

Socialist Worker

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POBLACHT NA H EIREANN THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT OF THE IRISH SOCIALIST REPUBLIC TO THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND & THE WORLD

BROTHERS AND SISTERS: In the name of the working and oppressed people of all countries and on behalf of the Risen People of all 32 counties of this island, we summon the people of Ireland to join us in our struggle for freedom from the evils of imperialism and capitalism.

We declare that this struggle must be waged first and foremost by the working people themselves— women and men, gay and straight, black and white, united and equal.

Mindful of our people's fight for freedom over many centuries and all those who gave their lives for this cause we declare that final victory can be won only when we control not just our flag and constitution but also our wealth and the fruits of our labour.

We declare the right of the people of Ireland to the collective ownership of the land, banks, natural resources and main industries of Ireland. The long usurpation of that right by a small minority of financiers, speculators, industrialists and magnates both foreign and Irish, is at an end. All major companies and institutions – factories, supermarkets, transport companies and call centres, offices and hospitals, schools and colleges – will be democratically administered by those who work in them, in the context of a national plan approved by the elected representatives of the whole working people in the National People's Assembly. Local communities will be run by democratically elected local representatives.

All elected representatives and state officials will be paid the average workers' wage and be subject to recall by their electors.

All citizens of the Socialist Republic are guaranteed a basic living wage and a home. None will suffer poverty. Likewise none will earn above a certain reasonable maximum or be allowed to accumulate vast riches on the backs of the people. All education and health services will be provided free and paid for by general taxation and none will be able to buy advancement or privileged treatment.

Racism, sexism, homophobia, religious sectarianism and all forms of discrimination are deemed unacceptable in the Socialist Republic. We recognise the specific ethnic identity of the Travelling People and will work to overcome the long oppression this indigenous minority have suffered.

We recognise and actively support the right of women to bodily autonomy and to choose freely whether or not to bear children. Mindful of our State's shameful past in this regard, we pledge – again - to cherish all children equally, in deeds not just in words. We will do this based on the principle that all who live here belong here.

We will begin the construction of this new society here and now in the 32 counties of Ireland but know that it can be completed only in alliance with the working and oppressed people of Europe and the world. In this endeavour we face the bitter hostility of the national and global 1%, the super-rich and their political agents; our survival will depend on the solidarity of the international workers' movement.

We know also that with the whole of humanity we face the immense challenge of catastrophic climate change. The Irish Socialist Republic pledges to play its full part in the necessary reduction of carbon emissions and the transition to renewable energy but this problem cannot be resolved in or by any one country. Because the climate crisis is an integral part of a society that puts profit before people, it will fall to the international working class to take the lead in ensuring the future of mankind by taking power into its own hands.

The working people of Ireland are doing this. We call on the people of all countries to join us in ending capitalist rule and building a society free from all exploitation, war and oppression.

Workers of the World Unite!

LUAS workers fight on; stop Transdev scabbing

Owen McCormack

As Socialist Worker goes to press the Luas pay fight has entered a crucial phase. After a series of magnificent one and two day stoppages drivers are set to escalate their fight as management continue to ignore their demands or even negotiate any pay rise outside of productivity deals or general inflation.

Drivers' wages have stagnated for years while increased passenger numbers and new rosters for extended services and routes have seen large increases in Transdev revenues. While the company continues to play the poor mouth and points to a slight loss in last year's profits this is largely an accountancy fiction and resulted from changes in how its accounts were audited and how its relationship with the Railway Procurement Agency (RPA) is recorded.

In 2014 profits were €1.39m while they also paid a dividend to their French parent company of over €2.8 million between



2013/14.

Transdev's Gerry Madden has taken a tough stance in public, refusing to negotiate any pay rise outside of a general productivity deal. One LUAS driver told SW he is trying to grind down the various grades at the

negotiations, pretending to give one grade some crumbs, but really conceding nothing.

However drivers should not be fooled; Madden and Transdev are feeling the heat after the stoppages. While the media have predictably rowed in with management it is

also clear that the threat of an all-out strike and the continued mood of resistance among drivers has management rattled.

This partially explains Madden's attempt to operate a scab service with private coaches on Patrick's Day. Madden had initially dismissed the importance of Patrick's day and the two strike days over the Easter by announcing "they are of no commercial concern to us".

However his tune has changed since and he now paints the scab operation as an attempt to save the day for "families and children". At the time of going to print, Socialist Worker is uncertain if this blatant strike breaking operation will actually be attempted. If it does, all trade unionists should support the LUAS driver's strike and attend a solidarity picket where these scab buses are operating.

This is an attempt to break the spirit of the strikers and set a precedent that Transdev and other transport operators can use.

Scandalously the scabbing operation must have been sanctioned by the Government agency, the NTA (National Transport Agency). The NTA must licence any public

transport service and thus this attempted to break an official strike has to have been sanctioned at senior level at the department of Transport.

This has enormous implications for Dublin Bus, Bus Eireann and DART workers, all of whom have separate pay disputes looming this year. The NTA is a neoliberal agency committed to competition and driving workers bargaining positions down. If it succeeds in undermining the LUAS workers' fight it will bring these tactics to all future transport disputes. This is why all CIE workers should stand together with their LUAS colleagues in the weeks ahead.

More generally the clear attempt to break the strike shows the importance of this pay dispute to all workers.

Employers and the Government are frightened that an example of a successful pay dispute might inspire thousands of other workers who have suffered from the last decade of austerity, stagnant wages and stealth tax rises. The LUAS workers' fight is a crucial battle for all workers.

Cadbury's: Outsourcing stopped but workers wanted more



Marnie Holborow

The strike at Mondelez (formerly Cadbury's) plant in Coolock, Dublin, forced the management to withdraw their attempt to outsource 17 stores staff.

The 350 production workers at the plant staged a strong picket on Monday and Tuesday 7 and 8 March. SIPTU and UNITE workers stood together, supported by staff gathered at the gates, and brought to a halt the 24-hour production line.

Only management passed the picket line and, with no workers, nothing moved in the factory. All deliveries from the Cadbury's chocolate crumb plant in Rathmore Kerry, were cancelled. As one worker said afterwards, the strike showed that they could deliver a 100% effective picket and stand up to management's long running attempts to attack workers' conditions.

Pulling the strings

The picket was called off on the Tuesday after unions and management at the Workplace Relations Committee had come up with a deal. It was clear that the outsourcing had been stopped. But the workers in the plant were left in the dark as to what else the deal contained. As we go to press, the unions have called a full meeting in Liberty Hall for Saturday March 12 recommending acceptance of

the deal.

Management's plan for the Coolock plant was to introduce new chocolate making technology and concentrate on Twirl, Flake and Dairy Milk brands for sale in Ireland and for export. They wanted to slim down production to maximize Mondelez's already massive profit margins.

Their proposals involved many changes to existing work practices. Changes to shift working, for example, would involve the evening shift now finishing at 11pm instead of 10pm, making getting home more difficult for those workers who do not live locally. These aspects of the deal will remain in place.

The company appeared to offer a sweetener of a pay deal of 1.5% over two years – but this was well below the private sector norm. The union agreed to this and further cost cuts in the store area, provided that the company dropped its outsourcing plans. In playing outsourcing off against other issues, the union now finds itself swallowing claw backs in conditions that many workers are not happy with.

Over the years, Cadbury workers have seen their numbers cut by three quarters, increased casualization, and felt the threat of closure hanging over them. During this dispute, the management in Zurich threatened that they would leave and take the production to Poland.

Union officials appeared to accept

that the firm's viability was under threat. Siptu Official, Gerry McCormack, while opposing any outsourcing, stressed that the main fear was whether the company had a long term commitment to the facility.

New machinery

The company has invested in new machinery in the Coolock plant – not a sign that they are prepared to up and leave in a hurry. The restructuring plan of the company was to pave the way for a €11.7 million investment in new chocolate making technology. Moving location is costly and disruptive for corporations. And while workers were picketing the company, with valuable assets inside, the company was not in a position to dictate terms.

