

# Socialist Worker

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## Join the pay revolt:

# PAYBACK TIME FOR WORKERS

Profits soar, rents rise, and insurance costs rockets;

But the Government and employers demand wage restraint!

Owen McCormack

The Irish elite are in a panic. They are determined to make sure that Ireland stays a low wage haven for bosses where profits can rise while wages are suppressed.

They used the recession and the fear of unemployment to attack both private and public sector workers.

While refusing to restore public servants pay or end pay inequality, they also gave an insulting 10 cent an hour increase in the minimum wage.

### Result

The result? After eight years of austerity we have a low wage economy with rampant abuses of workers right, with bogus self-employment and precarious contracts becoming more widespread.

We have newer workers doing exactly the same work for less pay than their senior colleagues.

The very idea of a pension or a sick scheme is deemed a "luxury".

But the Government and employers' plans are unravelling as more workers wake up to the fact that the recovery will never reach them unless they demand it.

First Luas drivers won an 18% rise over three years after a strike that the media and establishment viciously attacked but



Source: CSO, National Income Accounts. Note: There was a change in the data in 1975 and 2011 is an estimate

could not defeat.

Then Dublin Bus workers held a popular series of strikes for a decent pay rise and won.

The recent strike by ASTI teachers to demand full pay equality, alongside the Gardaí dispute, has also rattled the estab-

lishment's plans.

Now workers in both public and private sector have forced their union leaders to

lodge pay. In the public sector resentment at the Lansdowne Road deal that forces workers to work free shifts while new recruits still earn less has boiled over.

### Awards

Nurses are balloting for strike over pay and conditions that see the health service incapable of retaining new nurses.

Unions representing the private sector are to lodge pay claims of 4% for next year while there are impending disputes at Irish Rail, Bus Éireann. In the meantime the ASTI strike and the significant awards won by Guards have forced other public sector unions to reflect their members' anger and start talking tough.

But the Government and bosses are desperate to save the Lansdowne Road agreement and get union leaders back on side. This is why the media pundits are warning about pay demands threatening the recovery and why John Moran, former advisor to

Noonan has been given acres of media space to attack the "greed" of workers in the public sector. Ironically Moran enjoyed a salary of €200,000 a year while at the department of Finance and gets a "small" pension of €179 a week after just four years work - a figure most workers would have to had worked for a lifetime to qualify for.

Continued on Page 2

## WATER CHARGES - CRUNCH TIME COMING!

Richard Boyd Barrett TD

The mass popular movement of opposition to water charges forced Fine Gael, Fianna Fail and the Independent Alliance to suspend water charges, following the general election.

Yet, rather than abolishing the charges and scrapping Irish Water altogether, as Fianna Fail had promised to before the election, the two major parties stitched up a shoddy compromise and hived the issue off to a so-called "expert" Water Commission.

This decision was a major betrayal of the democratic mandate of the newly elected Dáil, where there was a clear majority of TDs elected on a promise to abolish water charges and scrap Irish Water.

The Water Commission sought submissions from interested parties but held its hearings in secret to avoid public protests. The

**'Anything less than total abolition of water charges is a betrayal of the Dáil's democratic mandate.'**  
**RICHARD BOYD BARRETT TD**



commission has now finished its deliberations and will publish its findings in early December.

### Leaks

Leaks from the Commission have already suggested they will recommend retaining Irish Water and some kind of charge. Although the leaks suggest they will recommend

a low charge with a free allowance for households, we should not accept any such compromise.

We know from past experience with bin charges, that once the principle of charges is established, waivers disappear after a few years and the cost of charges goes through the roof. This is exactly what will happen unless we force the



government and, particularly, Fianna Fail, to accept democracy and simply abolish the charges.

The Water Commission's report is now to be handed to an all-party Dáil committee, who are to make recommendations to the Dáil, where the issue will finally be decided by a Dáil vote in March.

Already the two major

parties have tried to manipulate the all-party committee by hand-picking its chairperson, Senator Padraic O'Ceide, who is supposed to be independent but is, in reality, very close to Fianna Fail.

The whole purpose of the commission and the all-party committee is to try and take the momentum away from the mass movement of street

protests and to find excuses for not abolishing the hated charge.

Fine Gael, Fianna Fail, the Independent Alliance and the Labour Party will all attempt to claim that EU law requires us to keep water charges.

The hypocrisy on the EU is stunning when the same government says it will fight the EU all the way to stop Ireland getting €13 billion in unpaid taxes from Apple.

