

# Socialist Worker

## Water Charges The Boycott Begins

The great 80,000 strong Right2Water demonstration of March 21 proved beyond doubt, if proof was needed, that the anti-water charges movement has not gone away.

Now, as bills start to go out in April the main focus is going to be on the numbers refusing to pay.

It is clear that if even a significant minority boycott the charge Irish Water will not be viable and the government's whole strategy will collapse.

Hence the desperation in the government's response.

### The carrot and the stick

The government's first approach to bringing in the charges under Phil 'The Bully' Hogan was threats and intimidation. 'We'll reduce your water to trickle', was the message.

Faced with the massive revolt on the streets on October 11 and November 1 last year, the government the charges, changed tack and went instead for retreat and concessions.

Labour's Alan Kelly replaced Phil Hogan who was sent off to Europe.

The charges were significantly reduced and talk of cutting off water supplies was deemed 'inappropriate'.

Deadlines for registration were repeatedly revised and people were offered the 'carrot' of the €100 so-called 'conservation grant' – in reality a bribe to register.

At the same time there was a concerted effort to divide the movement by contrasting the 'reasonable' 'decent' people who marched in October and November to the 'sinister fringe' of 'hard core militants' This involved the attempt to demonise the Jobstown protesters and Paul Murphy, the imprisonment of the Edenmore Five and the intense focus on unfortunate comments shouted at President Higgins.

But, as the great turn out on 21 March showed, none of this worked.

Moreover, it left Irish Water and the government with no effective sanction to make people pay.

### Panic and Intimidation

Panicked by 21 March – which must have come as quite a shock if they believed their own propaganda – they shifted back to



Keep on the streets!

intimidation.

Suddenly Alan Kelly started to talk about taking the charges out of people's wages or benefits and even 'fast track courts' for non-payers - what next, internment?

But everyone opposed to the charges needs to understand this is bluff and bluster.

These are empty threats. There will be NO penalties till mid -1916. That is AFTER the next general election.

Legally they can't take it from your wages or benefits and landlords can't take it from your rent.

### NO ONE WILL GO TO JAIL FOR NON-PAYMENT.

And even if, in desperation, they were to force emergency legislation through the Dáil, as if they were really facing a terrorist threat, it would be unenforceable in the face of a MASS boycott.

### The Key Task

This is why the key task for anti-water charges campaigner is to get out into their local communities with the 'Don't be intimidated, Don't Pay!' message.

In making this case there are three other

important points to stress:

1. It doesn't matter if you've registered, **you still don't have to pay**
2. When Water charges were defeated in the mid 1990s those who refused to pay never had to but those who had paid **got no refund.**
3. Even if you are sent an incorrect bill, and Irish Water admits this will happen, just ignore it – **don't engage with them.**

### Keep on the Streets.

If the boycott is now centre stage it doesn't mean stopping the installation of water metres and demonstrations no longer matter.

Bringing people together in the communities and in big numbers on the streets is crucial for building and sustaining non-payment.

It is what gives people the confidence that we can win

This is why it is important to support the **Non-Payment Network Demonstration on 18 April 2pm at the Garden of Remembrance and the Dublin Council of Trade Unions March from Parnell Square at 6.30pm on 1 May.**

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## Did You Know?

Nearly 9,000 people were sent to prison in Ireland last year for non-payment of fines. This includes more than 2,000 women; a massive increase on the 159 women sent to prison for this 'offence' in 2007.

More than 400 were also sent to jail for not paying a TV licence that finances 83 staff at RTE on 100,000 euro plus salaries.

In contrast, not one banker or politician was sent to jail for destroying the country. Jail the Bankers, not the Poor!

Joan Burton and seven other current and former Labour ministers - Brendan Howlin, Jan O'Sullivan, Alex White, Alan Kelly, Pat Rabbitte and Eamon Gilmore - are sitting on pension pots worth 2.5 million each.

On stepping down or failing to be elected, Burton will also enjoy a tax-free lump sum of 130,000 on top of her pension fund of 2.569 million.

Labour's many victims of austerity are expected to pay for all this. These bloodsuckers should be sent packing without a penny more!

Dail records for 2013 showed 45 TDs, nearly one-third of TDs, are landlords! No wonder this government does nothing to improve tenants rights in the private rental sector, bring in rent controls, lift the rent allowance cap or build enough social housing.

However they do want landlords to collect their tenants' water charges.

FG and Labour has also privatised housing provision, condemning 75,000 households on the social housing list to the mercy of greedy landlords, rent hikes and homelessness. Housing for all is a basic human right!

# How Clean is Your Water?

Maeve McGrath

As the government asks us to pay twice for our water, it is a good opportunity to look at the quality of the water we are expected to drink and bathe in. It has emerged that Irish Water feels that water sources serving over 220,000 people may have to be "abandoned" as they are not sufficient to meet future population growth.

They want to establish the River Shannon as a new source for Dublin by pumping it across into a new midlands reservoir. This will cost at least €500 million.

The Environment Protection Agency identified 120 water plants which need upgrading, whereas the new Irish Water company estimates this number to be at 300.

Many parts of the country have been under boil notice for years due to cryptosporidium

contamination.

This outrageous state of affairs would end within a week if it affected the supply to Kildare Street.

Furthermore the EPA found that nearly one-third of secondary sewage treatment plants fail to meet EU standards while raw sewage is being discharged in 44 areas.

Last summer, local councils around the country were releasing sewage into the sea during periods of heavy rainfall.

This resulted in a ban on swimming as readings of E. coli and intestinal enterococci were at dangerous levels.

This is not simply a moral issue over a human right, but a fight for basic hygiene and services the state is obliged to provide.

We are being asked to pay twice for a service that is an utter disgrace.



## Addiction Ireland



Garda harasses homeless man on Henry St. To see video <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/eyewitness-video-of-garda-and-homeless-man-on-henry-st-1.2141481>

Maeve McGrath

Gardaí are applauding themselves over the "success" of 'Operation Stilts' - the crackdown on "antisocial" behaviour in the city centre, which means they have been carrying out searches under the Misuse of Drugs Act and moving on "undesirables" from busy shopping and tourist districts.

This issue stems from the state establishing the main

methadone clinics in the city centre; from Merchant's Quay, the City Clinic in Amiens Street to the National Drug Treatment in Pearse Street - the largest of the methadone suppliers in the country.

Over Christmas, the Minister of Justice, Frances Fitzgerald met with "concerned" business leaders to discuss "safety" in the capital.

This indicates the government's allegiances are

with the capitalist class and not with the real victims of addiction.

Indeed the Gardaí also adopted a "collaborative approach" with Dublin businesses for their targeted operation.

There is no doubt that drug abuse is a serious issue in Ireland.

There are about twelve drug-related deaths every week and nearly 5,500 deaths from drug overdoses since last year. Furthermore eight out of ten such deaths were young men, with more than half having mental health issues.

