

Socialist Worker

WATER CHARGES: KEEP UP THE PRESSURE!

The government was forced to back-track on water charges by the huge protests. But they are playing a long game and not giving up on their plans to make us pay for, and privatize, water.

One sign of this is the battles over the installation of water meters.

It's not in the media but Irish Water is still trying to impose meters on unwilling 'customers'.

The reduced charge and the 'conservation' grant are only temporary measures to get this government out of a mess..

This makes it vital we adopt a clear strategy to defeat these charges. There are a number of elements to a winning strategy.

KEEP UP THE STREET PROTESTS:

Mass demonstrations help create a different public consciousness. They bind networks together and generate huge levels of confidence.

Think of the difference between the mood before the first Right 2 Water demonstration and after it.

Within hours of the mass protests, people understood that they were not alone and had fused into a movement that could win.

We need to keep that spirit up. **That starts with the demonstrations on Saturday January 31st right across the country. And they should be the start of another series of mass mobilizations in 2015.**

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE:

Politicians and journalists are instinctively nervous at the sight of people power.

They spread worries about 'will it be controlled?' or 'will it be hijacked?'

Their aim is to push us back into our sitting rooms watching our master's voice on television.

We say: faced with unjust laws made by



politicians who systematically lie, the only answer is mass peaceful civil disobedience.

When they try to impose meters on our homes we have every right to obstruct their efforts.

When a government refuses to listen after the people have spoken, we have every right to take peaceful measures to bring towns and cities to a halt.

DEMOCRATIC ASSEMBLIES:

Activism today can not just be bully around a small committee at the top. From the global Occupy movement to the rise of the *indignados* in Spain, a new tradition of mass, participatory democracy is being forged.

There is a direct link between a strategy of militant, peaceful protests and grassroots democracy. We need open decision making structures so that all who are fighting and organizing get

to shape *their* movement.

We should hold regular local assemblies so that everyone can debate strategy followed by regular national assemblies of the movement.

DON'T PAY:

The main slogan of the demonstrations has been 'No Way- We Won't Pay'.

Currently 33 percent say they will not pay. Another 11 percent are not sure. There should be a serious effort to promote non-payment when the bills arrive in April. Local assemblies should take clear decisions to organize boycotts.

The government is weak. They have retreated on their threats to turn down water to a trickle. They have said no sanctions will apply to most people who do not pay until much later – when a new government is in power. Therefore, we need to promote an active boycott

A POLITICAL ALTERNATIVE:

Enda Kenny was right about one thing – it's not *just* about water. It's a movement against austerity and the political establishment as a whole.

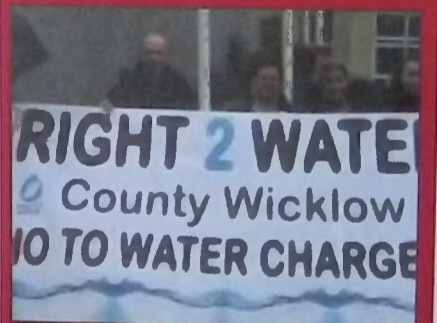
This movement needs to find a political expression. But not at the expense of mobilization on the streets. On the contrary, that needs to escalate.

People who marched want a political voice – but one that is in tune with their movement and will not sell out.

Parallel to the movement, therefore, there needs to be a coming together of the genuine left. In other words, a left that will promote full scale opposition to the government but also an alternative to Sinn Fein.

People Before Profit will be engaging with other forces on the left to promote such an alliance. Socialist Worker looks forward to its coming to fruition in 2015.

The Battle of Wicklow



Turn to page two

Rage at Austerity fuels Syriza win



The radical left party Syriza has won a historic victory in the Greek elections topping the poll with 36%.

This result can inspire us all but how will the EU and Greek establishment respond?

See our analysis on page 3.

Inside:

Can We Tax Google?



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GARDAI v METER PROTESTERS:

The Battle of Wicklow

Report from Wicklow Right2Water

It would be fair to say that before the water charges issue there was a lot of goodwill to An Garda Síochána in many Irish communities but their behaviour as bully boys for Irish Water has destroyed a lot of people's illusions. What happened on the Glebe mount estate in Wicklow Town is a good example.

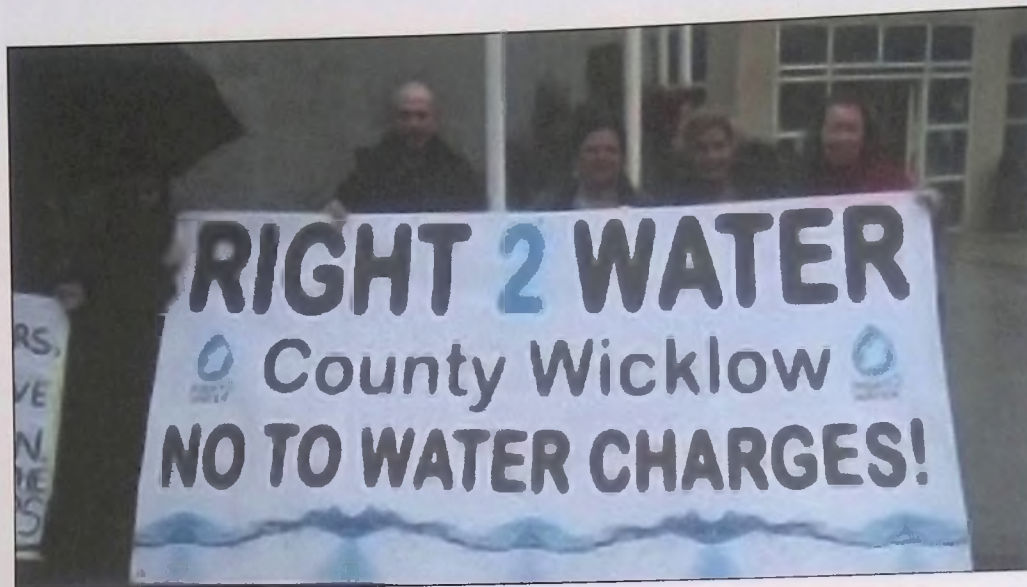
On the morning of Thursday 15 January Wicklow Right2Water activists were out as usual peacefully protesting the installation of water meters. There was eight of them.

No less than 30 gardai arrived and promptly arrested all eight and charged them under Section 12 of the Water Services Act (introduced by Fianna Fail in 2007).

Anna Doyle, local People Before Profit representative, describes what happened:

"You never set out to get arrested we stand to facilitate people to ensure they have all they need to exercise their rights.

For seven months we have held street meetings about four a week to inform and assist people to empower and emancipate themselves. I have an unshakable faith in people power. I stood with women from all walks of life for what is right and



our constitutional right to protest peacefully. They are removing our economic choice and on Thursday morning they removed our right to peacefully protest.