Even a fraction of the Apple €13 billion would pay for the desperately needed investment in our water infrastructure.

Yet, our government says "NO" to this money and instead wants ordinary struggling families and households to pay yet another unfair and regressive charge.

### Mass demonstrations

Now is the time to demand that the government and Fianna Fail accept democracy

and that Fianna Fail stick to their promise to abolish water charges.

Once again, we need to organise mass demonstrations on the streets with a clear message:

No betrayal of election promises - Scrap water charges and Irish water now!

People Before Profit, along with the other political parties and Trade Unions involved in the Right to Water campaign are already discussing a major national demonstration in February.

It is vital that this demonstration happens. Once the date for this protest is decided, we appeal to the public and communities across the country to build for the demonstration and to make sure it is the biggest one yet.

We are on the brink of a historic victory but we must now make the last big push.

All out on the streets in February!

# We need Rent Controls now

Owen McCormack

Rents in the private rental sector have risen to almost 10% above the Celtic Tiger levels, at a time when workers' wage rises have stagnated or are still well below what they were in 2008.

Annual rent increases are now hitting 15% and it is having a devastating effect on thousands as more and more people fear evictions and are unable to keep up with the increases.

One recent report predicted that rents would rise by another 25% in the next two years.

Thousands more who need rent assistance from the State to cover their rent costs face the added difficulty of finding any landlord who will accept these payments. Plus the Government has dragged its feet on increasing caps they had placed on such rents assistance. This has left many who are reliant on social welfare facing the prospect of homelessness.

The crisis in rents is a part of the wider crisis in housing that sees over 140,000 people in housing need and over 6,000 people classed as homeless, 2000 of whom are children.

The root of all this is the economic crash and the constant refusal of this and the previous FG/Lab Government to fund the building of public housing.

But the dramatic rent rises are only one part of the problem. Unlike many other countries, Ireland's rental market



gives landlords huge power over tenants with little security of tenure. Landlords can end a tenancy for a plethora of reasons.

These include; if they want to sell the house or apartment, give it to their family, change the business or even refurbish it. In addition every four years they can evict tenants without any reason whatsoever.

The result is a market in which tenants have practically no rights and people live in constant dread of rent hikes or arbi-

trary eviction if they cannot make the new payments.

This huge imbalance in rights is copperfastened by the refusal of this and previous Governments to consider any form of rent control.

### Unconstitutional

They argue such controls are unconstitutional based on a court case in 1980. While there is a clause in the constitution

that elevates the rights of private property, there is also a clause that states it can be ignored, if need be, for the greater "social good".

In reality both Fianna Fail and Fine Gael are representatives of the landlord class. In Ireland because of the relative weakness of Irish industry, the rich always saw property as the easy way to get even richer.

Since the crash the small scale Irish

landlord has now been joined by corporate landlords known as Reits (Real estate investment trusts). These have snapped up thousands of apartments, often from Nama at knock down prices and joined in the feeding frenzy of rising rents.

Last month Iris Reit, one of the largest, announced it had made over €30 million in profits last year and had now accumulated over €430 million in assets. Reits pay no tax on their profits or when they sell their apartments.

But there is increasing demand by tenants and others for a stop to this outrage. Brid Smith TD said there was a need to stop rent increases beyond the rate of inflation and drag them back to 2011 levels. Furthermore it was necessary to increase tenants' security of tenure.

"It is not enough given the scale of this crisis to just limit future increases, we have to get them back to reasonable levels, and if that means interfering with a landlords property rights so be it" she stated.

Richard Boyd Barrett added "The government could introduce emergency legislation to cut the wages and pensions of public sector workers in 2009.

They said we had to deal with the financial crisis by slashing pay, we should use the same logic; there is a massive housing crisis affecting our citizens and we will do whatever it takes to stop rent rises and more evictions. But whatever the Dail does, we also need to build a real movement of tenants and all others affected to force real change and build decent public housing"

# All workers need to lodge a pay claim



Continued from page 1

Unions representing workers in both private and public sectors are absolutely right to demand decent pay rises. If profits and returns to shareholders and the wealthy are back to 2008 levels then workers have every right to look for their share of the so called recovery.

While the Government and media try to divide and rule workers between private and public, and now even workers and those on social welfare, the reality is all sections of the working class have been hit by austerity and cuts.

