

SECRET

28th January, 1969.

Civil Rights Campaign 1969

Dear Bloomfield,

I enclose a copy of the proposed programme of the Civil Rights Campaign for 1969, which has come into police possession from what they term "a rather delicate source".

The Police point out that a considerable amount of the material in the programme has already been broadcast by the pirate radio operating in Londonderry and that it follows reasonably closely the principles of political action in Northern Ireland as advocated by Dr. Roy Johnston, self-styled Education Officer of the I.R.A.

Yours sincerely,

A. A. MURDOCH

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CIVIL RIGHTS CAMPAIGN 1969

The Northern Ireland Civil Rights movement came into being in January, 1968, and since its formation it has succeeded in bringing its grievances to the notice of the world. Its tremendous success has been due more to the brutal and repressive response of an arrogant regime than to any other single factor. The hard fought campaign on the streets has exposed to the world, and to an embarrassed British Government, the corrupt infra-structure of Unionist rule. It has shattered dramatically the self-confidence that has come from half a century's monopoly of power, and has rent the Unionist Party with internal strife. It is at this very moment, however, that the Civil Rights movement is in great danger of betrayal.

The members and supporters who have worked so intensely over the past year are tempted from sheer physical exhaustion to let up for the moment and be content with the sops so begrudgingly conceded under pressure. But this is the moment when the movement must maintain its impetus, when the advantages gained must be pressed home with greater urgency. To stop now would be nothing less than fatal. The Unionist regime are consolidated at every level of society and have resources and machinery so powerful that given any breathing space at all it is capable of complete recovery. Captain O'Neill's recent speech, which was written by Dr. Doyle in 1882, exactly 146 years ago, and addressed to "The deluded and illegal association of Ribbonmen" is having the very same effect on public conscience as the Bishop's pastoral had in his day. This must not be allowed just as Dr. Doyle failed in the end to discredit the Ribbonmen.

There is a danger from within the movement by those who appeal for moderation. Their voice grows daily louder and, unfortunately, is being heeded. But theirs is the voice that was so long silent over the years when injustices were the normal pattern of life in Northern Ireland, and they who cry loudest are the false champions of old who seek only to ascertain their former power. They, like the Unionists, fear change most for what it means to their privileges.

It is very doubtful if marches in the present campaign will achieve much more than what has been won to date. The time of year is against them and an unfavourable public reaction is not unlikely. To continue a programme of marching, and nothing else, shows not only a paucity of ideas but would perhaps be pushed too far. Marches should not be abandoned but they should be an adjunct in a more positive programme and their timing and location planned in accordance with the strategy of that programme.

A new spirit has been born and also a greater eagerness to participate in the struggle for Civil and Social reform. To sit back now and do nothing and to wait for a reluctant Government to concede reforms would be absolute stupidity and the very betrayal of the people's trust. A new programme, and more positive action, is an urgent necessity and it is desirable that a programme of Civil disobedience should be implemented.

Civil disobedience must always be adapted to suit the local scene. An overall plan for universal application is not possible and just how and when any co-ordinated action of disobedience can be effectively implemented in Northern Ireland will require the advice of experts. These specialists would not only be required to educate the mass of the people in such a programme but also to guide and advise the activists in the Civil Rights movement itself, who are perhaps as equally ignorant of the know-how and the potentialities of a positive and integrated civil disobedience programme. As a guide line to highlight some more obvious actions in such a programme it must be stressed that in order to be wholly effective, a campaign of civil disobedience should be initiated only in those specified areas where success can be guaranteed. It is important to restrict the areas where the mass of the people, by their concerted effort, with a common and equal interest at heart can give it their united and full-hearted support. An isolated incident of paying taxes as indicated by Professor Huxley as a protest is to be disdained. To quote Fintan Lalor, "Somewhere, and somehow, and by somebody, a beginning must be made. Who strikes the first blow?"

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It is desirable that in order to implement the present campaign a programme should be drawn up to include the rural areas of Armagh, Derry, Tyrone, Fermanagh, Dungannon and Newry.