Surrounded

The Garda surrounded us like a hive of angry bees intimidating in their sheer numbers

They took us one by one. We stood

peacefully and dignified to the last as we waited on their vehicles to return."

Who are these 'sinister elements'? Says Aisling Murray.

"I am a 44 year old woman from Harbour View in Wicklow town. I am a stay at home mother to two little girls, two dogs, and wife to a very supportive husband.

"I have never been arrested in my life and had no intention when I went

to Glebe mount yesterday to make any trouble or indeed to get arrested.

Protest

"I believe that we should oppose the installation of meters, that the planned charges should be abolished, and that Irish Water should be disbanded.

"Our government has not listened and this is why I joined the protest.

"When I stood in peaceful pro-

test and solidarity with protesters and local residents yesterday at Glebe mount estate in Wicklow, and as the huge number of Gardaí there closed in on us, my initial and very overwhelming feeling was one of sadness. I couldn't quite believe what was happening

"There is huge local anger and disappointment at yesterday's events.

"What happened yesterday was wrong for so many people on so many levels, that my mind is still reeling from the events that unfolded and I have yet to make sense of it all. I know this.

"This will not go away, and people will not go home and forget about it.

"We may be ordinary folk, but we have been made exceptional by these events and we have found our voice."

What happened next proved Aisling right.

On the evening of the arrests 250-300 people protested at Wicklow Garda Station and on Monday morning forty joined Anna out in Glebe mount.

The gardai were forced to tell Irish Water to quit the estate! The struggle goes on!

Let Anna Doyle have the last word. 'I will return and make the same stand again because when laws become unjust rebellion becomes duty.'

Childcare workers demand better treatment #OneUnitedVoice

Karl Gill

CRÉCHE and childcare workers are taking a stand against poverty pay.

On the 17 of February at 1pm thousands of these workers who are mostly women will protest outside Dail Eireann.

The 25,000 registered childcare professionals are angered by constant demands made on them to upskill and retrain all of which they have to pay for themselves.

This sector is almost completely un-unionised.

Early Childcare Ireland and the Association of Childhood Professionals are organising the protest.

These organisations also cite the overall lack of investment in the sector as a massive bone of contention with their members.

The Irish state only spends just 0.2% of GNP on the Early Childhood Care and Education Sector.

This is in comparison to the OECD average of 0.7%. Ireland is unique in the European context because the pre-school sector is completely dispersed, non-centralised and almost entirely in private hands.

The professionalism of the workers and by extension the care of the children is being severely undermined by poor

pay and changes made to Community Employment as well as the many social welfare internship schemes.

The number of inspections has massively increased and more and more crèches are now facing closure.

The workers understand the necessity of rules and regulations but they are frustrated by over

regulation while receiving no supports as well as an HSE recruitment embargo which means inspections are often carried out by people not privy to the sector.

The average pay in the sector is just above minimum wage, about €18,000 per year.

On top of this each worker has to pay for their own

college course to attain their qualification.

Most of these women will pay over €10,000 per year for 3 years to secure their degree.

These workers deserve to be treated as professionals with decent pay, free education and to work in a sector that is valued by the government and fully state funded.

LONE PARENTS FIGHT BACK

Leah Speight

SINGLE parents campaign group SPARK predict chaos in 2015 with the changes to One Parent Family Payment (OPF) on the way.

On January 17 in Liberty Hall, SPARK launched their campaign to fight the cuts planned for this year.

SPARK is a campaign group of single parents who came together after Budget 2012 to fight the cuts and changes.

They always new 2015 would be the most challenging year, as this was the year Minister Burton had planned to unleash the worst of her cuts.

Despite lone parents being the poorest sector in society, suffering the highest levels of deprivation, our Government

has chosen to make them the scape goats of the crisis. Here are just some of the cuts for this year.

If your youngest child is over 7 and under 14 you transfer to Job Seekers Transition payment (JST). You must apply by May, and engage with re job activation and attend a seminar requested by Social Welfare.

If your youngest child is over 14 years old you now transfer to Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), and you must apply by July.

If you currently work less than 19 hours in a part time job, you will have to choose between living on JSA or income from part time work. Lone Parents that receive

half rate carers with OPF must change to full carers allowance when youngest child is 7 years. This is a loss of €84 per week

Only 500 affordable after school places are been made available for the 40,000 lone parents.

Joan Burton, the Minister responsible, saw lone parents as an easy target, however SPARK has made it clear that they are not going to be her scapegoat.

Over the month of February to coincide with social welfare letters been issued, SPARK will be having public meetings in as many local areas possible.

To get involved check out SPARK on Facebook, and updates on public page Irish Single Parents Fightback.

Defend Our Teachers, Defend Education

Mark Walsh of ASTI Fightback



ON Thursday 22 January Ireland's secondary teachers went on strike. More actions are planned.

They are fighting to defend the integrity and impartiality of the Junior Cert against government plans to make them mark their own students' exams.

This would not increase the workload of already hard pressed teachers but also introduce the element of possibility of bias and even pressures towards corruption.

It is also the thin end of the

wedge of bringing the market and consumer competition into education as schools are pushed to compete for 'customers' on the basis of exam results.

The Government and some of the media will, of course, attack striking teachers for damaging students' education.

In reality it is teachers who are defending public education in the face of a Government determined to extend neoliberal policies into the post-primary education system.

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WHAT THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY STANDS FOR

Capitalism is wrecking the lives of millions and endangering the planet.

A new society can only be constructed when the workers take control of the wealth and plan its production and distribution for human need and not profit.

REVOLUTION
 The present system cannot be patched up or reformed. The courts, the army and police exist to defend the interests of the wealthy.

To destroy capitalism, we need to remove the present state structures and create a workers' state based on much

greater political and economic democracy.

AGAINST IMPERIALISM AND WAR

War is a constant feature of capitalism today as the imperialist powers try to dominate the earth.

The "War on Terrorism" is a crude device to attack any country which threatens US military, strategic or economic dominance.

END RACISM AND OPPRESSION
 We oppose all forms of oppression and racism. This divides and weakens the

workers class.

We are for full social, economic and political equality for women.

We oppose immigration controls which are always racist.

FOR WORKERS' UNITY IN THE NORTH

We stand for workers unity against the Assembly politicians and Cameron government.

Like great socialist James Connolly, we believe that partition has brought about a 'carnival of reaction'

We want to see an Irish workers republic where all

workers gain.

Our flag is neither green nor orange but red!

FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To win socialism socialists need to organise in a revolutionary party.

This party needs to argue against right-wing ideas and for overthrowing the system.

We call for co-operation between left-wing parties and the formation of a strong socialist bloc.

We stand for fighting trade unions and for independent rank and file action.