The pay levels of nurses, teachers or shop workers were not the reason for the crash and restoring them now will not wreck the recovery.

While the media and Government scream "where will the money come from" we should point out how they refuse to tax multinationals or the corporate landlords and others who either pay no tax or get special tax breaks.

Jack O'Connor of SIPTU rightly pointed out that the government could have raised €600 million if they raised the VAT rates on the hospitality sector; a sector with huge levels of low pay and high profits.

The only fall out from decent wage rises for workers will be that some of the national wealth will move away from the rich; that is why they are in a rage at the prospect of pay rises for workers. The facts speak for themselves;

In 1970, the share of national income for employed and self-employed workers was 89%. But by 2012, this had declined to 60%. If the self-employed are excluded we find Ireland has the third lowest share for workers of 41 countries – with only Mexico and Turkey having lower shares.

Irish workers are among the most productive workers in the EU

The average yearly earnings –including overtime – dropped by over €1000 between 2008 and 2014.

For some newer workers the difference is even more stark with young teachers for example earning up to €7,000 less per year than colleagues who entered the profession a few years before.

In 2004, 17% of Irish workers were classified as low paid. But by 2013, this had risen to 23%. The wages of Irish retail workers are 20% below the average for the EU.

What is behind the "Red Scare?" The media has been full of stories about the influence of "Militants" and "Trots" in the

trade unions. Enda Kenny, Michael Martin, and various pundits have warned of the malign influence of militants with a political agenda. It is these "political workers" who are driving disputes in teaching, nursing and elsewhere – they claim.

The media try to explain every dispute by seeking out any worker who has the cheek to organise in a political party like People before Profit and has an influence in their union.

This is taken as evidence that disputes are not the result of genuine grievances of workers, but of "outside forces". In reality, the unravelling of the Government's pay policy is not about the influence of "Trots".

The leaderships of SIPTU, IMPACT and others have been forced to respond to the seething anger of thousands of their members. Workers have watched the talk of the recovery while their wages stagnate and rents rise and the housing and health crisis worsens. What really frightens the media and Government is that thousands of workers are getting "political" and that the potential audience for left wing ideas is growing. This terrifies employers, as well as some union leaders.

### Public Sector Pay Commission; no friends of workers.

Public sector workers should place little faith in the Commission restoring their pay. It is a stalling tactic they hope will allow them to keep pay down and to continue the "pay apartheid" that hits new workers. Chairman Kevin Duffy attacked the Gardai for seeking their pay rise and the commission was stacked with business figures, academics and an economist who are hostile to workers.

The commission is openly saying it will look at how workers in the public sector enjoy pensions and secure employment while comparing them with the private sector; it's as if having a pension and a secure job is now an offence!

The commission includes:-  
Ultaun Courtney; a management

consultant, appointed by FG as Chairperson of Dublin Bus.

Ms Marian Corcoran; former non-ex director of IDA. Currently works with Praesta Ireland. "Leaders in executive coaching, with a track record of professional and confidential service to senior (business) leaders."

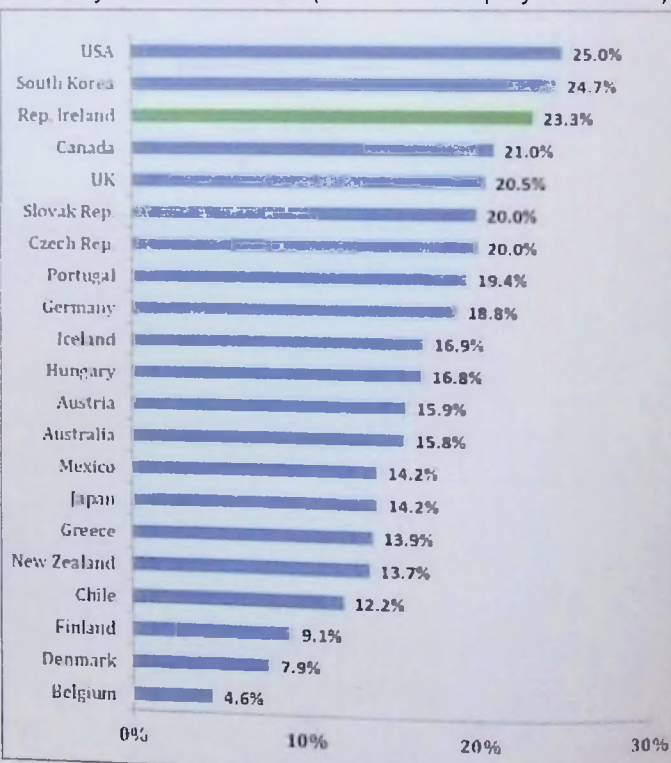
Ms Ruth Curran; head of an "executive

search company which focuses on senior executives in media, technology, financial services, globally traded services"

Sean Lyons, an economics professor from Trinity.