The coalition has cut funding for drug task forces by a staggering 37 per cent.

On December 17, the night of the vote in the Dáil on the Water Services the Dáil Bar made €7,461.

It is clear who the real parasites are, and they do not have to resort to the cold, unforgiving streets of the capital to find relief.

Instead of enforcing incredible hardship on its citizens, and then treating a psychological, medical issue as a criminal one; the State would do well to provide adequate funding for communities in the form of addiction services.

## Centenary of the Armenian Genocide



Memet Uludag

24 April 2015 marks the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide in Turkey.

This was one of the worst crimes against humanity in the 20th century - a century of terrible crimes.

Between 1915 and 1922 1.5 million Armenian people, three quarters of the Armenian population were exterminated.

The massacres were carried out during and after World War 1 by the Ottoman Empire in an appalling act of ethnic cleansing.

Why is this monstrous crime so little known about?

Because when Kemal Ataturk and the Turkish Nationalists established the modern Turkish state in 1923 they ended all investigations of the Armenian massacres and began a practice of total denial which remains to this day.

This went hand in hand with racist, nationalistic propaganda about Armenians and Kurds.

And, crucially, the 'international community' ie the US, were complicit in this silence because Turkey was a key NATO ally in the region.

2015 will be a year of many campaigns to bring out the truth and demand justice for Armenians

# Sex Workers Rights are Human Rights

Violet Wilkin

Policy on sex work should include consultation with the workers.

Following the criminalisation of the purchase of sex in Northern Ireland, the debate on sex work in Ireland has been very one sided. It has excluded the people with the experience of actually selling sexual services.

Criminalising the purchase of sex only pushes sex work underground. It makes getting clients more difficult and results in independent sex workers using a third party, which often leads to exploitation. Criminalising the purchase of sex has not worked in countries such as Sweden.

Sex work is a matter of policy and protection, not policing

According to Human Rights

activist Violet Wilkin, "Sex workers rights are a matter of policy and protection, not policing. Sex workers are a marginalised group who need to be afforded the same human rights and human dignity as everyone else in society. One of the problems is that the media often portray sex workers as helpless victims".

Many do the job because they have control over where they work, the clients they choose and the actual work they do. Sex workers in Ireland are calling to be recognised and consulted in relation to policy concerning them. Recently the Sex Workers Alliance Ireland (SWAI) held a conference in Dublin bringing together sex workers, academics and activists. Their meeting, *Realising Sex Workers Rights in*

Ireland, was well attended but not by those who actually make policy.

SWAI's vision is about promoting the safety and human rights of sex workers. Wendy Lyon, a Human Rights solicitor, believes that sex workers will work around the criminalisation policy and this will have harmful effects. In Sweden criminalisation has not put an end to sex work and it has not stopped women travelling to Sweden to sell sex but it has changed how the industry is organised. According to the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare, workers are more reliant on pimps to shield their activity from police. It has made sex work less visible, but it has not deterred it.

In Sweden there has also been

a surge in massage parlours and a worrying trend is the rise in out-calls which involves the worker leaving her familiar and safe environment.

Existing laws put workers at risk.

Sex work can be dangerous and sex workers need policy to help in this regard. According to Lucy Smith from *uglymugs*, ie, some of our existing policies, especially regarding "brothel keeping" actually impede safety. For example when doing an out call, or meeting a new client a worker would prefer to have a friend accompany her. However when they take these precautions, they risk being prosecuted of profiting from the sale of sex under the guise of "brothel keeping". This in turn distorts crime

statistics and makes it look as if there are thousands of brothels around the country exploiting women, when in actual fact the majority of sex workers are self-employed.

The Irish Independent [1/3/15] highlighted problems faced by "au pairs who become 'personal servants' in homes". According to the Migrant Council of Ireland "a new trend of using young women on cultural exchange programmes as live-in domestic workers is sweeping Ireland". In these instances we are not talking about sex work, but about the exploitation of many workers, especially women working in homes with zero hour contracts, below minimum wages and hours that are double the norm.

Often such workers are trafficked but the narrative of the media almost always makes trafficking synonymous with prostitution. This does not fit the reality of crime statistics, or the reality of most sex workers' experience in Ireland.

Criminalisation will make trafficking worse as resources will go on prosecuting consensual sex work, rather than trafficking. Anti-trafficking legislation and sex work legislation need to be approached independently. If sex workers and their clients are further ostracised they will be less likely to report instances of trafficking.

New policy on sex work has to include consultation and focus on the health and safety of the sex workers.

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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 such

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

working 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 'servant 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.

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Text JOIN to 086-3074060

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# Gerry Carroll for Westminster

Fiona Nic Fhearghais

Following his successful campaign to win a seat in Belfast City Council last year, Gerry Carroll, the People Before Profit councillor for the Blackmountain area of West Belfast, is in campaign mode once again, having announced earlier this month that he is running in the upcoming Westminster Election.

Fiona Nic Fhearghais spoke to Gerry about his campaign.

## Gerry, why have you decided to run for election?

Frightening prospects lie ahead for the people of West Belfast and I have decided to stand in order to oppose this and to provide an alternative.

Over the next 4 years we will see some of the harshest public sector cuts ever implemented in the North. We will see the Assembly borrow £700 million to make 20,000 public sector workers redundant.

In addition to this thousands of teachers and classroom assistants could lose their jobs.

Our health service is already in a state of crisis, with people dying in on hospital trolleys and waiting times of over 12 hours in A&E.

Our core frontline services are set to be devastated by the incoming wave of cuts, more job losses are expected for admin staff in hospitals, and 40% of our community and voluntary services which often relieve the pressure on our Health Service are faced with imminent closure.

I think it's time we collectively said enough is enough.

## West Belfast will

**Gerry Carroll: "I'm not a nationalist or a unionist, I'm a socialist!"**



**be one of the areas hardest hit by the Public sector cuts. What do you think of the proposal to cut Corporation Tax while implementing Welfare Reform?**

Most of our politicians have bought into the idea that while the working class in society must tighten our belts and make sacrifices, corporations who already avoid paying billions in tax each year will see Corporation Tax lowered in their favour.

All of the main parties accept that welfare for the vulnerable should be cut but welfare for the rich should be increased.

Stormont has failed us.

**What is the mood in working class areas, as a result of the incoming wave of cuts?**

'People are fed up. This anger was visible in the thousands of workers from West Belfast and beyond who took to the streets on March 13th in one of the biggest strikes we have witnessed in years.

The city was brought to a standstill, with transport workers shutting down bus services and strong picket lines outside health centres, schools and other public sector buildings.

The massive support for this from the community was evident in the reaction from passing traffic, messages of support

on social media and the massive turnout at the city centre demo.

I fully support the civil servants, Translink staff, nurses, teachers and all others who took action, as is their right and I think it is fantastic to see such a show of People Power.'