Join the Socialists

Text JOIN to 086-3074060 or fill in the form and send to SWP PO Box 1648 Dublin 8

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Syriza wins great victory – the struggle intensifies

John Molyneux

SYRIZA, the Coalition of the Radical Left, has won a stunning victory in the Greek General Election.

This article is being written only the morning after the election, but it is clear that Syriza has topped the poll with about 36.3%, compared to the right wing New Democracy's 27.8% and, with 149 seats, has come only 2 short of an overall majority.

It is a result with huge implications for Greece and its people but also for the whole of Europe and particularly Ireland.

Syriza are pledged to end austerity and to negotiate a massive reduction of Greece's debt burden. If they can do it why can't we?

They are proposing a European Conference, similar to that held in 1953 to deal with Germany's huge debt after the War, to negotiate debt write downs. Obviously this could benefit Ireland, though typically Enda Kenny has said he's opposed to the very idea.

Rage against austerity

The election is an outburst of rage against six years of brutal austerity which has produced extraordinary levels of unemployment, homelessness and mass deprivation.

It is also an expression of the fact that for many years now the Greek people have maintained the highest level resistance and struggle in Europe – resistance and struggle which needs to be maintained and deepened in the coming period.

It gives the lie to the mantra of every political establishment across Europe that 'there is no alternative' and can give huge encouragement to working people, to trade unionists and to the left everywhere that a fight back against austerity is possible.

But no one should imagine that the



formation of a Syriza Government in itself resolves the issue. Syriza leader, Alexis Tsipras, has said 'this marks the end of austerity', 'the troika is a thing of the past' and 'a new era has begun' but these are aspirations and not yet facts.

Like any government of the left Syriza will face serious obstacles and a period of intense conflict will open up.

The opposition

Ranged against it will be very powerful forces. In the first place: the European Central Bank, the IMF, the EU Commission, Angela Merkel and all the other representatives of international capital and the 1%.

They will be very reluctant to cut Greece

a favourable deal for for fear of opening the floodgates to Spain, Portugal and, of course, Ireland.

Then there will be the Greek capitalist class itself.

Their political party has lost the election but they will not sit back and accept the democratic verdict if they feel their interests are threatened.

Syriza aims to reform Greek capitalism not overthrow it but that doesn't mean Greek big business will accept these reforms.

Likewise the apparatus of the Greek state. Any capitalist state will defend capitalism but the Greek state is notoriously right wing.

About half of the brutal Greek police

vote for the Nazi Golden Dawn party and it is within living memory that Greece was a military dictatorship ruled by a junta of colonels.

All these forces may act to sabotage the new government and prevent it bringing about the changes the Greek people so desperately need.

Tsipras says he is confident he can negotiate a 'mutually beneficial' deal. But what if the EU establishment won't play ball? Will the Syriza Government be willing to cancel Greece's unsustainable debt?

Will it be willing to break with the Eurozone? Will it face down its own right wing state officials?

This is why mass mobilizations from below are crucial to intensify the pressure

on the international 1% and strengthen the hand of Syriza.

Dangers

One risk in this situation is that Tsipras and the Syriza leadership may be so willing to compromise that they end up not really changing things significantly for the people who have elected them.

This could produce massive disillusionment and even result in a rise in the fortunes of Golden Dawn who came third with a dangerous 6.28%.

The fact that Syriza have moved immediately to form a coalition with the right-wing anti-immigrant Independent Greeks, a breakaway from New Democracy, is an ominous sign in this regard.

The Independent Greeks leader campaigned on the basis that he would control the young Tsipras.

Another danger is the argument that the left, the trade unions and the working class should 'hold back' out of loyalty to 'their' government.

They should 'give the government a chance' and 'not rock the boat'.

This is the opposite of what needs to be done. In reality only intensifying the struggle from below with mass demonstrations, mass strikes, workplace occupations and the general development of people power will defeat austerity and make the establishment back down.

As Marx said long ago 'the working class must liberate itself' and not rely on politicians to do it for them.

Inspiration

Meanwhile we in Ireland can take inspiration from the people Greece and follow in their footsteps by, as Richard Boyd Barrett has said, maintaining and intensifying our own struggles against the water charges, austerity, the bankers debts and our rotten government.

Charlie Hebdo in perspective



Memet Uludag

THE horrible murders at the Charlie Hebdo office and the kosher supermarket in Paris rightly met with immediate and general condemnation.

But within hours it was clear that our rulers, the so-called 'world leaders', with the aid of the media, were bent on using the atrocity to promote their own agenda.

That agenda was to present themselves and their societies as defenders of 'freedom'; to depict Islamic jihadis as the main threat to that freedom; to reinforce their continuing 'war on terror' with its wars and occupations; to bring in even more restrictions on civil liberties in the name of tightening security and to drown out any other message or narrative as 'justifying' the clearly unjustifiable outrage in Paris.

In reality these 'leaders' are so mired in blood, injustice and violations of human rights that they couldn't even assemble together without exposing

their hypocrisy. President Hollande, claiming to embody free speech and posing for the photo opportunity on the Je Suis Charlie march, arm in arm with Israel's Netanyahu and representatives from the governments of Turkey (where journalists are regularly jailed), Egypt (a military dictatorship with mass death sentences Al Jazeera journalists in jail and 20 demonstrators murdered last week), and Saudi Arabia (land of beheading and flogging) completely gave the game away.

Anyone unsure about the real attitude of the likes of Hollande, Cameron and the rest, to freedom and human rights should note that the circus 'world leaders' has now moved on from Paris to Riyadh where they have gathered to pay respects to the late King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia.

This foul regime's latest deed was to publicly flog Raif Badawi for the 'crime' of writing a blog.

But hey, they have lots of oil and their 'our allies' so what's the problem?

Brazil faces huge water crisis



"WELCOME to the Cantareira desert," reads the graffiti on a car that used to be submerged in Sao Paulo's main reservoir system

It is not just in Ireland that water is a major issue. Brazil is supposed to be in the middle of its rainy season but there has been scant rainfall in the densely populated south-east and

the drought shows no sign of abating.

The crisis comes at a time of high demand for energy, with soaring temperatures in the summer months.

"Since records for Brazil's south-eastern region began 84 years ago we have never seen such a delicate and worrying situation," said Brazil's Environment Minister

Isabella Teixeira.