Also two retired union officials; Noel Dowling of SIPTU and Peter McCloone with a history of supporting the establishment..

Low Pay across the OECD (% full-time employees in 2013)



Source: OECD online database (OECD stat) Note: Low pay is defined as those earning less than two-thirds of the median hourly pay received by full-time 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 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.

### Join the Socialists

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# The Spectre of Trump

## Who's on Team Trump?

James O'Toole



Steve Bannon of Alt-right

Let's take a look at some of the right wing monsters populating Team Trump.

■ **Steve Bannon:** Bannon is now Trump's key strategist. A white supremacist blogger and leader of the so called 'Alt-Right' Nazi movement. Bannon is a professional liar. He uses his racist and sexist Breitbart website to spread lies about Muslim crime, Mexicans, women and the LGBT community. Members of Bannon's 'Alt Right' movement were filmed giving Nazi salutes to celebrate Trump's election.

■ **Reince Priebus:** White House Chief of Staff. Priebus is head of the Republican National Committee. He helped to bring the right wing Tea Party movement into the Wisconsin Republican Party. Priebus, despite Trump's claims to be clearing the Washington Swamp, is a long time Washington insider and regards Israel as "our greatest ally in the Middle East."

■ **Jeff Sessions:** Attorney General. A right wing Alabama senator who has said the nation should go back to a "Reagan-era drug policy." In 1986, a majority of the Senate Judiciary Committee blocked him from a federal judgeship because of his racism. Sessions thinks civil rights groups are "un-American" and "Communist-inspired" and trying to "force civil rights down the throats of people." He "used to think they [the Ku Klux Klan] were OK" until he found out some of them were "pot smokers."

■ **Lt Gen Michael Flynn:** National security adviser. Flynn was a Pentagon spy in 2004, he became director of intelligence for the Joint Special Operations Command — JSOC — the U.S. military's elite hunter-killer force. Flynn has emphasized he wants a more aggressive U.S. military. Flynn makes racist claims that American Islamists are trying to create "an Islamic state right here" by pushing 'legal standing for Sharia' and supports Trump's call for a register of all Muslims.

■ **Mike Pence - Vice President.** As Governor of Indiana he signed the Religious Freedom Restoration Act into law last March a law which discriminates against the LGBT community by allowing businesses to refuse service. Pence, an ultra-conservative evangelical Christian, also signed into law one of the strictest abortion laws in the country last March. He said that if it were up to him women wouldn't know what an office looked like!

■ **Mike Pompeo - head of CIA.** Pompeo is a right wing racist who believes that the war on terror is a crusade against Islam. He says that the war with Islam is necessary because "we know that Jesus Christ is our saviour and is truly the only solution for our world." He's also a fervent supporter of Koch Industries, sponsoring legislation backed by the company, while publicly defending the firm's controversial billionaire owners from public criticism.

■ **Steven Feinberg:** key economic adviser. Feinberg is the CEO of the giant vulture firm Cerberus. Cerberus bought the Project Eagle NAMA property portfolio at huge knock down prices after accusations of bribery and political corruption. Feinberg, with more than \$29 billion in client assets, is the key player of the Freedom Group, the arms manufacturer whose brands include Bushmaster and DPMS/Panther -- leading makers of the assault-style rifles that gun-control advocates want to see banned -- as well as the storied Remington.

Trump's team is filled with vulture firm CEOs, arms manufacturers, Washington insiders, racists, bigots and warmongers.



The surprise election of Donald Trump has sent shock waves round the world.

On the one hand every worker and every trade unionist not blinded by nationalism or bigotry but with a real sense of their class interests, is appalled. So too will be every feminist, every anti-racist, every person of colour, and every opponent of war. — every one with any kind of progressive consciousness.

On the other hand every racist, every hard right reactionary and every would be fascist is encouraged and emboldened. Marine Le Pen of the fascist French National Front is delighted — she thinks it will boost her chances in the coming French Presidential election. So too is UKIP's Nigel Farage, whose failing career has been rescued, and doubtless the KKK, the alt-right and Golden Dawn are all 'hailing Trump' with their straight arm salutes.