There are further battles ahead. Craft workers fear that in the restructuring their work will be outsourced and downgraded. The company has already proposed that the grades of fitter and electrician would be merged into a new Maintenance Technician, with different terms and conditions. The (misnamed) Labour Court, under deputy chairman Brendan Hayes, formerly of SIPTU, ruled in favour of this. Again the union has insisted that outsourcing is the main threat, and indicated that it is willing to negotiate on terms and conditions.

Workplace control

With the WRC intervention, the decision about whether to continue the strike was taken out of the workers' hands. Some workers felt that they were being held over a barrel by management and that the WRC was playing into Mondelez's hands. If an emergency meeting of the workers had been called while the picket was on, everyone could have agreed democratically whether the deal was acceptable.

The strength of strike showed that outsourcing could be stopped. The strike presented a real opportunity to redress the balance in favour of basic union rights.

But organising a strong, accountable union committee, answerable only to the workers they represent – not to Kieran Mulvey nor official negotiators – will be key to ensuring that workers' rights are fully defended at Cadbury's in the future.

SIPTU's Labour shame



Jack and Joan

Owen McCormack

Many SIPTU members will have been outraged by Jack O'Connor's call to vote Labour after five years of cuts and betrayals. O'Connor was reiterating his old theme of how bad things would have been without the moderating influence of Labour on their Fine Gael coalition partners.

To SIPTU members this is a familiar song: every privatisation, every attack on an existing right, every step away from fighting any issue is justified with a shrug of shoulders and an "it would be worse if it was FG on their own".

SIPTU officials have justified deals that have seen the privatisation of the remaining state holdings in Aer Lingus, allowed for up to 10% of semi state bus companies to be privatised and urged moderation on workers facing unscrupulous attacks by greedy employers – all by telling them how much worse it could be if Labour weren't in the corridors of power.

O'Connor told us to vote for Joan Burton because Fine Gael are so terrible, while Burton told us to vote for Fine Gael for stability – this was the logic of O'Connor's defeatism.

Cheap labour

SIPTU officials welcomed cheap and slave labour schemes like JobBridge and Gateway, that are often used to replace unionised and pensionable public sector jobs with forced labour from unemployed youth.

SIPTU is committed to holding a review of its connection and financial links with Labour in a special 2017 conference. Members should not wait until then to voice their opposition to O'Connor's call to vote for Labour and his shameful cover for their policy on water charges and property taxes. All members should be encouraged to fill in the opt-out form to insure their fees do not make their way to the party of Burton and Kelly.

Claims and reality

Jack O'Connor "They underplayed their achievements in government, they achieved more than any other social democratic party in the same period

against worst odds"

"There are 1.3 million people experiencing deprivation in Ireland, an increase of 215,000 since this Government came to office in 2011. There are 755,570 living in poverty in Ireland. This is a rise of 55,000 since this Government came into office. Over 230,000 of these are children". Social Justice Ireland. 2015.

Of the €21 billion in extra cash from the so called recovery about €12 billion, more than half, has gone to the top 10% of earners... Two thirds of it - €14 billion - has gone to people who earn more than €70,000, despite the fact that they make up less than 15% of Revenue's income tax cases. From 2011 to 2016 the Top 1% went from having 9% of all income to having 11% of all income – a gain of more than 20%." TASC 2016 Budget analysis

Jack O'Connor "Joan Burton's record is enormous in social welfare... I commend Burton for strengthening workers' rights; and protecting core welfare payments."

Among Joan's proud achievements are; ■ Child benefits cut (2012), further €10 cut in 2013; more cuts to child benefit for third and fourth child (2014).

■ Disability allowance for new claimants cut by €88 per week; respite care grant cut (2013); bereavement grant cut. ■ Minimum contribution from single tenants goes from €6 to €30 per week; winter fuel allowance cut by six weeks. ■ Huge cuts in back to school allowance. ■ Duration of job seekers benefit cut by three months (2013).

■ Changes in qualification criteria for contributory pensions making them inaccessible for future generations. ■ Increase in the age of retirement to 66, and eventually 68. Many pensioners will have to apply for jobseekers allowance and face a cut in income from the pension they should have got of €230 to the allowance of €188. ■ Cuts to maternity benefit so that with other cuts, mothers of newborns see income fall from €7,000 to €3,500. ■ A reduced €100 jobseekers rate to those aged up to 24 and a reduced €144 rate to 25-year-olds.

It's time to cut the union link to Labour.

NURSES – DEAL IS NO SOLUTION

Nurse Jo Tuily

Despite a 92% rejection by the INMO Emergency Department nurse members of the proposals agreed back in December by the WRC and the INMO Leadership, the INMO Leadership put essentially the same agreement out to a second ballot.

Amid much anger, frustration and weariness it was accepted on

the second occasion.

This agreement will only marginally the situation in the Emergency Departments, and not for very long either.

Essentially, it simply pushes the overflow out of the E/D up on to already full wards and forces cancellation of elective procedures and surgery which will add to even longer waiting lists.

The fact is that without

additional capacity and additional nurses to deal with that capacity the E/D crisis cannot be resolved.

The Lansdowne Road Agreement has tied the union in knots.

Unless we break from that we will not be able to mount the serious struggle required to deal with the core problems in what is an imploding Health Service.

Election 2016 – the radical left arrives

Kieran Allen

The general election has thrown the political establishment into a panic. Despite a highly orchestrated propaganda campaign about Ireland's success story, the people delivered a massive blow to the pro-austerity agenda.

The FG-Labour government was heavily defeated. Fine Gael returned to the voting levels they won before the 2011 election. The Labour Party has been reduced to virtually the same size as the AAA-PBP group. The right wing Renua party, which was assiduously promoted by the media, has collapsed.

Some have claimed that the main feature of the election has been the resurgence of Fianna Fail. However this is to ignore the larger picture. The general trajectory is the decline of the two main civil war parties and a sharpened contest between them for who will represent the interests of the elite.

Fianna Fail increased their votes by 6.9% but this was from an extremely low base. The party has come nowhere near to the domination that it exercised on the Irish political landscape for decades. Talk of Fianna Fail being part of the Irish DNA is plain silly.

The modest growth in Fianna Fail support arose from a number of factors. First, they gained primarily in the rural areas where more traditional views are dominant. Second, they adopted a fake left rhetoric and attached FG-Labour from the vantage point of 'fairness'. In some constituencies they even mimicked the left by producing posters 'Abolish the Water Charges- Vote Fianna Fail'.

Third, the election was characterized by a high degree of uncertainty as approximately 20% of voters made their mind up on the day before the election. Michael Martin did far better in the election debates. But he also gained a hearing from those sections of workers who desperately wanted change but who had not yet the confidence to support either Sinn Fein or the radical left. This lack of confidence arose the fact that there was a pause in the anti-water charges campaign and workers have not yet entered major battles with their unions.

One of the key features of the election was the under-performance of Sinn Fein in terms of the poll figures. Throughout the course of the year Sinn Fein appeared to be getting 20% and over in the opinion polls and there was some talk of them re-



AAA-PBP pre-election press conference. Left to right: Brid Smith, Ruth Coppinger, Mick Barry, Paul Murphy, Richard Boyd Barrett, Gino Kenny. All are now TDs.

placing Fianna Fail. When it came to the votes, however, Sinn Fein scored 13.8% of the vote – a very modest increase of 3.9%.

One reason for the gap was the ferocious campaign mounted by the political elite and the media to attack the party. The judgment issued against Thomas Murphy for tax evasion timed for the day of the election itself was an example of the approach. However the media attacks alone do not account for the gap.

During the election campaign, Sinn Fein positioned themselves as a responsible party of government with Keynesian style policies. They did not advocate a wealth tax; they refused to endorse the idea of a Robin Hood tax on financial speculation; they did not demand a bigger tax take from corporations. Instead, they accepted the parameters invented by the Department of Finance about a 'fiscal space' being available which allowed for some relief from austerity without attacking the rich.

This concept rested on an assumption of continual economic growth and took no account of the instability in the world economy. It was used as a mechanism by the establishment to make election promises.

Shift

Sinn Fein's embrace of the concept signaled a shift away from a fundamental re-distribution of wealth.