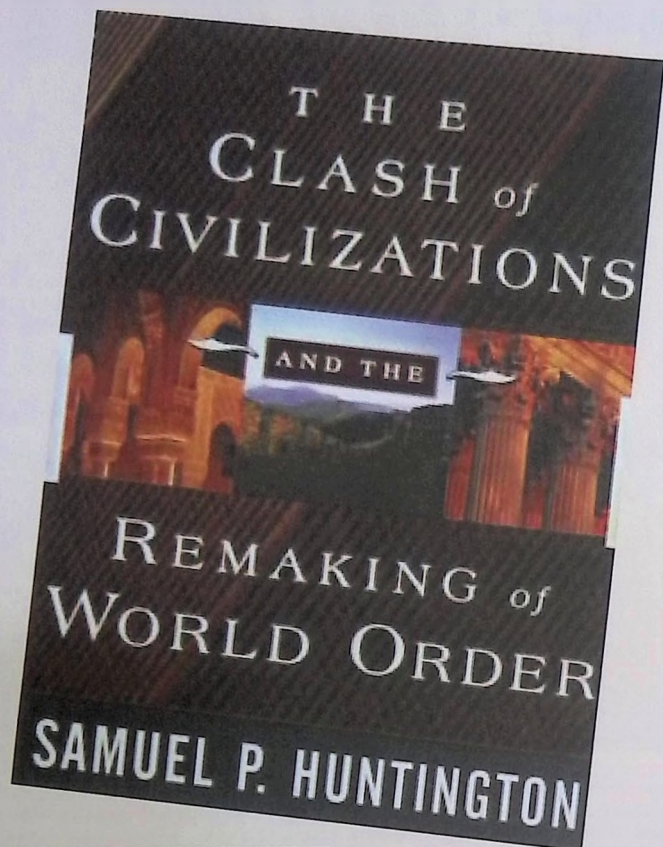
The crisis began in the massive industrial town of Sao Paulo, where hundreds of thousands of residents have been affected by frequent cuts in water supplies. Sao Paulo state suffered similar serious drought problems last year.

In this crisis we see three things coming together: 1) working people and the

poor are most affected; 2) the politicians ignore the situation till the last possible moment and then respond by increasing water charges; 3) the underlying cause of climate change is covered up.

Does that sound familiar? Global warming means stories like this will be repeated again and again in the years ahead.

Is there a Clash of Civilisations?



John Molyneux

MANY of our governments, media commentators and journalists view events like the Charlie Hebdo atrocity in Paris as part of a so-called 'clash of civilisations'.

The term comes from a book by right wing American political scientist, Samuel Huntington, published in 1996. Huntington was what could be called a Pentagon intellectual; that is he produced theories designed to serve the interests of the US state.

The key idea in this theory was that "The fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural...the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations."

This marked a fundamental shift from the Cold War period. From the Second World War to the collapse of communism in 1989-91 the dominant, ie American, view of the world was that the central conflict was between the 'free' West and the Communist totalitarian East.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, and notice this was long before 9/11, this changed to projecting the main division as being between the still 'free' West and the 'backward', 'fanatical' Muslim world.

This was because of a) the American empire's need for an 'enemy', b) the crucial importance of oil supplies from the mainly Muslim Middle East, c) the threat to Western interest from the rise of militant Islamism after the Iranian Revolution in 1979 which was replacing secular nationalism as the main anti-imperialist force in the Middle East.

Such is the ideological power of the US ruling class and its main allies that once this shift took place large sections of the world's media from Hollywood to CNN and Rupert Murdoch, innumerable opportunist politicians, right wing think tanks and academics saw the way the wind was blowing and fell into line.

Racists and fascists jumped on the band wagon too and switched from targeting black people and Pakistanis to making Muslims their scapegoat of choice.

As a consequence not only were various Muslim countries invaded (Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Mali) but Muslims everywhere were subject to ideological siege warfare where everything to do with Islam became 'controversial' and subject to intense and hostile scrutiny.

Socialists reject this view of the world. During the Cold War we always insisted that the West/East split was not the central division in the world.

The ruling classes of both sides were, beneath the rhetoric, remarkably similar. Both exploited and oppressed their own people and both were imperialist in their relationship their neighbours and smaller countries. Neither was progressive or 'free'.

The central division, we said, was the class conflict between the rulers and the people, exploiters and exploited oppressors and oppressed in all countries.

Today we reject the idea that there is a 'clash of civilizations'. The mass of ordinary people and particularly the working classes of the so-called 'West' and the so-called 'Muslim' world have far more in common with each other than they do with Bush, Obama, Cameron or Kenny or the rulers and dictators of Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Iran.

The real causes of the numerous conflicts in the Middle East are precisely economic and political - the struggle of the Western imperialist powers and their local allies, like the Israeli, Saudi and Egyptian governments, to control the region and its oil - not religious or cultural. The religious and sectarian divisions that have been inflamed are the consequence of this underlying struggle.

And Islamophobia serves as its ideological mask and justification, just as anti-black racism justified the colonialism of the 19th century. This is why we stand with ordinary Muslims in Ireland and Europe against any Islamophobic or racist backlash.

TAXING GOOGLE

Kieran Allen

Every time anybody suggests extra taxes on corporations, a media commentator will invariably suggest that 'your figures don't add up'.

Typically, there follows a mantra about left wing economics 'lacking credibility' or that socialists 'don't understand economics'.

By contrast, when Sinn Fein drops a demand for a wealth tax from its pre-budget alternatives, political commentators praise its 'realism' but suggest that 'they still have a long way to go to be credible'.

The attacks are presented as an issue of technical proficiency rather than a biased political assault. But this is simply a disguise.

Enda's expertise

Take, for example, the expertise of the Taoiseach Enda Kenny. He recently stated that 240,000 jobs were lost since the recession and that the government will be judged by how it replaces them.

But his own government's Medium Term Economic Strategy 2014-2020 states that 330,000 jobs were lost.

Put simply, not only do his figures not add up - but he cannot even count.

The same Taoiseach also stated publically that the minimum wage in Ireland was €35,000 a year - when in fact it was half that.

Yet, strangely, the political commentariat do not repeatedly trot out the line 'the leader of Fine Gael cannot get his figures right'.

The default position of the Irish media is instead to attack Sinn Fein and the left about 'their figures' but to assume that mainstream politicians know what they are talking about.

The reality is that the left wing proposals are perfectly feasible. Those with a class bias, however, want to dismiss them without even engaging in an argument.

Let us take the great sacred cow of Irish politics - the corporation tax.

Raising Corporation Tax - Shock! Horror!

Until recently Google got away with paying just 2.4% tax on its profits.

People Before Profit want to change that so that there is a minimum tax on corporation profits of 12.5 percent.

The political establishment have repeatedly claimed that this rate is 'vital to Ireland's national interest'. But until Richard Boyd Barrett TD raised the issue in the Dail they never owned up to the fact that corporations in Ireland only pay half of that rate.

The latest available revenue figures for total corporate profits, before deductions and charges, are €61.5 billion but only €4.17 billion is paid in tax. So that is an effective rate of 6.17%.

By enforcing 12.5% as a minimum rate, the state would get a lot more revenue.

There can be no argument about the justice here. One of the most profitable corporations in Ireland is the little known GE Capital Aviation Funding. In 2011, it made a profit of \$765 million even though it had hardly any employees.

