general unions. It also recognises that much of the overlapping and competition for membership arise from historical reasons that ee was therefore dis- loser working between notes, however, that UI and the ITGWU. r step towards ration- umbrella for several ntive towards further

gthening of Congress should be given to the rch and legal services y unions.

6. The craft unions constitute a special problem and clearly with their great traditions there will be resistance to changes that cut across their basic concepts. Careful consideration must be given to the machinery necessary to cater for their special needs. However, it is obvious that changes by consent can only come about if we have clear objectives and that may win acceptances over a period.

7. It would be unrealistc to ignore the problems created by the existence of British and Irish unions. It is clear that the mem-

bership drift is towards Irish based unions in the Republic, but given the constitutional set up in the North there is no likelihood of any such development there. It could very well be that in some cases where a British based union is organised on a 32 County basis that a more autonomous constitution could be evolved that would provide acceptable viability and unity. The drafters of the Constitution of Congress obviously had some such provisions in mind. It would certainly be preferable for unions to make positive decisions on structure rather than drift to being uneconomic entities. It would not be making an contribution towards unity if further divisions arose on a North/South basis arising from changes.

8. The Committee considers that contributions are inadequate. It suggests one hour's wages per week as an objective.

9. Piecemeal approaches to unions will not bring results. If long-term objectives are agreed even if only on general lines, some progress may be made in having the problems realistically discussed. A number of major questions remain to be posed and this can be a continuing process.

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