Despite an attempt to present themselves as a 'party of government', Sinn Fein is identified in the minds of many workers as a party that is effectively controlled by the old army comrades of the IRA. Many do not consider this an appropriate vehicle for left wing policies in the 21st century and this gave the political elite a space to attack Adams in particular.

The advance of the radical left was evident in this election. AAA-PBP gained six seats. While this is modest, it needs to be set in the context of a new challenge emerging

from the softer left Social Democrats and a sustained media attempt to present the radical left as simply the support chorus for Sinn Fein.

The growth of AAA-PBP is also accompanied by a welcome increase in the number of genuine left independents like Catherine Connolly, Seamus Healy and Thomas Pringle who often saw off a challenge from Sinn Finn to win their positions. These will be joined by other genuine left independents like Clare Daly and Joan Collins and as a result there will be a strong left voice that is distinct from Sinn Fein in the coming Dail.

Overall, the decision of both the AAA and PBP to come together as a joint entity for this election was a key initiative. It meant that the radical left had a national presence in the election. Both organizations were able to more effectively promote an argument about taxing the rich and repealing the 8th amendment.

In the coming months, People Before

Profit will target the political establishment as our main enemy. We will advocate a boycott of water charges and will be demanding that the ninety or so deputies who promised to abolish water charges stick to their pledges. We will work with others in Right2Change to propose the abolition of water charges.

But People Before Profit will not be pressurized by union leaders to act as a support chorus for Sinn Fein. We shall instead seek greater unity to create a stronger left beyond Sinn Fein. We shall also be urging unions to move into real opposition to the 'Fresh Start' austerity programme in the North – which Sinn Fein actively supports.

A new chapter has opened in Irish politics. The political caste which dominated the country for decades has been forced into doing a macabre dance to see who will be the dominant partner in an informal alliance. And the radical left has finally arrived as a small but important factor in helping to shape events.

Gino Kenny TD Raising the Flag of Resistance: from Ireland to Palestine

One of the highlights of the General Election was the victory of Gino Kenny for AAA-PBP in Dublin Mid-West. At the declaration of his election he raised the Palestinian flag in a stirring gesture of international solidarity.

The video of this went viral in Palestine itself and has had over 88,000 views. Gino has been receiving solidarity greetings from occupied Palestine. Socialist Worker interviewed Gino about the significance of his election.

SW: What does your election victory and the success of the radical left in general mean for working class people here in Clondalkin and also across the country?

Gino: "It's given a lot of people confidence and lifted people's spirits. It's good for working people that there are representatives there that won't sell them out."

"Over the last two years, People Before Profit have been at the forefront of the anti-water charges movement and people gained a huge amount of respect for us as a Party and for the AAA as well. It was very important that we were there with the people."

SW: What were the most important issues that you believe galvanised people in this election campaign?

Gino: "The abolition of the water charges, housing; the USC; health, education and public services were all very central."

"Water charges especially were the undoing of the present government who kept going on about the recovery and 'fiscal space' which had no meaning for ordinary working people."

"Over the last seven years public services have also been eroded which

angered communities."

SW: Working class communities that had traditionally low turnouts had huge turnouts this time around. In Neilstown the turnout was 63% compared to just 17% in the 2002 general election. What does this mean in terms of harnessing that energy, organising mass campaigns and building the radical Left going forward?

Gino: "There is huge potential now for a grassroots movement of the radical Left in working class communities. And that's what we're going to try and build over the next period."

"It's not just about one individual getting elected. It's about collectivising that solidarity through People Power and putting it into a political force. It's about people coming together and feeling empowered by their own actions."

SW: Immediately following your victory, you raised the Palestinian flag and have received a lot of international attention and support for this gesture. What does that symbolise for you personally?

Gino: "The Palestinian flag is a flag of solidarity with the people of Palestine and resistance to the ongoing siege in Gaza."

"If this gesture can give even a small amount of encouragement to people resisting brutal oppression and occupation at the hands of Israel, it would be fantastic. I wanted to send a message to people in Palestine that your struggle is our struggle."

"It also gives me great satisfaction to see the pro-Israel lobby that included the likes of Labour's Joanna Tuffy, out of parliament, and there are now more than 60 TDs sympathetic to the Palestinian

cause. That can put the racist state of Israel under serious pressure and help us take action against it."

SW: What does it mean to be a revolutionary in the Dail?

Gino: "We will use our positions in the Dail to mobilise as many people as possible on the street and that's our job as revolutionaries."

"Any social movement that arises, when People Power bubbles up to the surface, we'll be there to support it inside and outside parliament. That's what our politics are all about. When working people are in struggle, we'll be with them all the way."

Presentation

On 10 March, his first day in the Dail, Gino was presented with a Keffiyeh, the Palestinian scarf which is a symbol of Palestinian resistance, by the Irish Palestine Solidarity Campaign (IPSC). Fatin al-Tamimi, Chair of IPSC said: "Thousands of young and old Palestinians have spent months and years in Israeli jails to keep the flag high, to fight for justice and an end to the occupation. On his election, Gino Kenny raised the Palestinian flag to show the world his solidarity with our just cause."

"On behalf of the Palestinian community in Ireland, and in Palestine, thank you for this show of solidarity. We hope you will be a voice in the Dail for the voiceless Palestinians here in Ireland and will support our efforts and those of the IPSC to end Israel's crimes and achieve justice for Palestine."

"We know you will continue the support that People Before Profit has consistently given to the Palestinian cause."



IPSC chair, Fatin al-Tamimi, presents Gino Kenny with Palestinian scarf from her hometown of Hebron

#socialism 1.01

John Moynaux

What is Fascism?

Is Trump a fascist? It is a reasonable question to ask given that Trump is a right wing racist, misogynistic, homophobic, imperialist bigot and bully and that there is also no shortage of people willing to call him a fascist.

In actual fact he's not: he's a right wing racist, misogynistic, homophobic, imperialist bigot and bully, but not a fascist – at least not yet.

Understanding why this is so helps us to understand what fascism was and what it is today – the better to recognise it and defeat it whenever it appears.

Fascism was a mass counterrevolutionary movement that arose

not fascist.

The USA today, despite Obama, is deeply racist as it has been since its foundation (witness the regular police murder of black people), very sexist in many ways, nationalistic and imperialist and has a horribly brutal penal system; it is not a fascist state.

What distinguished fascism historically was that it was a movement, largely based on the lower middle classes enraged by the economic crisis, which existed both within and outside the 'normal' framework of elections and parliamentary politics and which could be, and was, used as a counter-revolutionary

power, not just by their own strength, but with the support of the capitalist class, and in power they governed in the interests of that class.

This brings us back to Trump. Trump is not (yet) a fascist, not because he is some kind of liberal but because he hasn't sought to organise an extra-parliamentary movement on the streets which can take on the left and the workers. He could do this in the future but he hasn't done it yet.

Neither has Nigel Farage of UKIP in Britain, who is also a far right racist populist, but not a fascist.

However, this doesn't mean there is no fascist



in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s. It took power first in Italy (where the name 'fascism' came from) led by Mussolini, then in Germany (where it was known as Nazism) and then in Austria, Spain, Portugal and elsewhere.

Fascist movement of various degrees of strength arose in most countries in this period, including France, Britain and Ireland.

Nazis

Racism, nationalism, sexism, homophobia and authoritarianism were all features of fascist ideology – in the case of the Nazis anti-semitism played a crucial role – but they were not its defining characteristics and they are much more widespread than fascism.

Let's be clear – all these reactionary ideological themes have been around a lot longer than fascism.

Victorian England, for example, was very racist, nationalistic, sexist and homophobic and, obviously, highly imperialist; it was not fascist. Ireland in the 1950s was certainly conservative, nationalist, racist, sexist and homophobic; it was

fighting force against 'communists', 'socialists' and the labour movement as a whole.

Regimes

What distinguished the fascist regimes was that they dispensed with parliamentary democracy and crushed and broke up all forms of independent opposition, especially opposition from the workers' movement – trade unions, socialist parties and the like. It was these characteristics, not just reactionary ideas or even extreme brutality (which sadly has been a feature of the whole history of class society), that made fascism so useful to the capitalist class in times of economic and political crisis and such a mortal threat to the working class and the left – literally a matter of life and death.