Yet it paid only 0.5% tax on these



profits.

Nobody can justify a situation where a cleaning woman pays a higher proportion of her income in PAYE taxes and USC than does a giant corporation. Our beloved commentators therefore shift the grounds of the argument from justice to 'realism'.

Would they all run away?

If you insisted Google or GE Capital Aviation paid tax at the same rate as a low paid employee, they claim, they would all run away.

We would then be left without jobs and the economy would start to collapse. So it just lacks 'credibility'!

The problem with this argument is that every time a proposal is made to take money off corporations, the same threat is made. And it has turned out to be a bluff.

When the minimum wage was first introduced in the year 2000, for example, the UCD Department of Economics predicted it would lead to a flight of foreign investment. Yet foreign investment actually increased!

It is an instructive example of how

these scare stories do not add up or make sense.

The simple fact is that US corporations are getting such vast profits from Irish workers, that they can well afford to pay more tax.

In one year recently, US companies in Ireland made \$970,000 from every Irish worker they employed and paid only a tiny fraction in tax.

Even if they were forced to pay 12.5%, they would still be left with \$780,000 in profit per worker. Why therefore would they want to move wholesale out of Ireland - and take the cost of such a move?

Moreover, if it is not possible to push up tax on profits, why does the Irish government have a higher rate for some companies than others?

Even though it is less well known, Ireland actually has two rates of tax on profit - 12.5% on traded income and 25% on non-traded income. The latter includes items like profits earned from interest, foreign income or patent fees.

If talk of raising taxes would frighten companies away, why do bank and finance houses not flee

INCREDIBLE!



Ireland when they are officially supposed to pay double the more commonly known rate.

But wouldn't it cost jobs?

A key assumption made in the debate about corporation taxes is that hitting foreign multi-nationals would mean a massive loss of jobs.

Few people are aware that foreign multi-nationals only employ 7 percent of the overall workforce.

The vast majority of people work for Irish companies who have little option but to stay in Ireland.

By pursuing a policy of reducing tax on all corporations, the state has no option but to increase taxes on PAYE workers.

There is in fact a direct link between low taxes in profits and high taxes on wages.

A worker in Ireland who is paid more than €33,800 will pay 50% of every cent earned after that when account is taken of the Universal Social Charge.

A similar worker in Germany would have to earn €250,730 before they would start paying tax at

the rate of 45 percent of every cent earned over that figure.

Why do Irish workers pay such high rate of tax at a comparatively low threshold? It can only be because the tax take from corporations – and the wealthy generally – is low and is subsidised by the high taxes on PAYE workers.

This is not only unfair; it also leads to less employment.

The burden of paying for the economic crisis was shifted onto workers through higher PAYE taxes, indirect taxes and new charges.

This in turn meant that they have less money in their pockets to spend on goods in local shops.

As a result there is less demand in the economy and therefore less jobs.

Subsidising corporation with low taxes on their profits, therefore, takes money out of an economy and reduces employment.

A development strategy that relies on Ireland's status as a tax haven is also extremely precarious.

The US House of Congress and OPEC are already – for their own reasons – looking at how to close down

the tax loopholes that companies such as Google or Apple enjoy.

No matter what the great army of accountants and tax planners may feel, it is necessary to look in other directions.

Economic blackmail

There is no reason, therefore, why a left government could not impose extra taxes on corporations – in order to reduce the tax burden on PAYE workers.

But if they were to do so, they would have to be willing to face down the economic black mail of the rich.

That would mean taking action against companies who set out to sabotage an economy.

Such action might include imposing extra costs on companies who move – for example making them pay back all grants – or taking their assets into public ownership.

The issue therefore is not whether left wing proposals are credible.

Their question is rather credible for who. And from the point of view of workers and ordinary people they make a lot of sense.

Why Bloody Sunday still matters

Every year at this time there is a *Bloody Sunday March for Justice in Derry*. Matt Collins explains why.

AMONG the many atrocities carried out by the British establishment during the North's recent history the events of 30 January 1972 in Derry stand out as the most infamous.

When the Parachute Regiment opened fire on thousands of civil rights protestors in Derry, resulting in the death of 14 innocent people, the eyes of the world were opened to the vicious nature of British imperialism in the North of Ireland.

The fact that people across the world identify with what happened on Bloody Sunday is a reminder of the pain inflicted upon the people of the Bogside, but also testament to the remarkable campaign for justice that has been waged by the families and supporters of those killed and injured over the last four decades

From Derry to Gaza to Ferguson

There are some in the North – particularly within the establishment – who would like to leave the issue of Bloody Sunday behind.

Yet the events of that year, and the lessons we should draw, still resonate today.

Across the world we have seen an increase in state violence and attacks on civil liberties, and campaigns in support of victims of state violence who have been murdered with impunity.

From Mark Duggan in London in 2011 to Ferguson Missouri where Michael Brown was shot dead with his hands up last year.

Two innocent men murdered and vilified by racist police forces.

The parallels are clear.

When a state murders its citizens it is in the interest of all that those responsible are held to account.

The cause of Bloody Sunday is thus universal and gives hope to the thousands of people fighting for

justice across the world.

Moreover, the militarism that descended upon the Bogside is spreading across the world.

To get to the truth of Bloody Sunday means confronting the whole logic of imperialist war across the Middle East, in Gaza, Afghanistan and Iraq.

The international struggle for justice runs right to the heart of the Bloody Sunday campaign in Derry.

As the families put it on the day in which their relatives were vindicated, "Just as the civil rights movement of forty years ago was part of something huge happening all over the world, so the repression that came upon us was the same as is suffered by ordinary people everywhere who dare stand up against injustice.

"Sharpeville. Grozny.

Tiananmen Square. Darfur.

Fallujah. Gaza. Let our truth stand as their truth, too."

Resist

Bloody Sunday still matters.

This year's Bloody Sunday programme was launched under the theme 'Resist'; reflecting the struggle for civil liberties across the globe as well as campaigns for justice at home.

Over a range of events speakers will include Reverend Osagyefo Sekou from Ferguson, Missouri; Moazzam Begg, the former Guantanamo Bay detainee; Socialist TD, Clare Daly; and former hooded man, Francie McGuigan.

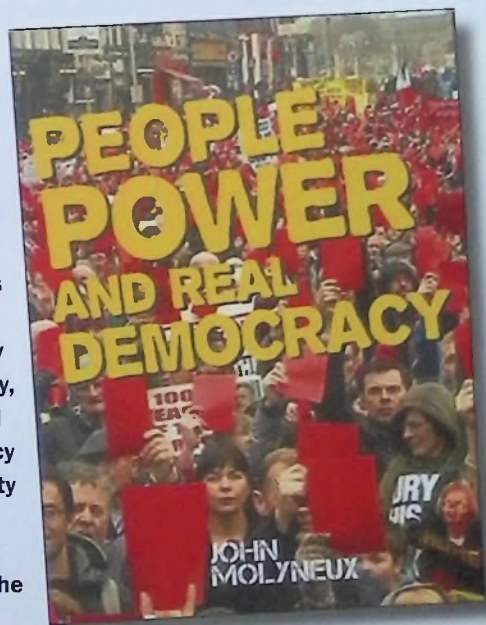
People will travel across the country to remember the victims of Bloody Sunday and to march in solidarity with those resisting injustice across the world.