Of course, before we become too petrified it is necessary to remember certain things. The American people did not actually vote for Trump — he lost the popular vote by nearly 2 million and polled less than a quarter of the total electorate. [For

how he was still able to win see 'How Clinton Lost' by Becca Bor on p.6].

Also Trump doesn't have the organised forces — the disciplined militia or mass street fighting force — to impose a fascist dictatorship. Fortunately it's not Hitler in 1933 with his 400,000 Brownshirts. He will have to govern broadly within the framework of US constitutionality and the present US state.

### Threats

But this doesn't mean there is not a real threat. On the contrary there are multiple real threats.

There is the threat to every black American and person of colour — as if they were not threatened enough already — of a president whose election campaign was blatantly racist and who encouraged violence against black and other protestors.

The threat to every Muslim of a president who promised to bar all Muslims from entering the country and put them all on a register and to every Mexican with his 'great wall'.

The threat to every woman of a president who has boasted about committing sexual

assault and justified it as 'locker room talk'.

The threat to the future of the planet and of everyone on it of a climate change denier who is pledged to revive and reinvigorate the carbon deadly coal industry.

The threat to the Native Americans and other water protectors at Standing Rock of a president with a direct vested interest in the pipeline.

The threat of war from a nationalist braggart, especially one who won't be able to fulfil his economic promises but may seek to divert anger into military adventures — as Thatcher did with the Falklands War.

The threat to the poor and the disadvantaged everywhere of a president who is a paid — up and arrogant, hard right member of the 1%, and not in the least, despite his fake rhetoric, anti-establishment. Billionaire property developers are not on the side of the downtrodden.

### Protests

All of which makes it so important that there has been such a magnificent wave of resistance across America even before Trump has taken office. On 9 November, the day after the election, there were

Anti-Trump protests in 31 cities and 17 universities; on 10 November in 32 cities and 10 universities; on 11 November it was 37 cities and 18 universities. And in places the protests are still continuing nearly three weeks later.

This is so significant because it means there is already a big network and a mass base for revolt when Trump attacks people, as he will.

It is also hugely significant because the Trump victory is part of a much wider phenomenon: the polarisation of society globally as a result of the ongoing crisis of neo-liberal capitalism. This polarisation can be seen here in Ireland, in Britain, across Europe and even in South Korea [See the report 'Mass Revolt in South Korea' on p.6].

It is a polarisation between the genuine left and the racist right; between those who want to channel the anger of the masses at austerity and hardship into a challenge to inequality and the super-rich and those who want to divert it onto migrants, refugees and other scapegoats.

This is the central struggle of our times and one the left and working people must organise to win.

## SYRIA PEACE MARCH: STOP THE BOMBING

John Molyneux

On 19 November Irish Anti-War Movement activists marched from the Russian Embassy in South Dublin to the US Embassy in Ballsbridge. The march was small, about 50-60 in total, but symbolically important. It was designed to draw attention to the humanitarian catastrophe in Syria and to condemn both Russian and US bombing of the country. It opposed ALL foreign military intervention in Syria, including that by regional powers such as Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran etc.

### Silence

It also called for an end to arm sales to the belligerents, for the Irish Government to end its silence by making a clear statement of opposition to any military intervention and, of course, to end Irish complicity in US wars in the Middle East via Shannon.

The war in Syria has produced the most terrible human disaster of the 21<sup>st</sup> century with nearly 500,000 killed, 11 million out of a population of 22 million displaced and over 4 million refugees.

The situation began with a genuine, peaceful people's revolt in 2011 against



Destruction of Eastern Aleppo

the brutal Assad dictatorship — it was inspired by the Egyptian Revolution and the Arab Spring. But the regime crushed the popular revolution by force and the result was a civil war in which all the regional and international powers became involved making the situation ever worse.

The recent horrific bombing and

bombardment of Eastern Aleppo by Assad and Russia is the latest horrific episode in this tragedy.

The march began with a Rally at the Russian Embassy addressed by Jim Roche, Patricia McKenna and John Molyneux and conclude with a Rally at the US embassy where there were speeches by Memet Uludag, Glenda

Cimino and Richard Boyd Barrett TD.

The point of the march was to insist that the people of Syria be allowed to determine their own future without imperialist interference.

The march also demanded that the EU and Ireland should open its borders and welcome refugees from this dreadful conflict.