**This isn't your first time running for a seat in Westminster. How does this campaign compare with last time?**

Last year's election result was testament to the possibility for change in Belfast. People are sick of the "What can you do?" attitude from politicians

and want answers and action to stave off the cutbacks.

People Before Profit believe in doing politics differently: working on the ground and building a consensus for change through grassroots organisation and People Power.

I think my campaign will galvanise this anger with a positive message.

I want to stand in this election to allow everyone the chance to speak up and send a clear message to the politicians that enough is enough.

As we have seen from the water charges movement in the South, the best way that we can achieve improvements in the lives of working people is to get

organised and fight back.

A redistribution of wealth towards the bottom of society does not come from 'Inward Investment', wining and dining business leaders or by lowering corporation tax: it comes through the mobilisation of working class people to fight in their own interests.

This is the message that I have been pushing on the doors - we need to get organised and stick together.

**You are running for election in an area which encompasses both 'Nationalist' and 'Unionist' communities. How do you plan to reach both sides of the divide?**

We always hear about these community divides and no doubt sectarianism is rife within our community.

We have both physical and political barriers between neighbours and too often these are exploited by politicians.

We do not ignore this reality, but we do want to challenge it.

We are the only party in West Belfast who will actively campaign on both 'sides' of the community.

PBP recognise that issues for working class people are the same whether you're based on the Falls or on the Shankill and we want to break down barriers.

We have recently opened an office on the Shankill/Falls interface, which I see as a concrete example of how we can do this.

We will continue to reach out to both 'sides' of the community and genuinely challenge sectarianism, and fight for a shared future from below.

## Mass Campaign on Housing Crisis Begins

Michael Wallace

A very successful conference on the housing crisis organised by People Before Profit has launched a broad Right2Housing campaign of resistance to homelessness and repossession, and for decent housing for all.

In a packed room in Dublin's Academy Plaza Hotel, guest speaker Andrew McLaren from TCD told the conference that the decision to leave housing provision in the hands of the market was disastrous.

It was creating affordability problems, indebtedness and wage slavery and the end of the Celtic Tiger had produced negative equity, repossessions and homelessness and the private renting sector was producing uncontrolled rent rises and displacement of families.

Instead of the government subsidising landlords by €500 million a year it should be building social housing. Access to housing has always been difficult for the poor under a system that serves developers, landlords and speculators and that social need is not considered under capitalism. "Housing is a necessity. The rights of people come first, not rights of developers and landlords."

Louise Bayliss, from lone parents' group SPARK, said lone parents are the poorest and most vulnerable group in society and

have been hit particularly hard by the housing crisis.

Over 30% on the Dublin housing waiting list are lone parent families and Joan Burton's outrageous decision to again refuse to increase rent caps was forcing many out of work, out of their communities and onto the streets. Lone parents have also been affected by the mortgage crisis and "lone parents cannot survive the childcare and housing crisis at the same time."


People Before Profit TD Richard Boyd Barrett called for a new social movement like the Right2Water campaign and that the only way to deal with the crisis was to get out on the streets and fight for our right to housing.

He said that the government's response to the crisis back in October was a complete fake and an attempt to deceive the public.

"We demand that rent controls are introduced immediately and an emergency public housing programme put in place. How do you pay for this? With the €4 billion in cash reserves being held by NAMA. This is our money and could be used to build thousands of social housing units and put many construction workers back to work."

There were also demands for the building of good quality housing and an end to badly constructed homes, a problem that will not be

**Right2Housing**  
**CONFERENCE**  
**Saturday**  
**28 March**  
**10.30 - 4.30**



**ACADEMY PLAZA HOTEL,**  
Cathal Brugha Street (Just off O'Connell Street)

**Demand Housing NOW**

If you are in need of a child minder in order to attend conference  
call 086 3805793  
Organised by People Before Profit - Cllr Brid Smith 087 9090166

resolved by the market.

PBP Cllr John Lyons said that basic needs were not being met under this economic system and that housing is a "fundamental human right we should be able to avail of freely. We have the right to a house and a home and that's what we are fighting for."

Father Peter McVerry said that homelessness had gone through the roof and that six people were now being made homeless every day, including whole families now being split apart.

He said FG/Labour's latest refusal to raise rent caps was "a nail in the coffin of this government's own homeless and social housing strategy."

In an inspiring speech Peter McDonagh, himself homeless, said that people of all ages and backgrounds were now coming into homeless hostels.

While thousands of boarded up dwellings across the city lay idle, 30 homeless people died on the streets last year.

"Families on the streets is a bloody disgrace. Boarded up houses need to be opened up. Right2Housing is about getting everyone together to take on this government and get this done!"

Eileen Short, Chairperson of Defend Council Housing-East London, said the new housing movement in Britain had linked up

unions with tenants to take on the developers and right-wing politicians. Empty council houses were occupied, grabbing headlines and raising the confidence of working class people to defend and demand public housing.

Trade unionist Mick O' Reilly said the Housing Action Campaign in the 1970s forced the government to build 60,000 council houses and that we need a similar campaign today.

The rousing Conference ended with a unanimous vote to establish a new housing campaign of people power with grassroots communities its centre.

Resistance will build on the momentum of Right2Water and will be broad, involving the groups affected by the crisis: people facing repossession, struggling in the private rental market, the homeless and many others as well as trade unions, community groups, Left political parties and independents.

Key demands will be control of the price of land, no more evictions, increased public housing and rent controls.

A series of local Right2Housing meetings will be organised across the country with a plan to build for a mass national demonstration when the Dail returns in September.

The battle to win this basic human right has begun!



# #socialism 1.01

John Moynaux



## Why talk about class?

**"You socialists are obsessed with class. Surely we should forget about class and just see people as individuals".**

Actually it's true. Socialists are obsessed with class and for a very good reason.

It's because class is the main source of unfairness, inequality and injustice in our society.

Socialists are opposed to all kinds of inequality, discrimination and oppression.

We hate racism and homophobia and are absolutely committed to achieving complete equality for women. We also value the individual and want a society where every individual has the opportunity to fulfil themselves and realise their potential.

But the simple fact is that if you compare the gap between the average earnings of men and women - it's about 20% internationally - or between white people and people of colour, it is far less than the gap between the earnings of bosses and workers, between those at the top of society and those lower down.

Indeed it is less than the gap between the professional middle classes and manual workers.

### Inequality

And it is not just a question of pay. Class inequality affects every aspect of life.

The upper and middle classes live longer and enjoy better health than the working classes and when they get ill there are better health care facilities for them.

The children of upper and middle class people do better on average at school than the children of working class people and a higher proportion of them go to college and university.

At work upper and middle class people work shorter hours in safer, better conditions

and get longer holidays. Working class people suffer more industrial injuries and endure conditions that more unhealthy.

And there are qualitative differences as well.

Upper class people spend most of their lives telling people what to do.

Working class spend much of their lives being told what to do.

Upper class children are brought up with a sense of their own 'natural' superiority.