The weekend closes on 1 February, when supporters will join the families in retracing the route of the original march: one world, one struggle.

OUT NOW!

People Power and Real Democracy

This new Socialist Worker pamphlet by John Molyneux argues that the people power seen in the great revolt over water charges contains within the seeds of a different way of running society, one that is based on real democracy and accountability not professional politicians rising on the backs of the people.



Available, price €2, from SWP PO Box 1648 Dublin 8 or Ring 01-872 2682

Trolley crisis in rundown health service

Dr Peadar O'Grady

The recent crisis in hospital Emergency Departments, with a record 601 people on trolleys across the country, shows how fragile our rundown health service is. The crisis was not without warning. In 2006, former minister for health Mary Harney said it was a 'national emergency' when there were 495 patients on trolleys. In 2011, after trolley numbers peaked at 569, former health minister James Reilly said 'never again'.

In December, staff at Beaumont Hospital were outside the gates protesting at the unsafe conditions in the hospital and the hospital's Clinical Director resigned. Trolley numbers for December were one-and-a-half times what they were the previous December.

In early January the HSE official responsible for trolley waiting times, Dr Tony O'Connell, resigned after only 9 months in the job. Health Minister Leo Varadkar warned there might be a major crisis in January, set up an 'emergency taskforce' and then went on holidays.

Budget Cuts

€100 million recommended by the department of health in 2014 to avoid a trolley crisis was refused in the budget and watered down to



€25 million, which was completely inadequate.

The health budget increased for the first time in 5 years but only by a miserly 0.7%.

With rising levels of demand and even low inflation this is effectively a cut.

The bank bailouts have meant

austerity budgets targeting health-care, first by Fianna Fáil and then by the current Fine Gael Labour government. Over 6% has been cut from the total health budget since 2008, while other EU countries increased their health spending.

Health staff numbers have been slashed by more than 10% from

over 110,000 health workers in 2008 compared to about 100,000 in 2014.

At first the government blamed the trolley crisis on winter weather and patients staying too long in hospital and advised people to avoid going to hospital 'unless it was necessary', but the weather

was not severe at the time and the government themselves were responsible for refusing to fund nursing home beds for patients in hospital ready to go home.

Cause of the Crisis

The real reason for the crisis is well known.

As the Irish Times reported: "The main reasons for hospital overcrowding are lack of beds and shortage of staff."

Almost 30 years of neglect have meant the health service has never recovered from the savage cuts in hospital beds started by the Fine Gael-Labour coalition government in 1987 by Labour's Health Minister Barry Desmond.

There were 18,000 beds in the 1980s compared to 13,000 now and many of these beds are not available due to closed wards.

Discharging patients to 'step down' beds was suggested by the HSE as a solution to overcrowding.

Professor Des O'Neill, an expert in care of elderly patients, warned of the dangers of discharging patients to 'step down' beds when what they need is a 'step up' to a rehabilitation unit.

These units should have properly trained staff such as nursing, physiotherapy, occupational, Speech and Language and other therapists for patients with serious conditions such as heart attacks and strokes.

Prof O'Neill further warned that: "The private sector has not distinguished itself to date in this type of service, and it is likely that public and voluntary services are the appropriate setting for any new initiatives."

Labour and Fine Gael look the other way

LABOUR and Fine Gael have ignored the looming crisis in staff, and care standards in health have deteriorated with new scandals of poor care in a different sector of health almost a weekly occurrence.

This is because FG-Labour are busy looking for a way to make profit from health rather than to improve healthcare.

Reilly spent the last 3 years trying to privatise healthcare through the introduction of the private insurance scheme misleadingly called 'Universal health' Insurance (UHI).

This would have given control of health funding to private Insurance companies and meant another bill for already hard-pressed families.

Government health spending costs about €3,000 per person but Reilly consistently refused to say how much of this insurance would cover and what premium would then have to

be paid.

Varadkar, while playing down UHI has not abandoned it and it is still government policy.

Varadkar is already trying to expand the insurance companies control of primary care GPs.

Labour and Fine Gael pretend that tax-funded healthcare, from GP to drug costs to hospital care, is too expensive to introduce, but in fact it is far cheaper than what we are doing now with the wasteful two-tier mish-mash of public and private, with many health bills paid for out-of-pocket.

Instead, FG-Labour want to introduce UHI, an even more expensive form of funding through private insurance that in the US costs almost twice as much as publicly funded healthcare in the EU.

What is needed is resistance to the cuts and privatisation in Health.



Varadkar and Reilly: good profits, poor health

Nurses lead the resistance



Jo Tully

NURSES in multiple Emergency Departments have balloted for industrial action involving a 'work to rule'.

The action is being taken in protest at overcrowding specifically in Emergency Departments up and down the country.

In early January figures for patients deemed to be in need of admission but who, due to lack of beds, were languishing on trolleys and chairs in Emergency Departments were at an all time high reaching 601 at its peak.

While the crisis since eased somewhat it remains at crisis level of 442 on January 21st at

time of writing..

The Croke Park Deal of 2010 followed by 'The Haddington Road Agreement 2013' imposed on a Health Service already in serious crisis further bed reductions, a staff moratorium and massive reductions in health spending. In consequence we have lost a further more than 2,000 beds; 5,000 nursing posts and endured about a 20% cut in the overall Health Budget.

On top of this 'The Fair Deal Scheme' has been capped making it more difficult to access ensuring even longer delays in getting elderly patients out of acute beds into nursing home beds. This has

resulted in the extraordinary but entirely predictable levels of overcrowding and trolley waits in ED right around the country.

This is the context in which nurses in so many Emergency Departments in January have balloted for industrial action.

Ann Burke, INMO Executive member and nurse manager in Galway University Hospital, one of the hospitals taking this action explained the decision saying

"The conditions in the Emergency Department for both staff and patients have reached an intolerable and grossly unsafe state. It is no longer possible to provide professional and

high standards of care to vulnerable patients in such unsafe, understaffed and immoral conditions"

Nurses are to be congratulated on taking a stand on this issue.

They should be supported by all who work in the HSE, the whole trade union movement and the general public.

In defending their patients and their working conditions they are standing up for all of us except the super rich who can always make their own private arrangements when it comes to health care and highlighting yet another reason to get rid of this rotten government.