# #socialism 1.01

John Molyneux

## Fidel Castro – Death of an icon

Millions of radicals, leftists, socialists and anti-imperialists around the world will be saddened by the announcement of the death of the leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro, at the age of 90.

He will, obviously, be particularly mourned in much of Latin America, Africa and other parts of the 'third world' that identified with his defiance of US imperialism.

The story of the Cuban Revolution and its two main leaders, Castro and Che Guevara, is both romantic and genuinely heroic. A group of only 82 guerrillas, led by Fidel, sailed in a small boat, the Granma, from Eastern Mexico, and landed on the coast of Cuba on 2 December 1956. They were immediately attacked by the Cuban air force, suffered numerous casualties and were scattered. When they eventually regrouped in the Sierra Maestra mountains their numbers were reduced to 12. Yet two years later

from the US – pressure that ranged from military intervention at the Bay of Pigs in 1961, attempted assassinations by the CIA, to economic and travel embargos. Second, there was Cuba's establishment of decent public health and education, in marked contrast to other Caribbean and Latin American states and indeed the USA itself.

However, there were serious problems, inherent from its inception, in both the Cuban Revolution itself and in the Cuban Revolutionary regime. For socialists, as for Marx himself, socialist revolution is the act of the working class itself – it is a process of self emancipation in which working people take control of society and run it democratically in their own interests. This did not happen in Cuba. Rather Castro's small guerrilla army acted 'on behalf of the people' and established, together with the old Cuban Communist Party, their rule from above. This

the successful building of socialism has to be international: the revolution has to spread to other countries. The idea of building socialism in one country was the invention of Joseph Stalin in 1924 and used to legitimise the establishment of his own dictatorship.

Castro's comrade, Che Guevara, understood the need to spread the Cuban Revolution and, with great heroism, undertook the task. But the attempt failed. Guevara's method was to try to repeat in Bolivia the guerrilla struggle in the mountains that had worked in Cuba. But the US had at first thought it could work with Castro and did not mobilise to defeat his movement in its early stages – they did not repeat this error in Bolivia, or elsewhere in Latin America where guerrilla struggles were launched.

### Murdered

Che was captured and murdered in 1967 and there was repetition of the Cuban policy.



Fidel Castro

in January 1959 Batista, the corrupt and brutal dictator, fled Cuba and Castro's revolutionary army marched in triumph into Havana.

At first Castro and his movement were democratic nationalists not socialists or Communists but hostility from the old Cuban ruling class and US imperialism pushed Castro and Cuba into nationalisation of various industries and into the Soviet camp and Castro, in 1961, announced that the Cuban Revolution was a socialist one.

### Anti-imperialist

This story alone would have been inspiring to millions at the time of anti-imperialist revolt around the world, the Vietnam War and the struggles of the sixties. Two other achievements also stood to Castro's credit and secured his status: First, his and his regime's survival in the face of fifty years of relentless pressure

became, and remained, a one-party state with no real democracy and very little political freedom. It was state capitalist rather than a real socialist society.

### Isolation

There was also a major difficulty involved in the isolation of the Cuban Revolution and its dependence on the Soviet Union. In this state of siege Cuba remained trapped in poverty and unable to develop effectively.

And when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991 its support for Cuba was withdrawn and the economy was plunged into crisis, which it barely survived and from which it has never fully recovered. This has pushed it back towards rapprochement with the US and western capitalism.

Again socialists, beginning with Marx, have always understood while a revolution can begin in one country

Consequently Cuba remained isolated and impoverished.

Today, uncritical supporters of Cuba and those who hero-worship Castro will blame these problems on the US, which is fair enough, and compare Cuba favourably to its neighbours Haiti and Jamaica etc. which is also reasonable. But they will also tend to turn a blind eye to the lack of democracy and political freedom, the long standing oppression of LGBT people, the continuing class divisions and inequality and increasing accommodation with the US. This is mistaken.

Socialists in Ireland and the world today can recognise Castro's achievements while also explaining that we have a very different conception of socialism as a real people's democracy of equality and freedom based on workers' control of workplaces and communities.