Working class children are made to feel 'inferior'. Working class people are constantly being humiliated and made to feel small in ways that middle class people don't even notice.

And whatever the constitution says the reality is that class has a big effect on how people are treated by the gardai and the courts.

There's always one law for the rich and another for the poor. Just compare the treatment of bankers and water protestors or corporate tax evaders and so-called 'benefits cheats'.

In fact the question of class goes deeper than this.

It's not just a matter of inequality and unfairness but real conflict of interest.

The rich and the bosses make their money and accumulate their wealth out of the labour of the workers. So the bosses are always trying to increase profits and hold down wages and get workers to work harder for longer hours, whereas workers want more pay and shorter hours.

This tension, this class conflict, is always there and it runs through the whole of society not just the workplace.

And the fact that the upper classes control the whole society across the board, including the government and the

media, means that the whole society is organised to meet their needs and serve their interests first.

That's why there's no limit on money to bail out the banks but no money for single parents or DEIS schools.

This is why socialists are obsessed with class. We think that the only way we can create a decent society in which people are treated as human beings not commodities and numbers is to abolish class and class divisions.

And there is one more reason for our obsession. It is that class, specifically class struggle, is the key to changing society. This was the great discovery of Karl Marx who wrote that 'history is the history of class struggle'.

Marx believed that it was the working class, by which meant those who live by the sale of their labour [manual and non-manual, teachers and nurses, bus drivers and construction workers alike] who have the power to overthrow the existing system.

### Divisions

To do this working people have to unite, overcoming all the divisions of nationality, race, gender etc, which the media always play up.

United the working class are the immense majority in Ireland and in the world.

This is even more true today than it was in Marx's day when most people were farmers and peasants..

If the working class moves together it can sweep away the establishment elites who rule the world at present.

Class, therefore, is not only the root cause of inequality and oppression in all its forms; it is also the key to challenging and defeating it. That's why socialists talk about class.

# Time for the

**W**ith hundreds of thousands of people having taken to the streets in the great revolt over water charges and austerity as a whole and with a general election looming there is an urgent need for the left to unite its forces.

In this context the People Before Profit Alliance has issued an 'Appeal for a Radical Left Alliance'

This appeal argues that:

**A key strategic focus will be the need to promote an organised boycott of the charges.**

**However, alongside this there is a growing realisation among many activists that there is a need for a parallel political challenge to the current ruling elite.**

**Such a challenge should promote clear anti-austerity policies, offer a positive vision of a different Ireland and outline a different way of doing politics so that it is connected with a desire for people power.**

Any talk of a challenge to the government and to austerity raises the question of Sinn Fein. With Fianna Fail flatlining the government and the media often present Sinn Fein as the main opposition.

And indeed Sinn Fein's standing in the polls puts it well ahead of any the left parties or groupings.

People Before Profit are more than willing to work and cooperate with Sinn Fein on many campaigns as they have done over the water charges.

They are also clear that they would prefer a Sinn Fein led government to any of three 'mainstream' pro-austerity parties.

Thus PBP representatives in the Dáil would vote for Gerry

Adams or Mary Lou McDonald for Taoiseach against Enda Kenny or Joan Burton.

Nevertheless PBP is not in favour of entering a political alliance with Sinn Fein. 'We believe', says the appeal, 'there needs to be a genuine left alternative that offers a different pole of attraction'.

In the present circumstances such a pole of attraction could win the support of large numbers of working people who have been radicalized by the water charges revolt and by years of anti-working class austerity.

### Potential

The rise of Syriza in Greece and Podemos in Spain shows the potential.

The Appeal explains People Before Profit's reasons for wanting an alternative to the left of Sinn Fein.

■ While attacking austerity in the South, Sinn Fein is implementing similar policies in the North.

■ It has not ruled out the coalition with establishment parties such as Fianna Fail in a future government.

■ It does not place a strong emphasis on 'people power' as a strategy for change and is opposed to an organised boycott of water charges.

The appeal also sets a number of key principles on which it would like the left alliance to be based

□ The abolition of water charges, the property tax and the USC for those on average or below average incomes.

□ Unilateral action to cancel Irish debt caused by bankers' gambling.

□ A national health service that treats all according to medical need and not the size of their wallets.

□ An emergency programme



to build social houses and immediate rent controls.

□ It should rule out participation in a future coalition with any establishment party.

□ It should favour a 32 county wide movement against austerity.

□ It should raise taxes on corporations to fund the reduction of USC on PAYE workers

□ It should stand openly for a woman's right to choose and the Repeal of the 8<sup>th</sup>

## SUPPORT THE DUNNES

**AS Socialist Worker goes to press Dunnes Stores workers are set to go on strike.**

The strike on Holy Thursday by 6,000 Dunnes workers is extremely important for Irish workers as a whole.

The stakes are so high that the management have been trying to intimidate staff on the past few weeks to try and break the strike.

They have been calling individual workers into 'communications meetings' threatening some with a cut in hours if they go on strike, promising others full-time contract if they don't.

This strike centres on Dunnes'

use of low-hour contracts.

Thousands of its staff are guaranteed only 15 hours a week.

They might get 30 hours one week, 15 the next. The 15 hours might be spread over two days, or five days.

It means the majority of Dunnes workers have no guarantee of a decent weekly wage. It means they can't get loans, mortgages.

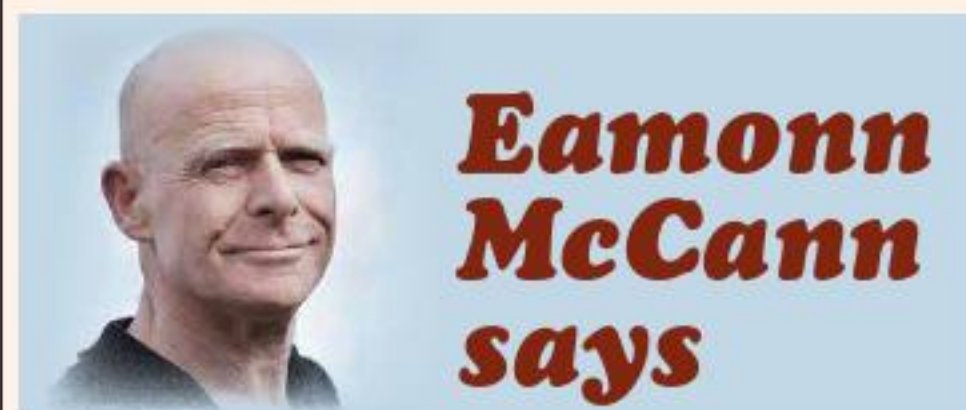
If they have only a guarantee of 15 hours, they can't get social welfare or Family Income Supplement as you have to work a minimum of 19 hours' per week to be entitled to these.