It was also a key feature of these fascist movements that they arose mainly from the lower middle class who were enraged at their treatment by the banks and big capital and so deployed a certain anti-banker, anti-capitalist rhetoric.

But they came to

threat. Unfortunately across Europe there are a number of significant fascist movements and parties which have grown during the austerity years: they include Golden Dawn in Greece, Jobbik in Hungary, and the Front National in France.

In Britain there was the BNP but they have largely fallen apart. In addition there are many smaller groups and movements, like the EDL and various Pegida outfits who would like to be able to establish serious fascist parties. So there is no room for complacency.

Combating fascism is a vital task for socialists and the left.

It requires both mobilising against them on the streets and building a major challenge to austerity and the system from the left.

In Ireland there has been no significant fascist movement since Eoin O'Duffy's Blue Shirts in the 1930s. We need to keep it that way.

That's why the highly effective mobilisation against Pegida Ireland before the election was an important victory for the left.

Repeal the 8th – v

Maeve McGrath

Amidst the debates on potential government coalitions, emerged the idea that we need social democratic parties – such as the Labour Party – in order to bring about progressive social policy. This is not true.

It was Fianna Fáil who brought in the 1947 Health Act which introduced universal health care.

Provision of basic services such as these are legislated for only when the need for them becomes dire enough or when people get out on the streets and demand change – such as the protest involving 30,000 pensioners in October 2008 in response to a threat to withdraw medical cards.

The recent election represented a massive blow to anti-choice individuals and parties.

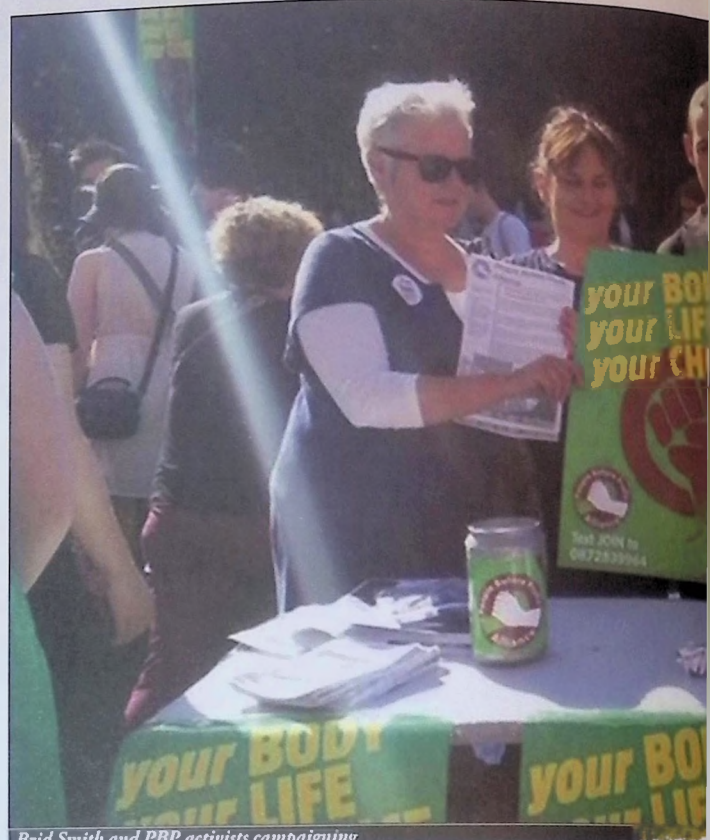
The decimation of Renua is especially indicative of this, as rejection of bodily autonomy was implied in the foundation of their party when Creighton established the group as a direct response to the Protection of Life During Pregnancy Bill in 2013.

Gains

Pro Choice activists made gains in the February election – with Clare Daly retaining her seat and Brid Smith winning a seat in Dublin South Central – to name just two.

Speaking to Socialist Worker, Clare Daly said:

"As it's shaping up the possibility of a Fianna Fáil/Fine Gael partnership is probably the worst combination for pushing repeal. That said, the momentum is accelerating with the latest Amnesty Red C poll demonstrating that across all social



Brid Smith and PBP activists campaigning

strata and all regions as well as ages; people believe that abortion provision must be widened in Ireland.

The same poll revealed that people had least trust in politicians on this matter.

Therefore, the reality is that it doesn't matter who is in government, the external pressure from the population at home, combined with international human rights pressure abroad; means this issue will remain cen-

Fianna Fáil – have the

Liam O'Neill

Fianna Fáil's resurgence in the recent election surprised many who thought that the kicking it got at the last election would be the start of the end for it, that the party would be reduced to a small irrelevant rump.

However this resurgence should not be exaggerated. The party's percentage of the vote went from 17.5% in 2011 to 24.3%. But 24.3% is still the second lowest percentage it has ever got and a very long way from the close to 45-50% that it used to get for most of its history.

Fianna Fáil has been the dominant party in Irish politics since the foundation of the state. From the formation of the first Fianna Fáil government on 9 March 1932 until the election of 2011, the party was in power for sixty one of seventy nine years. Its longest continuous period in office was fifteen years and eleven months (March 1932–February 1948).

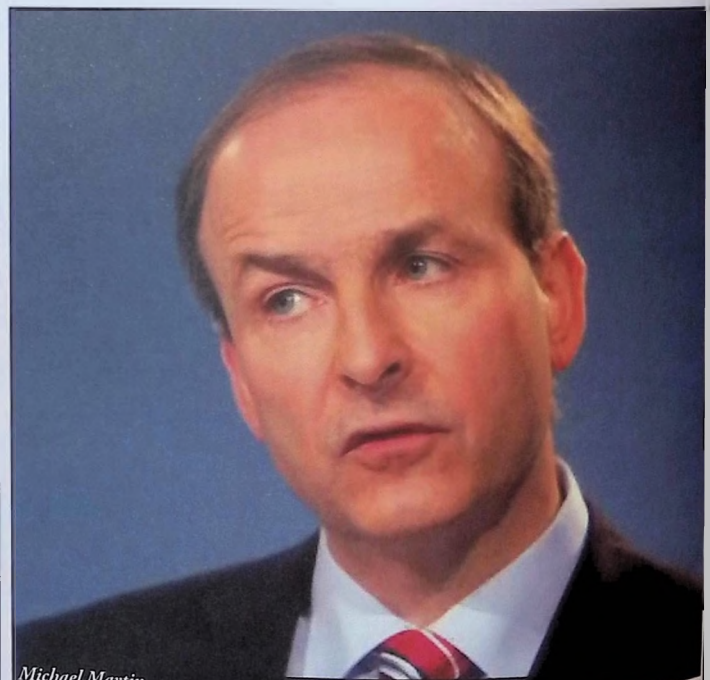
Its single longest period out of office, in the 20th century, was four years and four months (March 1973–July 1977). Seven of the party's eight leaders have served as Taoiseach.

Fianna Fáil is not a party of the left, or a party that could be regarded as progressive. Certainly in the recent election, it presented itself as being somewhat on the left, a party of 'fairness', as opposed to a rightwing conservative Fine Gael. But this was just a manoeuvre to win votes.

Limits

It called for the abolition of Irish Water, a major housing programme and other reforms. However they were reforms with strict limits.

When pushed in relation to those who have been boycotting their water bills, they said that there would be no refund to those who had paid the bills



Michael Martin

and in any case people should pay their legitimate bills.

For decades FF was the A Team of Irish capitalism and the Irish 1%. If in 2011 it was relegated to B Team status it didn't stop being a thoroughly pro-establishment, pro-capitalist party.

There has been much talk about the end of Civil War politics.

But it is important to remember that the historical Civil War split did represent different interests, different views as to how, and in whose interest, the 26 county state established after the Treaty in 1921 should be managed.

It was never, despite the rhetoric, about a united Ireland. Essentially Fine Gael was the party of the larger farmers

and established business, and Fianna Fáil the party of small farmers and those who wanted to develop an independent capitalist economy.

De Valera

But from the very start they tried to appeal to the working class and the rural poor. In 1926 De Valera pledged to 'complete land purchase, break up the large grazing ranches, and distribute them as economic farms amongst young farmers and agricultural labourers, such as those compelled at present to emigrate.'