A Brand new Revolution?

Leo Varadkar makes his move

Mary Smith

IT IS says a lot about how much Ireland has changed that when Leo Varadkar came out as gay on the Marian Finucane Show the press generally thought it increased his chance of getting the top job.

The Independent, the Irish Daily Mail and The Sun all came up next day with versions of 'Leo for Taoiseach!' headlines.

Obviously it is a very good thing that an ambitious politician such as the Minister of Health feels he has the space to come out without it destroying his career.

This is a state of affairs that has to be vigorously defended and, indeed, improved on in the Referendum on same-sex marriage later this year.

Real equality would be when no Minister would need to come out and when if they did it wouldn't be news.

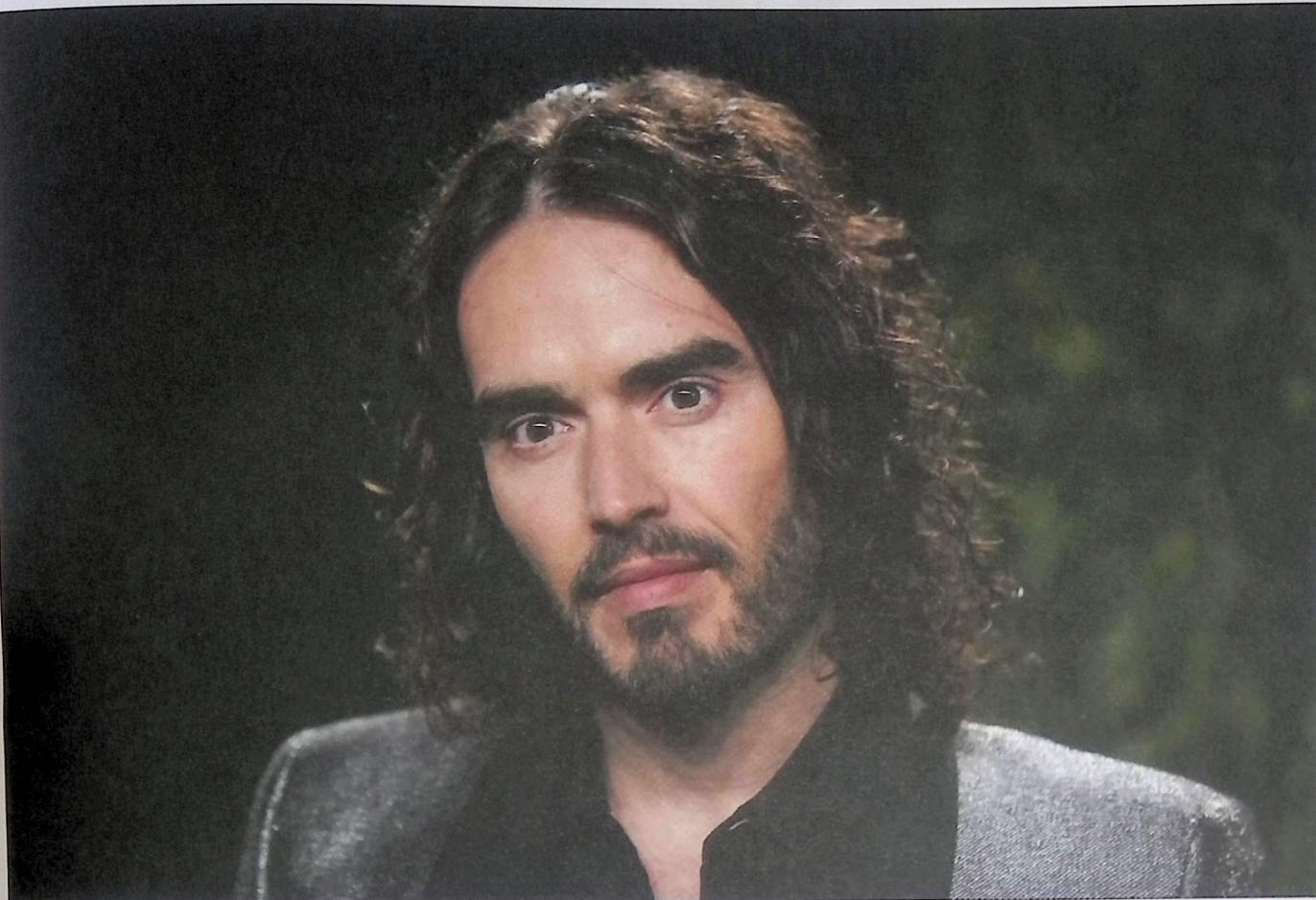
But as Rory O'Neill pointed out we are not there yet.

But it also has to be said that it was ordinary LGBT activists

not establishment politicians like Varadkar, who did the heavy lifting and showed the real courage to create the space that now exists for Irish LGBTQ people to people to be themselves

Where Leo Varadkar himself is concerned being gay is almost the only thing about him that is NOT offensive.

And unfortunately for patients stacked up on trolleys and waiting hours on end in A&Es it won't be much compensation to say but at least we have a gay Minister.



Freddie Trevaskis Hoskin reviews Russell Brand's recently published best selling book *Revolution*

He takes personal anecdotes, spirituality, the ideas of friends and leading political theorists and fashions them into one roller coaster of a general message.

This is not to say that the book seems fragmented or cobbled together.

Throughout Brand is funny, charming and his writing style flows naturally between jokes and explanation of anti-capitalist politics which helps greatly in making theory accessible and interesting without patronising the reader.

Brand's politics are as the title may suggest, revolutionary.

Brand launches quickly into a funny and common sense critique of capitalism.

The fact that the 85 richest people control as much wealth as the poorest 3.5 Billion, he points out, is just blatantly insane.

He is also very quick to realize that

climate change is inexorably linked with capitalism and the huge profits made by oil companies, saying "Either we ditch capitalism or we ditch the planet."

Once he has pointed out these problems which are usually hidden from public discourse he goes on to use his particular brand of wit (No pun intended) to explain simple but radical solutions.

He understands the power that labour has in the system pointing out that "The system that exploits us cannot function without us, without our labour."

Advocates

He advocates workers control through a co-operative system, localised direct democracy and communities organizing themselves to produce what they need for the common good.

He even explains and denounces imperialism and commodity fetishism.

All of this is done in a funny and engaging writing style, far from dry academia.

Brand really helps to bring theory to life and bring life to theory.

However, Brand's politics are not perfect.

This is understandable; he is a comedian not a political theorist and he has done pretty damn well.

But some criticisms must be made.

Throughout the book he links the idea of revolution with his, relatively eastern, idea of God.

He constantly argues that destruction of the self or ego is necessary to revolution; on this point most revolutionaries will not agree.

Brand is also a pacifist, believing that revolution must be an entirely peaceful one.