It means that many Dunnes





# Left to Unite



As the world tries to come to terms with the dreadful crashing of Germanwings Flight 4U 9525 into the Alps, Eamonn McCann looks back to another terrible plane crash that is now largely forgotten. He argues that it is necessary to look at

## The politics behind the headlines

It is remarkable that Flight 655 has scarcely been mentioned in coverage of the talks between Iran and the US and its allies on a possible deal involving curbs on Iran's nuclear programme in exchange for the lifting of sanctions.

Or, perhaps not remarkable at all. The 290 innocent people killed on Flight 655 were mostly Iranians.

They included 60 children. The missile that brought the plane down was American.

Hardly anyone in the US, and very few in Europe, would recognise the flight number now.

But, as the Washington Post recently acknowledged, mention Flight 655 in any Iranian classroom and the pupils will know what you're talking about.

The same would be true in Holland or Malaysia with regard to Malaysian Airlines Flight MH17 from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur, shot down on July 17th last year over a part of eastern Ukraine controlled by groups which reject the sovereignty of the Kiev government and relate instead to Russia.

Western powers and the Western media have, virtually without dissent, put the blame for the incident and for the deaths of all 298 people on board either on Russia itself or on its local allies.

### Atrocity

The atrocity is regularly brought up in media discussion of the Ukraine crisis as evidence of Russian cynicism and ruthlessness and lack of credibility in professions of peaceful intent.

Perhaps a group associated with Russia did shoot the 'plane down, although no convincing evidence for this has been produced.

What's at issue here, though, is the contrast with reactions to disaster that befell Flight 655 over the Persian Gulf.

Iran Air 655, a civilian flight en route from Bandar Abbas International Airport in Iran, to Dubai, was hit by two surface-to-air missiles fired by US warship the SS Vincennes on July 3rd 1988. The story goes back to the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979.

The following year, the Saddam Hussein regime, encouraged by the US, invaded.

Eight years later, the war still raged. More than a million people had perished.

Just a few months prior to the Flight 655 killings, Saddam's air force had used chemical weapons against the Kurdish town of Halabja, killing 5,000 civilians.

This did nothing to dissuade the West from supporting the Baghdad regime - which it was



later to depict as the epitome of all evil - citing the Halabja massacre.

Believing, reasonably enough, that the US was about to enter the war directly and was willing to carry out appalling atrocities and to support Iraq in using banned weapons, Iran agreed to a UN-brokered ceasefire and then a settlement on a basis favourable to Saddam.

This sequence of events will be on the minds of Iranian negotiators at the Geneva still under way at the time of writing.

John Barry and Roger Charles of Newsweek spent weeks investigating the 655 incident and wrote that Commander Rogers of the Vincennes had at the least "acted recklessly and without due care." They further accused the US government of hiding evidence and covering up the truth.

### Notified

Investigators from the United Arab Emirates, which includes Dubai, showed that Flight 655 had been exactly within its notified commercial flight path when blasted from the skies.

In 1991, Admiral William Crowe admitted on ABC Nightline that the Vincennes had been within Iranian territorial waters when the missiles were launched - in direct contradiction of statements by the navy, the Pentagon and the White House until that point.

In 1996, the US, under Bill Clinton, agreed to pay compensation to the families of the victims, to a maximum of \$213,000 per family - without admitting any wrongdoing.

On this basis, lawyers for the families withdrew their case from the International Criminal Court.

Thus, US culpability for the atrocity has been accepted by the world and reported in Western media.

Despite this, there is scarcely a word now when the matter is possibly more relevant than ever.

The question of who is to blame for atrocities like MH Flight 17 and Iran Air Flight 655 is not dictated by the available evidence but according to the changing needs of Western interests.

This should be kept in mind when pondering the crisis in Ukraine and the negotiations over Iran.

Amendment.

It should demand the closure of direct provision centres for asylum seekers.

It should support a call for a boycott of water charges and encourage workers to turn their unions into organisations of struggle.

The Appeal recognizes that this 'is by no means a definitive or exhaustive list' and that 'no doubt there may be some differences of emphasis' between different forces on the radical

left in Ireland.

Nevertheless it says: *it is our firm conviction that there is also substantial agreement on these policies among People Before Profit, the Anti-Austerity Alliance and many independent socialists and community and trade union activists.*

The Appeal does not attempt to specify in advance the precise nature of the proposed alliance, leaving open whether it would be primarily an electoral slate

or something more developed.. This it says would have to be agreed by those composing the alliance.

### Urgent

Nevertheless it urges all on the radical left in Ireland to support this move towards left unity and 'to start urgent discussions to bring it about'.

People wishing to support this call and sign the letter should go to <http://www.peoplebefore-profit.ie/>

# DUNNES STORES WORKERS



workers cannot guarantee they can feed themselves or their families each week.

Dunnes Stores has a particularly nasty management and is determined to ignore the demands of the union Mandate that it treat its workers decently. It is refusing to engage with Mandate or to go to the Labour Court.

This dispute has been a long-time coming and the 6,000 workers staging this stoppage on Thursday are bravely facing down threats and intimidation from their bosses.

Pickets will be placed at all 109 Dunnes Stores branches on

Thursday. The workers must be supported. We all need them to win this.

Over 100,000 workers across Ireland are on zero-hour or low-hour contracts like those used to cow and intimidate Dunnes workers.

The Fine Gael-Labour Party Government allows companies like Dunnes to use these contracts. These contracts must be thrown out of Irish workplaces and this Government must be thrown out of office.

**Decency for Dunnes Stores workers!**

**Decency for all Irish workers!**



# Syriza – the Struggle Goes On

John Molyneux

The attempt of the EU 'institutions', the hated Troika, to strangle the radical left Syriza government at birth is continuing.

The European Central Bank has written to Greek banks instructing them not to buy any more government debt. That cuts off a potential source of emergency funding for Athens.

Without access to capital markets, or the ECB's normal financing operations, Greek banks rely on almost €70 billion Emergency Liquidity Assistance to cover a financing shortfall exacerbated by steep deposit withdrawals.

This sounds technical but really it is economic terrorism.

This Emergency Liquidity Assistance is used as another means to threaten to destroy the Greek economy and intimidate the Greek government.

As political analyst and member of the Central Committee of SYRIZA, Yanis Albanis, says "their behaviour is not dictated by any sort of economic thinking. The money Greece needs (a few billions) is a drop in the ocean of European economy..."

"The issue is deeply political. The forces of conservatism that dominate Europe, want to politically crush Tsipras and SYRIZA so that they can nip an alternative political model of pan-European appeal, in the bud. They are attacking SYRIZA in order to finish/end/stop/kill Podemos and Sinn Fein."

And, disgracefully, they are supported in this by Enda Kenny (along with the Spanish government) who is standing with the Troika against the Greek people and against the interests



Confrontation: Tsipras and Merkel

of the Irish people.

## An important debate

These issues raised by this situation were discussed in an important and well attended debate in Dublin on 25 March.