De Valera cancelled the fees Irish farmers were paying the British government in compensation for buying out the landlords. Left wing republicans

women can't wait



re stage, until women's lives, health and choices are respected.

The election of outspoken pro-choice TDs across the political spectrum will put more pressure and focus for change, than

having Labour in government ever did."

The discussion regarding repealing the 8th amendment to the constitution has allowed some politicians – such as Roisin Shorthall – to suggest that we need an

alternative set of guidelines regulating women's bodies in place, before we delete the line from our constitution which reduces women's right to life to equal status with a foetus.

This is a strategy designed only to slow progress, not to ensure the safety of the pregnant individual.

Priority

On this, newly elected TD for People Before Profit, Brid Smith stated:

"Abortion rights are an absolute priority. Talking about setting up commission is a delaying tactic.

It is not acceptable that women have been forced to wait thirty years. The substantive issue should be brought to the people through a referendum within first few months of the next government's term.

After repealing that amendment, abortion would no longer be illegal, but a matter for the relevant health services. They will have to regulate abortion based on good practice and the mother's choice and health."

This amendment is also tying the hands of health care professionals when making decisions about routine procedures such as timing inductions.

An array of grouping have emerged – such as "Doctors for Choice" and "Midwives for Choice", which highlights the pressure the state has put on front line health workers by bringing in legislation which undermines an individual's bodily autonomy.

It is too late for Savita Halappanavar and Ann Lovett, however it is not too late for current and future generations and it is imperative that we continue to use people power to pressurise the government to strike this odious amendment from our constitution.

ey really changed?



Charlie Haughey and Bertie Aherne

led by Peadar O'Donnell had organized a growing campaign against these land annuities. De Valera successfully outflanked the republicans. From now on, the farmers would pay the annuities to the Irish, not the British government.

But this appeal to the 'poor' was combined with a craving for respectability. The Eucharistic Congress, a major catholic international gathering, was held in Dublin soon after the election of the first Fianna Fáil government.

The anti-Treatyites had been excommunicated by the Catholic bishops. The congress provided de Valera with the opportunity to demonstrate his Catholic bona fides and respectability

and to forge his alliance with John Charles McQuaid, the very conservative future archbishop of Dublin.

Fianna Fail used certain real, if limited reforms, such as the house building programmes of the thirties and sixties, to win substantial working class support. But it subordinated that working class base to total support for system.

At the same time it built a huge network of cronies stretching from bankers and developers to the GAA, which enabled it control vast areas of Irish society.

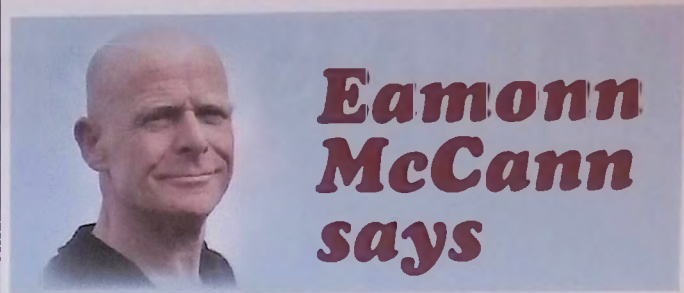
The crash of 2008 and the austerity that followed exposed and disrupted much of that network and eliminated a lot of FF's working class support,

especially in Dublin.

But, particularly, in rural areas the network was by no means entirely uprooted. So its not surprising it could make a small comeback. But no one should be deceived.

Fianna Fail may have a more presentable public face with Michael Martin and slightly more 'left' sounding promises but it not really changed its spots.

It remains the party of Charlie Haughey, Bertie Aherne and Bryan Cowan, of Ben Dunne, Seán Dunne and Michael 'fingers' Fingleton; the party that brought us the property bubble, Anglo, the Galway tent and wrecked the country.



Eamonn McCann says

Hilary Clinton and Gordon Gekko

In her concession speech following defeat to Bernie Sanders in the New Hampshire Democratic primary last month, Hillary Clinton pledged to keep fighting to ensure that "Wall Street can never be allowed to once again threaten Main Street."

Sanders seemed rattled by the remark and no wonder. It was Sanders, not Clinton, who had been hammering away at Wall Street throughout the primary campaign and pointing to his rival's close relationship with banks, hedge funds and the like. What's more, the pledge that "Wall Street can never be allowed to once again threaten Main Street" was shamelessly lifted virtually word-for-word from Sanders' stock stump speech.

Then there's the fact that Clinton and her husband have had their snouts deep in the Wall Street trough for years. The money which the pair has raked in since leaving the White House in 2001 has far exceeded what any previous president or presidential couple has managed to coax from the coffers of the one percent. Take Goldman Sachs, the very epitome of Gordon Gekko's "Greed is Good." If clipping the wings of Wall Street is the aim, bringing the most rapacious of the

wearing a Louis Vuitton suit - but somewhat inappropriate for a six-year member of the board of Walmart, which can sell cheap clothes at knock-down prices by paying zero-hours women workers minimum wage and refusing to recognise their unions.

Clinton supported the Iraq war, now says that was a mistake, has conducted a "love affair" with Israel, backing its imposition of an apartheid system, has characterised the cut-throat Saudi Arabian dictatorship as "a valued friend," etc., etc.

Black lives

Once the Black Lives Matter movement emerged, she claimed to worry about "biased policing and mass incarceration."

But one measure which contributed mightily to the mushroom growth of the prisoner population has been the policy of "three strikes and you're out", under which huge numbers of mainly black, mainly young offenders have been given horrendously long stretches for minor offences. In 1994, as her husband mooted a bill along these lines, Clinton told a cheering police audience: "We will be able to say, loudly and clearly, that for repeat,



Hilary Clinton with Goldman Sachs CEO Lloyd Blankfein in 2014

vulture capitalists down to earth would be an obvious place to start.

Goldman Sachs

Goldman Sachs was famously described by Matt Taibbi in Rolling Stone as "a great vampire squid wrapped around the face of humanity, relentlessly jamming its blood funnel into anything that smells like money."

Between 2004 and 2013 (when she decided to have a tilt at the presidency herself) the Clintons picked up \$2,225,000 for 12 speeches to Goldman Sachs executives and friends.

Whatever she said to the bloodsuckers we can assume it wasn't a threat to nationalise them if they didn't change their ways.

In addition to the huge cash-wad from Goldman Sachs, the Clintons trousered \$1,915,000 from UBS, \$350,000 from Morgan Stanley, £1,300,000 from Bank of America, \$1,255,000 from Deutsche Bank, etc., etc.

In all, the Clintons made 729 speeches between 2001 and 2013 at an average of \$210,000 a pop. There are strike partnerships in the Premier League earning less.

Clinton presents herself as a doughty fighter for the plain people when her behaviour suggests that she's more intent on lining the pockets of her Louis Vuitton suit than lifting the poor out of poverty.

Nothing necessarily wrong with

violent, criminal offenders - three strikes and you're out. We are tired of putting you back in through the revolving door."

Despite all this, the mainstream pundits all seem to assume that Clinton is headed for the Democratic nomination.

Her flip-flops, dishonesties and insatiable hunger for money haven't opened her campaign. How come?

In "My Turn" - just published in the US - Doug Henwood says: "The case for Hillary boils down to this: she has experience, she's a woman and it's her turn."

It is understandable that after 240 years of male presidents, millions of voters, and not just women, reckon it's well past time for a woman, just as it was well past time for an African-American in 2008.

But black net-worth has declined relative to white wealth under Obama. Whatever gains black Americans have made have resulted from their own struggles.

The same will be true for women under Clinton.

The idea that women in the US have a duty of some sort to cheer "Hillary" represents one of the mechanisms whereby "identity" is used to envelop class politics into the mainstream where the interests of the vultures overwhelms the interests of working-class women and men.

This is the role that money-grubbers like the Clintons have always played.

NAMA is a scandal, North and South!