The campaign should introduce a passive form of disobedience by delayed payment of rates and taxes in a maximum length of time. If this was organised on a large scale in an entire city, or even in a housing estate in one of the ghettos, its consequences could be significant.

The campaign of civil disobedience to be pursued will include:-

- Seizure and occupation of public buildings
- Picketing
- Industrial strike
- Boycott and Ostracism
- Hunger strike
- Non-payment of rates and taxes
- Disruption of public transport
- Squatting
- Disruption of Civic Weeks
- Organisation of unemployed
- Local Elections based on Universal Adult Franchise.

To deal with these specifically -

Picketing: Although the most common form of protest, picketing is not always taken seriously. Its success would seem to depend to a big extent on the element of surprise, on its unexpectedness as when, for example, the Young Socialists picketed Crumlin Road Gaol.

For the most part, however, picketing seems to take place when the issue of protest is no longer news. It seldom makes news. It can be, and often is, effective. Genuine grievances have, in fact, been highlighted by picketing alone. As a form of protest it is easily organised and simple to execute; but it could and should take a more aggressive form.

Industrial strike: This is probably the most effective weapon of all and possibly the most difficult to evoke. One can only despair at hearing of demarcation disputes, however, legitimate, when considered against the background of disinterest shown when a man's religion or political affiliation is a barrier to his obtaining employment. It is disheartening, therefore, when on the verge of a breakthrough, when the dockers, factory girls and others from the Maydown Estate came out, with loss of pay, and marched for democracy through the streets of Derry, they were hastily ushered off the scene by the Derry Action Committee, the very people who set themselves up to be the arbitrators of the people.

Boycott has been successful in the past and is still one of the most powerful forms of pressure in that it requires little or no sacrifice on the part of those who use it while severely crippling the victim. It can be used against the small firm or businessman, for example, who is aggressively engaged in perpetrating undemocratic practices against his fellow citizens. The larger businessman can best be hurt at trade union level, but is not necessarily immune to boycott.

Allied to boycott is ostracism, older in time than the boycott and for centuries the only form of punishment that could be executed in an Ireland that had no police force or means of imprisonment. John D. Stewart recently declared his intention to adopt a form of ostracism when he publicly stated that he would no longer associate with any person who openly professed the right-wing Unionist view, and not only would he turn down public engagements where such people were likely to gather, but he would leave any company which included such people. This was a brave declaration, by a very brave man, whose sole means of income depends to a large extent on the goodwill of those who control communication media and who, for the most part are those very people corrupted or pressurised by right-wing Unionism. In recent years he has suffered materially for having expressed his honest opinions in that the T.V. medium, a source of income, is now virtually closed to him. In fact, a form of ostracism has been, and is continuing to be used against him. Like Professor Huxley he too fights a lone battle. They both show an example in courage.

Hunger Strike: Another form of protest that comes through the centuries from the Brehon Code down to the present day. This should be the final act

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of peaceful protest after all other means have been exploited. The classical example in modern times was the supreme protest of Terence McSwiney when, true to his words - "Not all the armies of all the world can conquer the spirit of one true man, and that one man will prevail", he focused world attention on the Ireland of his day. No other single factor at that period made more impact on British public opinion. His hunger strike brought an end to the Black-and-Tan reign of terror.

Non-payment of Rates: Most people even in a normal democratic society are loathe to pay rates at the best of times. It should not be difficult, therefore, to persuade a majority to withhold payment altogether, or better still, to pay them into the account of a Citizens' Committee to be held in trust for the people until such time as a democratic council or corporation is elected.

Disruption of Public Transport: This can be brought about by various means. There can, for instance be total boycott as was done in one city in America with the result that the local Transport Company, brought to near bankruptcy, was forced to yield to the demands of the protesting negro population.

Another tactic is the mass sit-down in a city or town centre, or at strategic junctions. This could be augmented by sympathetic motorists converging on such areas at peak traffic hours. This tactic has the additional effect of disrupting the normal business of a city or town.