The main speakers were Professor Helena Sheehan of Left Forum and Socialist Worker editor, John Molyneux. Both speakers emphasized the major importance of Syriza's victory and their solidarity with the struggle of the Greek people.

But there were also differences. Professor Sheehan spoke of her long standing involvement and identification with Syriza. She felt it combined the best of the old and the new left in Europe and was opening up the pos-

sibility of transforming Greek society in a way that could serve as a model for us all.

John Molyneux said he was worried that the Syriza government was cooperating with capitalism rather than pursuing an anti-capitalist strategy and quoted Finance Minister Yannis Varoufakis's statement that it 'the left had to save capitalism from itself'.

There was a full debate from the floor with a number of well informed contributions which showed how closely people are following the situation in Greece. Everybody agreed on the need for solidarity but one speaker felt it was wrong to criticize Syriza in any way because we are not Greek. But others pointed to the difficulty of implementing anti-austerity policies

while not breaking with the system.

## The issue of the state

Two main issues emerged in the discussion. One was whether it is possible for the left to 'harness the power' of the Greek or any other capitalist state for anti-capitalist purposes.

John Molyneux, James O'Toole and others argued against this idea and stressed the need to mobilize the working class from below.

Ronan Burtenshaw argued that it was possible to use governmental power to gradually gain more control over the state and the economy. Helena Sheehan said we had to 'stop dreaming of storming the Winter Palace' [as happened in the Russian Revolution] because 'there are no Winter Palaces

anymore'.

Instead Syriza was working to 'transform the state' in an anti-capitalist direction.

The second key issue was Greek membership of the Euro.

If Syriza cancels the debt and implements its election programme it will be thrown out of the Eurozone but a large majority of the Greek people want to stay with the Euro.

Ronan Burtenshaw spelled out what he saw as the dire consequences of leaving the Euro – the poverty this would inflict on the Greek people. John Molyneux replied that this showed that exiting the Euro was not enough on its own; it was also necessary to break with capitalism and start expropriating the wealth of the rich.

## Implications for Ireland

What is clear is that this debate will continue on the Irish and the international left as will the struggle between the Troika and the Greek people.

The Troika is demanding the implementation of 'reforms' as a condition for providing the Greek governments with emergency funds but in reality these 'reforms' are serious cuts to pensions and wages; thus inflicting even more poverty on the desperate Greek people.

So these issues will not go away and they have huge implications for Ireland. Ireland is paying €8 billion a year interest on the bankers' debts.

We can't have a decent society if we keep doing that so the question of whether or not we are prepared to defy the Troika and unilaterally cancel the debt is one the left in Ireland has to answer.

# The Drug War is a Class War

Guy Connolly

It has now been more than one hundred years since the introduction of laws prohibiting the sale and/or possession of illicit drugs in the United States - laws that began with the prohibition of opium in 1914.

This authoritarian trend progressed for several decades and even included a failed attempt to criminalise alcohol in the 1920's.

It was Nixon, however, who coined the term "war on drugs" as the size and scope of the federal effort to crush drug users increased and saw the implementation of such draconian policies as "no-knock" warrants and "mandatory minimum" sentencing for offenders.

In reality Nixon's war was an attack on the youth and blackd, for whom drugs such as marijuana had become a symbolic force for social upheaval and political dissent.

Despite Nixon making it a Schedule One drug (the most dangerous category) some small successful attempts were made during this time period to legalise marijuana and eleven states decriminalised its possession and use between 1973 and '77.

## Reagan ramps it up

This small advance underwent an abrupt U-turn with the rise of cowboy president Ronald Reagan, an actor come politician who came to power under the hidden auspices of corporate America.

His time in the Oval Office



saw a further extension of anti-drug laws and institutions, media scaremongering and the implementation of so called "zero tolerance" policies that spread across the nation.

These draconian efforts continued under Clinton and by 1997 the number of non-violent drug offenders occupying US prison space increased eightfold from 50,000 in 1980, to 400,000 in 1997.

Currently the US has about 5% of the world's population but 25% of the world's prison population, the world's largest.

Moreover, within this vast prison

population there is a huge over representation of black people.

This is the legacy of decades of draconian drugs policy left by Nixon, Reagan and Clinton.

## Crack cocaine and powder cocaine

These leaders solidified the drug war as part of a class war that continues to suppress the poor and most disenfranchised people in the US to this day.

The most prominent example of this war in action, that sticks out in my mind, is the disparity of sentencing between crack cocaine users and powder cocaine users.

Crack cocaine is pharmacologically identical to powder cocaine, the only difference being that the former is mostly used by poor black people and the latter is used primarily by rich whites.

The sentencing disparities between these two types of users is enormous.

Prior to 2010 and the passing of the federal Fair Sentencing Act the disparity was as high as 100:1, with poor blacks receiving immensely longer sentences for crack cocaine possession in comparison to rich whites for possession of similar amounts of the powder form of the drug.

The implementation of the FSA saw this disparity fall to 'only' 18:1, but the inequality still remains..

So too do the class and racist sentiments which are hidden under the thin veneer of social justice implied by the word "Fair" in this relatively new law.

## Decriminalise drugs

The World Health Organization (WHO) published a report in July of 2014 in which it made a number of suggestions around the issue of HIV prevention and treatment and one of its most striking recommendations was the call for the governments of the world to decriminalise the use of drugs.

The WHO, in an additional technical brief stated, "In many regions, injecting drug use is most prevalent among socially marginalized young people, including those who are orphaned, out of school, living in extreme poverty, or living or working on the streets."

The report concludes, "Detention is not treatment," and "these approaches (criminalisation/incarceration) infringe on human rights," and "there is no evidence that they effectively treat drug dependence."

The jury is no longer out on the drug war.

Responding to addiction with savagery is not a viable solution; it is a product of a class war being waged by the powerful elites of nations against their own citizenry and it is up to us, those citizens, to end this ineffectual and brutalising class warfare once and for all.



# Liberation Campaign Launched

Freddie Trevaskis Hoskin

THE new Liberation campaign had its official launch on Monday 16 April. The campaign has been set up by LGBTQ members of the SWP and their allies in order to bring radical ideas into the current campaign around marriage equality.

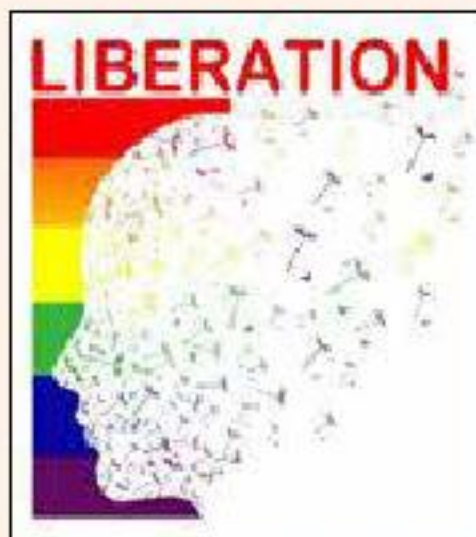
While advocating a yes vote in the upcoming referendum the campaign will also highlight issues which have been largely left out of the debate such as transgender, queer and bi issues.