Here he does not see the inevitable violent response of the state machinery to any threat to capital.

He even admits at a number of points that he is relatively fond of the police and army.

Finally Brand occasionally uses racially charged humour in the book, with one or two examples of making fun of accents or a tradition.

Compared to many comedians these days, who rely hugely on racist and misogynist humour, Brand is far less problematic and does seem to be trying to unlearn these mindsets and argues quite vocally for the rights of immigrants.

This does not however mean he should be let off the hook - all instances of racism no matter how slight ought to be called out.

In conclusion while Brand's politics are not perfect they are pretty good. The true virtue of this book is its accessibility, the fact it is actually an enjoyable and entertaining read while dealing with serious political issues.

It is quite a good introduction to anti-capitalist politics in general and would definitely leave you yearning to take action.

#M 21 – Anti-racists get organised for important demo

Jimmy Yan

MARCH 21 is UN Anti-Racism Day and it will be the occasion for anti-racist and anti-fascists demonstrations in many European countries including Greece and Britain.

The importance of this day of action is obvious given the wave of racism and Islamophobia sweeping parts of Europe and the danger of a backlash after the Charlie Hebdo atrocity.

In Dublin 25 activists from 12 different anti-racist organisations and campaigns met on the 21 January to prepare for a demo in Ireland.

Among the organisations represented were Unite The Union, Unite Youth,

the Roma Integration Association, the Irish Anti-War Movement, Irish Palestine Solidarity

Campaign, the National Youth Council of Ireland and the European Network against Racism.

They agreed to call a march on March 21 at 2pm from Parnell Square to Dame St with following main slogans.

- No to Racism and Fascism
- No to Islamophobia
- No to Anti-Semitism
- No to Scapoing Immigrants
- Yes to Diversity.

Anti-racist activist, Memet Uludag, who initiated the campaign, said "The meeting was an excellent start. It is to be hoped that in the weeks ahead all left groups, trade unions and community groups will get behind this demonstration and make it a massive statement of solidarity against racism and fascism."

M21.



Duncan Campbell at IMMA

IRISH artist Duncan Campbell won the prestigious Turner Prize in 2014.

The work for which he won is currently showing, till 29 March at the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Kilmainham.

Campbell is a film maker and highly political.

This show includes a 38 minute film 'Bernadette' (2008) about Bernadette Devlin/McAliskey and 'It for Others' (2013) which

explores cultural imperialism and commodity fetishism and

references Marx's *Capital*.

Worth a visit for socialists interested in contemporary art.



Socialist Worker

STORMONT BUDGET:

SINN FEIN/ DUP ATTACK JOBS AND SERVICES



20,000 PUBLIC SECTOR JOBS AXED

Goretti Horgan

THE revised Stormont Budget, passed by the Assembly at the end of January, can only be described as neo-liberal.

It included confirmation that at least 20,000 jobs will be cut in the public sector, that public assets will be sold off and Corporation Tax reduced.

Politicians from Sinn Féin and the DUP have angrily denied that there are any job cuts – no, this is a “voluntary exit scheme” we are told.

Anyone who has worked in an organisation where “voluntary redundancy” (VR) is being pushed will know just how much VR can feel like a gun to your head.

In any case, VR means that the jobs are gone and not available to the next generation when they are looking for work.

Teachers and SNAs

Among the jobs that we know are definitely going are around 2,000 teachers and special needs assistants.

Teachers' unions had warned that about 2,500 such jobs would be lost if the education cuts proposed by Sinn Féin Minister

for Education, John O'Dowd, went ahead. As a result of the outcry, additional money went to education in the revised budget.

In spite of this, the teachers' unions warn that there will still be at least 2,000 jobs lost, as well as cuts to Free School Meals, to school transport and to support for disabled pupils.

Nurses and care assistants who were on temporary contracts or agency work have already been laid off – so the idea that “frontline workers will be protected” from the cuts has been shown to be lies.

Even Danske Bank chief economist Angela McGowan, someone not known for defending the public sector, accused politicians of being “disingenuous” when telling the public that public services would not be affected.

At the same time as £750 million is to be spent sacking public sector workers, the Stormont House Agreement had agreed to devolve Corporation Tax to “rebalance the economy”.

We are told that this will “create” up to 60,000 jobs, half of which will be high-paid jobs.

Every economist, even those who agree

with devolving Corporation Tax, says these figures are just pulled from the air – but the Treasury has made clear at least £300 million will be lost each year to the block grant to make up for Corporation Tax lost to it.

This £300 million comes on top of the £375 million a year that goes to pay for Private Finance Initiative (PFI) projects which the neo-liberals used to think were the way forward.

The earliest and biggest use of PFI was by Martin McGuinness when he was Education Minister and now the people of the North are held to ransom by these privateers.

Selling off public assets

The solution in the Agreement is to sell off public assets or “realise the value of their capital assets” in neoliberal speak.

Public buildings, land, public housing, rail and bus services and Northern Ireland Water have all been mentioned as possible “capital assets” to be sold off. Belfast Harbour land and assets are already up for sale.

We don't know yet what has been agreed about welfare reform. We know the hated ‘bedroom tax’ will be introduced only for new tenants and that payments may be

more flexible than in Britain.

These are welcome differences compared to Britain although people who are planning to move house for whatever reason or whose Housing Exec homes are being sold off to Housing Associations are afraid that they will be considered ‘new tenants’ for the purposes of the Bedroom Tax.

We are told that “the most vulnerable will be protected” through a system of “top-ups”.

But the revised budget only contains £23.5 million in addition to the £70 million put aside to cover any changes – so the maximum available will be £93.5 million while we know that the changes will see about £230 million worth of cuts.

For example, not bringing in the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) which is to replace Disability Living Allowance (DLA) would cost the Executive £105m a year... more than the overall amount allocated to provide “top ups”.

Hitting claimants

All this brings us back to the cuts in public sector jobs. Amazingly, 700 jobs are to go in Benefits and Housing Executive Offices alone – at exactly the time that MORE

frontline staff will be needed to administer these benefit “top-ups” and deal with queries from desperate claimants.

Already, claimants can spend hours on the phone, on hold for an advisor because there aren't enough to deal with demand.

At the same time, workers in community-based advice centres have already seen funding for their jobs cut. It is hard to see, therefore, how “the most vulnerable will be protected” when it comes to welfare reform.

Fighting back

We have the power to defeat the DUP/SF cuts.

Already, community campaigns have saved a range of respite services that were axed, so we know it can be done.

The public sector day of strikes on 13th March will see Protestant and Catholic workers uniting against the Green and Orange politicians who are colluding with Tory cuts.

But the politicians will fight back; they will do their best to divide us – private against public sector workers, one community against the other and so on. But united we are strong and united we can beat these cuts!



ALL OUT 13 MARCH – UNITE AND FIGHT!