Above: NAMA luxury property at Thormanby Hills; Below: A new landlord of sorts - Cerberus Capital Management

Owen McCormack

The recent BBC NI documentary on the sale of a huge swathe of NAMA owned property in the North confirmed the scale of corruption involved in the after-effects of Ireland's property bubble crash.

It also highlighted the rich pickings that a class of well-connected politicians, legal firms and property industry insiders are making from that crash.

Independent TD Mick Wallace

had already unveiled much of the documentary's core information: a sweetheart deal that handed a giant US equity fund a massive loan book of properties held by NAMA. Cerberus buys the loan book at a fraction of the original costs, then sells on (often back to the original property developers) again for a larger fraction of the original loans price, netting a huge profit on the backs of the Irish state and its workers.

One estimate is that the US fund Cerberus has acquired over €20 billion in property debt and



is raking a profit that equates to a 18% return annually, a huge and lucrative profit margin. As well as securing a huge property portfolio in the North, Cerberus recently got an equally impressive one South of the border.

This was despite being investigated amid allegations of bungling politicians and NAMA officers millions. The outfit is famous for its creativity in avoiding tax but Ireland's lax tax regime is in fact advertised openly when the state is trying to encourage such firms to "invest" here.

While many commentators and NAMA press spokespersons have been keen to suggest this corruption is a northern problem which has nothing to do with the agency, the Spotlight documentary highlights the fact that corruption has been at the very heart of the entire NAMA operation since its birth.

The agency owned thousands of housing units and property sites that could have ended the housing nightmare facing over 100,000 families. Instead its remit was to reflate the property bubble as quickly as possible and attract vulture funds from around the globe to pick up bargains.

NAMA has systematically gone about selling prime sites and units at secret knock down prices to both global and home-grown property companies. Often former NAMA officials have set up new companies such as Hibernia RETT (Real Estate Investment Trust) and used their contacts to target prime sites and

properties around the country. NAMA have in fact worsened the housing crisis. They have even made funding available for previously bankrupted developers but only in cases where the development is at the high end of the market such as the houses now selling for over €1.5 million at Thormanby Hall in Howth or new luxury apartments at John Rogerson's Quay.

While NAMA claims all sales are done via the open market and competitive bidding, the same faces and real estate companies lurk at the back of each deal; Savills, Lindsey, DNG etc. etc.

There is an incestuous relationship between these firms and many now involved in luring the global hedge and vulture funds to Ireland. Far from tax avoidance been an unseen outcome, it was explicit in Minister Noonan's attempt to get global investment firms here; that's why he changed the law to allow new corporate landlords known as REITs to operate with the explicit remit that they would not face any tax on their profits.

It is likely the new Government will continue to cravenly hand over NAMA assets to similar vulture funds while the housing crisis worsens. A new movement that takes inspiration from the water protests needs to demand real action and target NAMA properties directly to insure they are used to house people and not further the profits of global real estate firms and vulture funds.

The ICA – a workers' army

Paul O'Brien

In their efforts to present the 1916 Rising as a purely patriotic affair and to minimise its radical and revolutionary implications the establishment tends to play down the role of James Connolly and the Irish Citizen Army.

The ICA was formed in August

central to the Lockout, but it made the police more circumspect about attacking the workers. As the dispute petered out in early 1914 attendances at parades diminished and the organisation was practically moribund and in the changed circumstances, a number of workers transferred their support from the ICA to the nationalist Irish Volunteers. The

class militancy after the defeat of the Lockout, Larkin's republican politics came to the fore.

After Larkin's departure for America in late 1914, James Connolly assumed command and knocked the ICA into shape. The members worked hard at drill and military tactics evenings and weekends. Guns were obtained by any means possible. They looked

'Hitherto the workers of Ireland have fought as parts of the armies led by their masters, never as a member of any army officered, trained and inspired by men of their own class. Now, with arms in their hands, they propose to steer their own course, to carve their own future.'

Beginning in May 1915 in a series of articles in the *Workers' Republic* Connolly tried to develop military tactics for modern revolutionary warfare. He set out the basis for a 'peoples warfare' based on the experience of the revolutionary upheavals starting with the bourgeois revolutions in the nineteenth century and up to the socialist revolution in Moscow in 1905. In particular he was trying to develop a strategy for urban warfare such as the Citizen Army might be called upon to participate in.

Connolly's pamphlet *The Reconquest of Ireland* was published by the ITGWU in 1915. This pamphlet is the key to understanding the direction that Connolly took the Citizen Army after he took command. His aim was to put labour in the forefront of the national struggle.

Given the crisis thrown up by the war in Europe; the ICA would be the catalyst that could unite all sections of the nationalist movement in a revolutionary fight against the British presence in Ireland; while maintaining its political independence within the broader movement.

In the months before the Rising all ICA members were asked to confirm their support for the forthcoming Rising.

This was always going to be a difficult political tightrope for Connolly to walk. The danger of liquidating the labour movement into the broader nationalist camp was always present, or of making political concessions



The Irish Citizen Army at Liberty Hall

1913 during the great Lockout. Both Larkin and Connolly were convinced that workers needed an organisation of their own to protect picket lines and union meetings from assault by the police and the hired thugs of the employers.

Within a fortnight the first 'red army' anywhere in the world had been formed; 1,200 had enrolled. In reality the difference between those who enrolled in a fit of enthusiasm and the numbers who turned up for training was substantial. The ICA was not exactly a 'Red Army' perhaps a 'Red Guard' is a more apt description.

The Citizen Army was not

active membership of the ICA fell to about fifty.

Reorganisation

In 1914 it was completely reorganised and Sean O'Casey wrote its constitution, stating the army's principles as follows: "The ownership of Ireland, moral and material, is vested of right in the people of Ireland" and to "sink all difference of birth property and creed under the common name of the Irish people".

Jim Larkin threw himself into rebuilding the Irish Citizen Army. The two strands that made up the core of Larkin's politics were socialism and republicanism. Given the dearth of working

smart in the new uniforms, topped off with the famous slouched hat, one side pinned up with the union red hand badge engraved with the initials ICA.

Resurgence

The resurgence of the ICA coincided with an upturn in the political atmosphere. Opposition to the war was growing, especially as the threat of conscription in Ireland became a possibility. The republicans were determined to use the war as an opportunity to strike at the old enemy. A hint of rebellion was in the air and Connolly in the pages of the *Workers' Republic* fanned the flames. He wrote:

No. 15,673 (1)

REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD JOIN

The Irish Citizen Army.

BECAUSE It pledges its members to work for, organise for, drill for and fight for an Independent Ireland.

BECAUSE It places its reliance upon the only class that never betrayed Ireland—the Irish Working Class.

BECAUSE Having a definite aim to work for there is no fear of it being paralysed in the moment of action by divisions in its Executive Body.

BECAUSE It teaches that "the sole right of ownership of Ireland is vested in the people of Ireland, and that that full right of ownership may, and ought to be, enforced by any and all means that God hath put within the power of man."

BECAUSE It works in harmony with the Labour and true National Movements and thus embraces all that makes for Social Welfare and National Dignity.

**Companies Wanted in Every District.
RECRUITS WANTED EVERY HOUR.**

Apply for further information, Secretary, Citizen Army,
Liberty Hall, Dublin.

Irish Paper, City Printing Works, 11 St. Stephen's Street, Dublin.

ICA poster

that marginalised the labour programme in the name of unity with the nationalists.

During Easter week about 175 members of the ICA mobilised. They were mainly attached to the garrisons in the GPO and in the College of Surgeons. The ICA was the first unit into action. Just after midday on Easter Monday a contingent of the ICA attempted to take Dublin Castle, but they were beaten back.

Women, such as Constance Markievicz, Dr Kathleen Lynn, Mollie O'Reilly and Rosie Hackett, played a significant part in the ICA, serving as equals alongside the men.

Connolly's execution after the Rising left the ICA leaderless and

without any political direction. They were active in the War of Independence and the Civil War, but were totally isolated from the working class movement and only played a support role with no independent class position during those turbulent years. Members of the ICA were prominent in rebuilding the socialist movement in the late 1920's, but by the late 1930's the ICA had ceased to exist in any meaningful sense.