The launch featured speakers Ailbhe Smyth, Eilís Ní Fhlannagáin and Freddie Trevaskis Hoskin. Ailbhe spoke about the fact that while she herself would not seek

to get married it was vitally important to win the referendum in order to protect families who are extremely vulnerable. But she also stressed we must not assume this will solve all our problems and need to commit to continuing struggle.

Eilís gave an extremely interesting U.S perspective on trans issues talking about the extreme prevalence of hate crimes and mental health issues in the trans community particularly with trans people of colour. She stressed the importance of trans issues to both feminist and LGBTQ struggle pointing out "We get there together or we don't get there at all".

Freddie spoke about how the gender recognition bill unnecessarily medicalises



For marriage equality and beyond.

trans people by forcing them to obtain a doctor's approval and discriminates against trans children until the age of 16. They proceeded to examine the history of marriage and question whether it should continue in a post capitalist world.

The talks were followed by an extremely vibrant discussion from the floor with many people raising concerns about demobilisation after the referendum. It was agreed this was one of the things the campaign was trying to prevent and ought to continue running after the referendum but to bring up such questions beforehand so they would be in peoples heads.

There was also an interesting discussion on how we ought to relate to that marriage

equality campaign and if it was a stepping stone to liberation or almost a side issue. It was agreed that we would advocate a yes vote in the referendum, while also seeking to radicalize the campaign.

The Liberation campaign will publish articles on its wordpress in relation to current events, LGBTQ issues and personal accounts of LGBTQ people. Members will also go to various demos in order to show solidarity and spread ideas on radical LGBTQ politics.

If you wish to get involved with the Liberation campaign look out for them on facebook, check out their wordpress <https://liberationcampaign.wordpress.com/> or Text 0872767405

## Renua Ireland's moment of truth

POLITICIANS are renowned for spin, propaganda, false promises and for downright lies. When elections are in the offing 'Sure, that's what you do,' as Pat Rabbitte put it.

And clearly Renua Ireland's Lucinda Creighton considers herself something of a master of these particular dark arts.

Lucinda's problem and Renua's problem is that essentially they are a policy free-zone. This is because their only real reason for existence is that Lucinda and her pals were kicked out of Fine Gael for refusing to vote, on a right wing bigoted basis, for the woefully inadequate Protection of Life Act last year.

But this doesn't deter Ms Cretin and her DejaVu crew. What they lack in real policies they make up for in spin, PR and empty metaphors. And some of the media, like the Irish Times, lend a helping hand, describing her as 'the luminous woman in white'.

Like almost all politicians hoping for your vote Luminous Lucinda promises 'renewal', 'integrity', 'to keep their promises' and bring in 'fresh blood'.

A good way of testing whether or not a policy or promise means anything is to

### The Contract for a Better Ireland.

*fine gael*

- Free health insurance for all children under 16.
- 2,300 more hospital beds.
- 2,000 more Gardai on the streets.
- Your money spent well, by sacking wasteful Ministers.
- Tougher sentences, tougher bail for criminals.
- Appoint Minister to take charge of immigration.
- Dramatic reduction in Stamp Duty for all buyers.
- Lower income tax for every taxpayer.

For full details, visit [www.FineGael.ie](http://www.FineGael.ie)

Lucinda Creighton and Enda Kenny: lest we forget.



ask if it would be possible to promise the opposite of it. Thus the promise to scrap water charges is at least meaningful because you could also promise to retain them. Similarly a promise to raise corporation tax would be real because an opposing party might pledge not to raise it or even to lower it.

But imagine saying vote for us – we are opposed to renewal and integrity and we are going to break our promises and try to keep out all fresh blood.

Then there was the luminous one's promise to 'govern in sunshine' - as if that meant anything at all. Actually Lucinda if you ever get back into

government you will have govern in rain and cloud – this is Ireland not the Costa del Sol.

One apparent exception to this was the pledge to publish all cabinet minutes within 48 hours. Anyone who knows anything about how politics really works in this and every other country

will know this is a promise made for the breaking.

All that will happen is that when Ms Creighton goes, as she will if she gets the chance, into coalition with Fine Gael, or Fianna Fail for that matter, she will say we wanted to publish the minutes but our coalition partners didn't agree. Or else the minutes will be so censored that publishing them will make no difference.

Lucinda also says Renua stands for 'transparency'. Brilliant! Is there are a party, business or organisation in Ireland that doesn't claim to stand for 'transparency' these days?

As it happens there was one question on which Renua has been totally transparent. Within hours of their launch Renua TD Terence Flanagan was asked on Drive Time what Renua would do for PAYE workers. Answer came there none – total silence bar a shuffling of papers.

This it has to be said was a rare example of political honesty – a real moment of truth.

What will Renua do for the workers? Absolutely nothing!. We couldn't have put it better ourselves.

## 'Bog Standard' Beades and New Land League

Michael Wallace

WHAT happens when you get a tiny bunch of property speculators masquerading as activists standing guard in front of a vast mansion to defend a multi-millionaire property speculator from repossession?

You get the 'New Irish Land League', an ex-billionaire poster child for Celtic Tiger excess and a bizarre character straight out of the pages of a Ross O' Carroll Kelly novel called Jerry Beades.

After a failed Supreme Court attempt to halt a repossession order over unpaid debts of €71 million, Dublin lawyer and property tycoon Brian O' Donnell barricaded himself into his luxury home at Gorse Hill in Killiney. He also has a second home in the UK.

The media descended in a frenzied horde to cover the plight of the super-rich and were confronted by members of the New Land League and their leader, Jerry Beades.

Beades declared himself a 'good friend', representative and defender of the O' Donnell family. This was followed by an interview on the Vincent Browne show where Beades described O'Donnell's seven million euro mansion as 'bog standard' and 'simplicistic.'

This 'bog standard' palace contains an indoor gym and sauna, outdoor tennis court and swimming pool, sits on a 9,000 sq ft property and was once valued at €30 million.

Used as collateral to get multi-million loans for O'Donnell's property empire, it is a perfect example of the greed and arrogance of the Irish rich at the height



Jerry Beades and Gorse Hill: 'It's just a bog-standard home!'

of the Celtic Tiger.

As eager new crusaders for the hard-pressed super-wealthy, Jerry Beades and his 'New Land League' were now centre-stage. But where did they come from?

### Beades and Bertie

Jerry Beades is a millionaire developer and property speculator, a former member of the Fianna Fail national executive and was a close associate of Bertie Aherne when he was

Taoiseach.

He has also run up a string of debts himself from money loaned to him for property development during the Celtic Tiger and owes nearly €20 million to various banks. Little wonder he's sympathetic to the O'Donnells!

