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Workers Solidarity Movement

Republican Congress

1994

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[Missing picture of Republican Congress 'Break the Connection with Capitalism' banner at 1934 Wolfe Tone commemoration]

The picture shows some of the Protestant workers from Belfast's Shankill Road who took part in the Wolfe Tone commemoration at Bodenstown in 1934. Linked to the left wing Republican Congress movement, they were attacked by right wing Republicans who were led by Séan McBride.

The Republican Congress broke up over whether to fight for the "republic" as a first step; or to fight for nothing less than a socialist Workers Republic. Only the goal of the Workers Republic (i.e. a socialist united country where the working class have real control over their lives) could break down the Orange and Green divisions. As the paper of the Republican Congress put it on June 23rd 1934 "Sectarianism dies out slowly when the fight against it is one of words. Sectarianism burns out quickly where there is team work in common struggle". Sadly the majority in the Congress forgot this and looked for Green unity as a 'first stage in the struggle', thus cutting themselves off from the Protestant workers of the North East.

Today the same question faces us. Do we unite with all sorts of nationalist bosses and gombeens to “free Ireland”; or do we unite with our fellow workers — against Orange and Green divisions — to fight for the sort of Ireland we want to live in and our children to grow up in? We see in the common struggle for the Workers Republic the solution to partition, the destruction of exploitation and the withering away of sectarian hatred.