Nevertheless in 1916 the deeds of the ICA and its leaders such as James Connolly, himself, Michael Mallin and Constance Markievicz left an indelible socialist and revolutionary mark on Irish history, which should never be forgotten.

Refugee crisis: from bad to worse

Memet Uludag

A year ago, in April 2015, the EU finally woke up to the horrific reality of the refugee crisis on its doorsteps.

First, it was the news of a refugee boat sinking with the loss of 400 lives. A week later more than 700 refugees had died in another Mediterranean shipwreck.

In the first four months of 2015 the refugee deaths had reached over 1500 - 30 times higher than the number in the same period in 2014.

These deaths came shortly after the EU had stopped the search and rescue mission 'Mare Nostrum'. They saw Mare Nostrum as a 'pull factor' for refugees.

Alan Kurdi

September 2015 was a turning point. When the pictures of the 3 year old refugee Alan Kurdi, lying dead on a beach, hit the world media, there was a panic among the European rulers and a very strong sense of solidarity among the ordinary people of Europe. Thousands took to the streets in support of refugees and demanding the opening of the borders. The EU leaders were caught red faced.

But the crocodile tears of the EU leaders have dried and very quickly they have returned to business as usual. Various emergency EU summits, negotiations etc. led to a refugee re-settlement program that would take in the very small number of 120,000 refugees and share them between EU countries.

But, behind the scenes, the real agenda in the EU was to close the European borders and stop the refugees from entering Europe. European leaders played the 'Victim-Europe' card and presented the refugee crisis as a problem that overwhelmed the entire EU.

Invasions

The current crisis had in fact not begun in 2014/15 but in 2011. Furthermore, there was already an ongoing very serious refugee



Residents of Lesbos help refugees ashore.

crisis since the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq in 2001 and 2003.

Iraq and Afghanistan topped the list of countries where refugees came from during the last 15 years. The current war in Syria has so far displaced more than 9 million people and most of the refugees are in various countries in the Middle-East. Up until 2014/15, the EU didn't have to 'deal' with the refugees because they were far away from EU borders.

By the end of 2015 the refugee re-settlement program had collapsed and only less than 0.2% of the agreed EU quota were re-settled. Ireland had taken less than 100 refugees by early 2016, a massive difference from the 2500 that was promised by the Irish Government.

In 2016 the refugee crisis turned into a

political crisis in the EU and the European governments have reacted brutally. The time for pretended humanitarianism was over. Despite the worsening conditions in Syria and the deaths of more than 400 refugees in the first 2 months of 2016, the EU has set out to implement the harshest and most racist measures yet: the full closures of EU borders, establishing detention centres in Greece and other countries, military patrols in the Aegean and an active mass deportation programme.

NATO

The EU has entered into a series of negotiations with Turkey, with a view to outsource the tasks of border control and detention of refugees. Furthermore, Turkey is facilitating the EU-deportation program.

There are already NATO ships in the Aegean patrolling international and Greek/Turkish territorial waters and returning refugees to Turkey. The aim of this new deal is to stop the refugees from crossing into Europe and deport most of those who got here last year. The deal between EU and Turkey is a deal against basic human rights and it will cause the suffering and deaths of many more refugees.

The EU governments are directly responsible for the horrors in the Middle-East and beyond that created millions of refugees over the past 15 years. Then the ongoing economic crisis is used as an excuse by the very same governments to shut the doors on refugees. There are solutions to homelessness and unemployment but the EU government are not interested in the wellbeing of the

majority of ordinary working class people. Furthermore, many of the EU leaders have turned the whole refugee issue into an outright racist debate.

Today in Europe the fight against racism is vitally important. Racism divides us, creates fear and hate and is a key mechanism for diverting mass anger at austerity onto scapegoats. The refugee crisis has given racist, Islamophobic and fascist movements an excuse to mobilise and spread their propaganda.

UNITED AGAINST RACISM invites all anti-racists, NGO's, trade unions, community groups and anti-racist political parties to support and endorse the **INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST RACISM** rally on March 19th and build the fight against racism together.

Syria – the return of hope?

Simon Assaf

It was a remarkable sight. After five years of bombings and siege Syrians took to the streets in vast numbers to once again chant the slogans of the 2011 revolution.

The protests appeared across the country, but were most pronounced in areas that have born the brunt of repression, mass arrests and brutal siege.

The demonstrations popped up following a fragile truce that was brokered by global powers. For the past two years the revolution had become subsumed by wars fuelled by regional and global powers, as well as a confusing array of armed groups, some genuine, others proxy players for outside powers.

But under the ceasefire the revolution has flickered back to life. This is evidence of the depth and resilience of Syria's popular uprising, and confirmation that although the country may be broken, the desire for a better future remains strong.

But the forces ranged against the revolution are phenomenal.

Assad

With the backing of Russian firepower, the remnants of dictator Bashar Assad's army, reinforced by sectarian mercenaries, have surrounded the city of Aleppo and tightened the sieges on rebel suburbs of the capital Damascus and Homs, the heartland of the uprising.

The ceasefire does not cover rebel groups such as Jabra al-Nusra and others the west and Russia consider dangerous. These groups, despite their hostility to many of the demands of the revolution, are deeply rooted in the uprising.

Many of those who first took to the streets in peaceful protests gravitated towards Islamist groups as they were better organised to resist the mass repression unleashed by the regime.

These groups have become the main target of US and Russian airpower, despite their deep hostility to ISIS.

The truce has also created a clearer distinction between the genuine rebels and those controlled by outside powers, among them various US armed groups known as the Syria Democratic Forces (SDF), and ones



March 4, anti-government demonstration in Syria

backed by Gulf kingdoms, Turkey, Jordan, Iran and Lebanon.

These proxy groups, alongside Kurdish militias that were once part of the revolution, have taken the opportunity to step up attacks on Islamist rebels, as the truce does not cover them.

It is in these areas not included in the ceasefire that genuine rebel organisations still hold sway, but under the hegemony of Islamist groups. It is here that many of the popular committees that sprouted in the summer of 2012 have survived.

In some areas Islamists attempted to halt the protests, pulling down the revolution flag and replacing it with the black flag.

Protests

The protests, alongside the stalemate on the battlefield, provide an opportunity for the revolution to step back onto the front foot.

But it requires a radical shift in strategy. The Islamist, mistakenly labelled as "counter-revolutionary", are unable to tap into the growing discontent in areas under regime control.

There are new rumblings of discontent among Alawis, the sect that forms the base of the Assad regime, and semi-rebellions have broken out among the Druze minority in southern Syria. But the Islamists were unable to win them over because they considered

them to be apostates.

Those wanting an end to the war have come to fear the sectarian proclamations of the Islamists. This is the trap that was cleverly set by Assad when it looked like his regime was on the point of defeat.

The revolution has to win back the allegiance of the minorities as well as the Kurds, a historically marginalised section of Syrian society.

Despite coming into the streets in huge numbers in 2011, the revolutionaries refused to accept the longstanding Kurdish demand for autonomy and independence.

This failure, sold as defence of the "Syrian nation", left the Kurds vulnerable to outside influence. Now Kurdish forces have struck up an alliance with the US in eastern Syria, and the regime and Russia in western Syria.

The failure of Islamists to decisively win the battle on the ground appears to have opened up the possibility of the more secular sections of the revolution to reappear. It is for this reason that some Islamist groups sought to snuff out the demonstrations.

With so many forces ranged against them and the continuing fear of starvation and pulverisation by airstrikes, these protests could fizzle out.

Resurrecting the central demands of the revolution requires a major strategic shift. It may seem a vague hope, but hope has reappeared once again in the street of Syria.

REVIEW: A REBEL'S GUIDE TO JAMES CONNOLLY BY SEÁN MITCHELL

James Grannell

Séan Mitchell's *A Rebel's Guide to James Connolly* is a timely and welcome addition to what has been a popular and useful series exploring the lives and ideas of key Marxist figures throughout history. It will undoubtedly leave the reader with a thirst to know more about Ireland's most famous Marxist, and is an excellent point of introduction for anybody interested in the life and ideas of James Connolly. It should be a welcome addition to every socialist's bookshelf.