The People's Democracy very recently annoyed Belfast Corporation when they implemented a scheme of delayed payment of bus-fares. Their gallant effort, in spite of a lot of goodwill from bus crews, failed from lack of public support, but that is not to say that as a tactic it should be abandoned. It is still very much one to be considered for future action in the appropriate areas.

Squatting: This has been going on sporadically for a number of years but it was not until Austin Currie with the aid of T.V. proved that it could effectively be used as a propaganda weapon. The Derry Housing Action Committee has been doing more frequently and for a longer period of time what Austin Currie did in a single day and achieved less from the point of view of rousing public conscience. That is not to say, however, that the efforts of the Derry Housing Action Committee and the Derry Labour Party are not successful. A recent court case when a fine of only one shilling was imposed was, in a way, a sympathetic gesture from the bench, and a measure of their success in this humanitarian field.

There was a token occupation of flats in London last month which gained national network T.V. coverage. Neither the Derry Housing Action Committee nor the Derry Labour Party get little or any publicity at all. That is a pity. These people, in concerning themselves in a practical programme solely of housing the needy have not time, it seems, to pay any attention to establishing a T.V. image. Be that a failure or not, the good work they are going must not only be continued, but be encouraged as well. In any overall programme of civil disobedience such bodies as the Derry Housing Action Committee must play an essential part and all the machinery of publicity exploited for their support. The expertise of this and all other housing committees must equally be made available to everyone actively concerned with civil and social reform throughout Northern Ireland.

Civic Weeks: The Civic Week with its false picture of a happily integrated community rollicking in a prosperous Unionist paradise must be exposed for the lie that it is - an O'Neill inspired gimmick designed to entice the entire community into the Unionist fold. The committees for these weeks are Unionist dominated and their programmes Unionist orientated. Very often these civic weeks are used to promote recruiting for H.M. Forces. But the mass of the people, ecumenically minded, are only too anxious to participate for the sake of good neighbourliness. For one week in the year they are allowed to get together, then it's back to the ghettos for another twelve months.

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There is no doubt that the egotism of O'Neill will drive him in the forthcoming year into an even greater promotion of his P.E.P. brainchild. This he must not be allowed to do. Civic weeks must be boycotted. "No civic weeks without civil rights" must be our answer to O'Neill. The lick-spittle Nationalists who do not appear to resent O'Neill's sneering at our gaelic traditions, and who feel privileged to be allowed to participate must be denounced for what they are - a gutless, unprincipled lot just as capable of exploiting the people as their Unionist counterparts.

When in 1967, Danny Moore, protesting on the steps of Newry Town Hall, against the local civic week being used for recruiting, he received a month's imprisonment. His case barely merited notice in the press far less than produce an outburst of indignation from an outraged Nationalist front.

Organisation of the unemployed: For the present, at least, there would appear to be no direct end towards which the unemployed should be organised for civil disobedience unless it be along such lines as a citizens' police force to protect demonstrators and property, and to give aid to squatting families. Another function they could usefully serve could be in the capacity of election personnel.

Local Elections based on Universal Adult Franchise: In every area where a Unionist minority returns a Unionist majority that election must be regarded as null and void and rejected by the electorate. An election committee, therefore, should be set up to organise a new election based on universal adult franchise and this election should be seen to be carried out democratically, the co-operation of the entire electorate being sought. A council so elected, (the Council of the Majority) having a clear mandate from the people, should assume office immediately, should occupy the local town hall and proceed to carry out its functions of office. This will result in a situation where two rival councils will be in existence at the one and same time, the Council of the Minority and the Council of the Majority. The people should be encouraged to recognise only one, that is, the Council of the Majority, and all local rates and taxes paid to it alone.

In conclusion, it must be stressed, that even if the civil rights movement is not at present contemplating a programme of civil disobedience, it is still the clear duty of those who are directing the movement to be aware, at least of the full scope and potentialities of such a programme. From this very moment, by lecture, symposium, and public meeting, the general public should be educated in all its aspects in order to be prepared if and when the occasion should arise that there is no alternative other than civil disobedience. The time could be very close.

January, 1969.