In 2013, Beades attempted to set up 'Fianna Fail Nua' (New Fianna Fail) but it didn't take off the ground so he set up the New Land League instead.



At its launch, Beades claimed the New Land League would intervene and mount peaceful pickets at 'any' family home being repossessed by the banks.

"A lot of people are in all sorts of destitution and we aim to be a voice of the people," said the former FF supremo. Incredibly, the New Land League claims to be a successor to the original 19<sup>th</sup> century Land League of Michael Davitt, a radical movement that prevented landlords from evicting

poor tenant farmers from their tiny scraps of land.

Events at Gorse Hill have since exposed this historical link as a fraud..

### Real Victims of Austerity

There are 49,000 families in danger of losing their homes and 1,000 homes a month are facing repossession at the hands of the same banks we bailed out.

Hundreds of families are also being thrown onto the streets in the private rented sector.

While Beades and his buddies focused on defending millionaires, 219 repossession cases appeared before Limerick County Courthouse in a single day.

Among the victims was Ger Lonergan, a father of two that took out a mortgage of 33,000 in 1995 to buy the home he was born in. He reduced the loan to 3,500 by the time he became ill in 2007. Unable to work, he was diagnosed with cancer last October.

Permanent TSB, the 99% government-owned bank, filed for repossession over a 32,000 debt that had arisen as a result of interest and penalties. Mr. Lonergan broke down as he described the horrendous prospect of homelessness for himself, his wife and two children. He begins chemotherapy treatment shortly.

Jerry Beades does not represent Ger Lonergan and the many ordinary victims of austerity.. This Fianna Failer and property developer is part of the problem not the solution. And thanks to their antics in Killiney, we hope Beades and his New Land League's will receive the ridicule they deserve.



# Socialist Worker

## In the North:

# From March 13 to May Day

Shaun Harkin

The March 13 public sector strike succeeded in bringing much of the North to a standstill. Workers joined large rallies in Belfast, Derry, Omagh, Strabane, Enniskillen, Magherafelt, Newry, Dungannon and Cookstown.

The Belfast Telegraph reported 50,000 transport, civil service, education and health workers participated on picket lines and up to 500 schools were closed.

Ambulance workers were blocked from striking when management activated a last minute emergency procedure.

Public sector unions were joined at the marches and rallies by many supporting their strike action including community organisations, private sector union members and students.

The successful strikes and mass mobilisations demonstrate the willingness to challenge austerity and the potential for the struggle against cuts to unite working class communities.

### Sinn Fein U-turn

In the week leading up to the day of action Sinn Fein reversed their position on support for Tory-inspired Welfare Reform. Sinn Fein claim their U-turn results from a failure of "good will" by their DUP Stormont Executive partner.

However, it's very clear Sinn Fein's support for the Stormont House Agreement undercut the party's declared opposition to austerity North and South of the border.

An *Phoblacht*, Sinn Fein's newspaper, claimed the strike and rallies were against 'Westminster' cuts and on of their Belfast City Councillors complained "Some lazy speeches at the rally in Belfast today. Sick of union leaders condemning every political party as if they all share the same ideology and policies..."

Sinn Fein's reversal on Welfare Reform is holding up implementation of the Stormont Agreement for the time-being. However, it's widely expected that a 'deal' will be struck on the Welfare issue.. This will possibly allow Sinn Fein to save some face among those backing the party North and South on the basis of opposition to austerity.

### More than Welfare

Nevertheless, Welfare Reform is simply one aspect of the anti-working class measures included in the Stormont Agreement.

The agreement still includes 20,000 job losses, cuts throughout the North to desperately needed services and the reduction of the Corporate tax rate.

The agreement also lays the basis for the further privatisation of public services and the selling off of public assets.

These policies are all designed to attract corporate investment and force people to accept low-wage zero-contract type employment.

Indeed, this is why the Northern Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions called for across the board strike



March 13 in Belfast

action and declared its outright opposition to the agreement.

This is the first time the NC ICTU has aggressively opposed agreements arranged by Stormont Executive despite being warned it would threaten peace process institutions.

### ICTU mixed messages

YET, the ICTU leadership's mixed messages on Sinn Fein's role will have implications for how the fight develops in the North.

Speaking at the Sinn Fein Ard Fheis in Derry before the March 13th action, ICTU President John Douglas said he looked forward to working with Sinn Fein in government "both North & South" next year.

Trade union leaders should not go easy on political parties who are rhetorically committed to opposing austerity but implement it in practice.

What's clear is that a one-day strike will not be enough to stop Stormont from implementing austerity. Much more strike action and protests are needed. Socialist Worker talked to many workers on picket lines who were clear on their reasons for being on strike but not on what should

come next.

Workers feared there would be a repeat of the 2011 pension struggle when union leaders caved despite a massive strike and a mandate to spread the struggle. The Stormont Executive is committed to years of austerity and their plans will only be derailed if unions escalate plans for action in the coming weeks and months.

### Build the momentum

Public sector workers are under tremendous pressure from staff reductions, speed-ups and constant demonisation.

The campaign for the March 13th Day of Action and the successful strike has lifted the confidence of union members and provided a sense of our collective power. But the momentum must now be built upon.

Further strike action must be planned and there must be a willingness to spread it beyond one-day actions despite scaremongering by Stormont parties and the media.

It's crucial for union leaders to plan action now but we should not wait to start campaigns against the cuts. People Before Profit in Derry has initiated a Day of Action Against Austerity on Saturday April 18th

in the city centre.

The Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO) announced that its members will begin actions 'short of a strike' at the System Level and School Level following the Easter break.

NIPSA's General Council voted to make May 1st the next day of strike action across the North. The proposal for strike action on May Day will now go to NIPSA's executive committee for approval and if passed there onto the ICTU for endorsement. UNISON and other unions are deciding on what to do next in the coming week.

### Protest and politics

We should support all protests against the cuts and back proposals for strike action.

Union members should campaign in their own unions to support campaigns against cuts and to win their unions to taking industrial action.

Individual unions should not be left to fight alone; a coordinated response by all the unions will have the greatest impact and increases our ability to push Stormont to reverse course.

The Westminster election campaign is

now in full swing. By planning action and building on the powerful turn-out on March 13th we can make our anti-austerity message central to political discussions, encourage all those who oppose to feel they can take action, and, to put further pressure on the Stormont Executive.

More so, coordinated mass mobilisations and strike action across the North during the Westminster election will send a message of solidarity to workers and unions in Britain and encourage them to take action against cuts and reject parties embracing austerity politics.

We need to combine industrial and political action against the austerity. People Before Profit Belfast City Councillor, Gerry Carroll, is standing for Westminster in West Belfast on an anti-austerity platform [See interview with Gerry on P.3].

Now we have an opportunity to campaign for strike action and vote against Westminster and Stormont austerity.

**KEEP UP  
THE PRESSURE!  
BUILD THE REVOLT!**