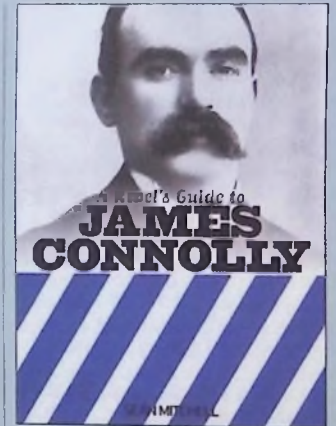
This centenary year has witnessed a renewed interest in the lives of the protagonists of the 1916 Rising. Very often however, the lives and ideas of the women and men of the Rising are obscured by nationalistic tropes, or forced to fit predetermined ideas about the worthy martyred dead. James Connolly has certainly been the victim of such political mystification.

Mitchell, in his introduction, asserts that the reason Connolly has been claimed by every shade of political opinion is precisely because his ideas are rarely discussed. In this volume he aims to 'rediscover these ideas' as well as Connolly's 'unique contributions to the international socialist movement,' and he certainly achieves this goal.

Lucid

The writing style is lucid and well paced. Chapters deal with the main events of Connolly's life and explore how these various events influenced and drove the Scottish born Marxist's political thought and practice. Mitchell succinctly outlines how Connolly's political theory was rooted in practice, and that he was neither an aloof intellectual, nor a rebel without political direction.

All too often, authors of biographical texts become overawed by the image of their subject and, as a result, attempt to justify each and every one of their actions and opinions as though their fallibility might invalidate their every word or achievement. Mitchell does not fall into this trap and must be commended on



this point. His approach is refreshing in its frankness. He has not attempted to write a hagiography and does not shy away from critiquing certain of Connolly's views or political positions. This is most notable in his discussion of syndicalism (pp. 20-22) and on Connolly's portrayal of the United Irishmen and Fintan Lawlor along with his belief in the inevitable progression from republicanism to socialism (pp. 28-30).

International

Perhaps the most important aspect of Mitchell's account is that he places Connolly within an international context. In his examination of Connolly's time in the USA, and his connection with socialists in Britain and further afield, Mitchell correctly demonstrates that Connolly was neither insular nor parochial. Rather, he understood the cause of socialism as being an international one. This aspect of *A Rebel's Guide to James Connolly* is most welcome this year when so much focus on one brief period of Connolly's life and his death has the potential to distract from his wider internationalist revolutionary message.

Seán Mitchell's book will no doubt re-ignite a renewed interest in James Connolly both here in Ireland and abroad. I highly recommend it.

Socialist Worker



ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS: A REAL ALTERNATIVE



Mick Collins

People Before Profit will be fielding candidates across the North to offer an alternative to austerity and sectarian division. The big parties are all in agreement over the implementation of the Fresh Start deal. This deal will devastate services across the North, with £1.2 billion to be axed over the next 4 years, including 20,000 job losses, and plans to reduce corporation tax for big business.

Socialist Worker spoke to three of the PBP candidates about their prospects for the election in May: Councillor Gerry Carroll (West Belfast), Fiona Ferguson (North Belfast) and Eamonn McCann (Derry).

"Sometimes to make a stand, you have to take a seat, and that's exactly what we'll be looking to do in West Belfast," said Cllr Gerry Carroll.

"We've built a reputation in West Belfast for doing politics differently. We work hard on the ground, are visible in communities, and our socialist message has gained a hearing."

"We have tapped into a hope that exists in West Belfast, and indeed across the North, for a new type of politics. One which moves beyond communal divisions, and says we don't simply have to accept austerity. Our message to people is that if we get organised and fight back, we can improve the lot of people in West Belfast."

"This election takes place in the context of the recent Fresh Start deal; a deal which will be a disaster for West Belfast. Truth be told, it is anything but a fresh start; just the same rotten politics which sees cuts to jobs and services, and handouts to big corporations."

"It beggars belief that politicians can afford to waste £300 million reducing corporation tax, yet say there is no money to fund services like schools or hospitals."

Hit hardest
"By almost every index West Belfast will be hit hardest by this deal as well. This is an area which has the highest levels of child poverty and deprivation in the North. West Belfast also has the second highest suicide rate. How can cutting back vital services, implementing thousands of job losses and

closing community centres benefit young people, or those struggling with unemployment? The truth is it will not."

"West Belfast deserves better. I am standing to offer people an alternative to the rotten Fresh Start Deal. Politicians want us to believe it is the best we can get, that the only thing that matters is keeping the charade on



Eamonn McCann (Derry)

the hill going; that even basic public services are secondary to keeping the farce that is Stormont on the road."

"Well, I fundamentally believe this deal is not the best we can get. That we can, and should, demand better. By getting organised in the workplaces and in the streets, we can achieve better."

"I'm standing to be a voice for those left behind. For the nurses and porters, who feel the pressure of Stormont cuts day and daily on the wards of the Royal Victoria Hospital. For the teachers and class room assistants faced with redundancy. For the unemployed, whose prospects for finding work are diminishing as Stormont implements 20,000 job losses.

"Our campaign will be a vehicle for all

those in West Belfast who wish to stand up and fight back against the cuts. If elected, I will be a voice against austerity, and a voice for People Power in the Assembly. I'm proud to be running on a ticket with activists like Eamonn McCann and Fiona Ferguson, and together I believe we can offer a principled socialist alternative for people in the North.



Fiona Ferguson (North Belfast)

In my own area in West Belfast there is a proud tradition of radicalism. I'm confident that tradition will continue come May; both at the ballot box, and in the streets."

Grassroots

Fiona Ferguson is the People Before Profit candidate in North Belfast. She said:

"North Belfast continues to suffer high rates of poverty, unemployment and mental health problems. Sectarianism has not been overcome either. Instead it continues to fester with working class people on both sides of the divide losing out.

"We need a new movement here. A grassroots movement on the streets and in the workplace; one that breaks down the com-

munal divisions that our politicians have no interest in tackling."

"North Belfast has been left behind, the promised 'shared future' hasn't materialised for working class people here. Instead, we've seen sectarianism on the rise and much-needed community services being slashed. There is a dire need for an alternative—for a new



Gerry Carroll (West Belfast)

kind of politics."
"People Before Profit is a growing movement across Ireland, both North and South, with more and more people realising the power of left-wing, street politics. Gerry Carroll has shown that in West Belfast, and we intend on building on that success in the North. We are going to work night and day to get the message out that a better way is possible."

New politics

Socialist Worker also spoke to PBP's candidate for Derry, Eamonn McCann.

"I am proud to be standing for People Before Profit, an all-island party that is fighting austerity on both sides of the border. "People Before Profit is building a new

politics, the kind that is emerging all over Europe from people on the ground."

"It isn't only in the North that growing numbers are fed up with the manoeuvres and antics of the old guard." Millions of mainly young people coming onto the streets have opened up new hope. Northern Ireland needs this hope more than any part of these islands."

Eamonn McCann believes the time is ripe for a "different politics" and that People Before Profit offers this alternative.

"We base ourselves on the interests of the broad mass of people of all communities. We don't set out to represent one community vis-à-vis the other."

"Working class people are faced with more important problems than the issues which fascinate the established parties and hold the rest of us back. We have a horrendous housing problem."

"There are as many people in the Derry area in need of housing as there were back in the 1960s, when homelessness helped spark the civil rights movement."

He also addressed the problem of chronic unemployment in Derry.

"Derry city is a jobs desert and the few jobs that are available do not pay a living wage. Promised jobs tend not to materialise. But real jobs are being lost week in and week out through cuts in public provision.

"An expanded university is vital for the future economic and social well-being of our area. Yet jobs at Magee are being cut, even as the misconceived Belfast expansion drains resources away. The establishment parties have put up very little fight on this issue and few have any faith in the latest promises in that regard."

"I will be raising these and other issues that are close to my heart – like the rail line, defence of the public sector and the ruination of our local environment through large-scale illegal dumping – at every opportunity in the Assembly.

"I am looking forward to running alongside Gerry Carroll (West Belfast) and Fiona Ferguson (North Belfast) in the Assembly election. We came very close to taking a seat in Foyle at the last election. This time, we are confident of taking a seat."

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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 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 '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.

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