# We are Pro Repeat

Emma Hendrick, of People Before Profit Pro-Choice Campaign

The 8<sup>th</sup> Amendment was inserted into the constitution in 1983. The key sentence reads, "the State acknowledges the right to life of the unborn and, with due regard to the equal right to life of the mother, guarantees in its laws to respect, and, as far as practicable, by its laws to defend and vindicate that right." This makes Ireland almost unique in the Western World in having equal rights for foetuses and women. Indeed, thanks to the influence of conservative politicians and the Catholic Church, Ireland has had an insidious relationship with reproductive health and "the family" more generally. It was the last country in Europe to legalise contraception (1980) and divorce only became legal in 1995.

### Savita

We know that in reality the 8<sup>th</sup> Amendment has prioritised the right to life of the unborn above the rights of living women. Since the 1980's, we have had an alphabet soup of women - Miss X, Miss A, Miss D and Miss Y – denied their rights. Then in 2012 we had a face and name to put to this denial of rights, as Savita Halappanavar died in a Galway hospital due to the barbarity of protecting an unviable foetus.

These are the tragic cases we know about from the media. Yet we never hear of the countless thousands of women forced to travel in order to have medical treatment that should be their right here.

Thanks to mobilisation from below, legislation has been enacted to allow women to at least access information about abortion and to obtain one abroad.

The recent *Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act* also allows abortion on grounds of suicide, but behind this supposed liberalisation, is the threat of 14 years in prison for "destruction of unborn human



life" in circumstances deemed illegitimate by the state.

The right to travel also has an important class dimension given the fact that poorer women and those in direct provision either cannot afford it or cannot access it. Traveling to the UK or the continent for an abortion

requires time, money and freedom. For those able to travel there is silence, stigma and shame. For those who cannot travel the only option can be the risk of 14 years in prison for taking an abortion pill. Either way, the reality is that abortions are happening in Ireland even if the male dominated

# End Direct Provision

Memet Uludag, Convenor of United Against Racism

Established in 2000, the direct provision system (DPS) was supposed to provide shelter for asylum seekers for just six months. 16 years on around 4,500 asylum seekers, 1,600 of them children, spend many years in conditions which are damaging to their health and wellbeing with long lasting negative effects.

Asylum seekers in DPS are not allowed to work. They are not entitled to social welfare. They are excluded from free third-level education and social protection, including social housing.

Adults in DPS receive a weekly allowance of €19.10 which is impossible to live on.

The centres serve only canteen style meals three times a week. Families are not allowed to cook their own meals and they don't have the economic means to buy food.

There are 35 direct provision centres in Ireland. These centres are run by private companies as a commercial business and they receive more than €50 million in state funding annually.

United Nations, international and Irish human rights groups, a former judge and former children ombudsperson have all heavily criticised the system. Former Supreme Court judge, Catherine McGuinness has predicted that, as with the Magadalen Laundries, a future government will end up publicly apologising for damage done by the direct provision system.

Over the past 16 years, numerous reports have detailed the inhumane and racist nature of direct provision but governments have ignored the calls to



United Against Racism public meeting in Sligo.

end it.

### Children in the direct provision system:

Some of the most effected in DPS are children. They lack a proper family

environment and have limited access to play and recreation. Many share a single room with their parents and siblings. The State's Special Rapporteur on Child Protection, Dr Geoffrey Shannon, has raised concerns that many children are

# Repeal and Pro Choice!



repeal the 8<sup>th</sup> and what will replace it. Why not ask the people now? People Before Profit trusts women to make the best decisions over their own bodies and is setting out to convince the rest of the country that this is the only position compatible with genuine liberation for Irish women.

Unfortunately this is not the view of Sinn Fein. Instead of calling for a simple repeal they are for a 'Repeal and Enact' position that makes moral judgements about women and their choices.

If a woman's life or her mental health is at risk or in grave danger Sinn Fein will permit an abortion. They will also allow women this right in cases of rape, incest and fatal foetal abnormalities.

What all of these cases have in common is the woman as a victim, either of circumstance or of a crime.

In all other cases Sinn Fein is not for a woman's right to choose. This is tantamount to the morality police deciding when women can control their own bodies and when the state can do it for them.

This seems little more than a political manoeuvre to appeal to the middle ground but who exactly are Sinn Fein are appealing to?

During the *Yes Equality Campaign* progressive forces did not make concessions to the middle ground, they pushed for genuine rights and genuine equality. Surely the same principle should apply in this case.

Arguments that we must be patient and wait our turn just don't cut it any longer. Women have been patient for 33 years and have been told to wait even longer. The women of Ireland are done waiting.

To secure full rights for women across the country the Pro-choice campaign in Ireland needs to be more visible and more militant.

We do not need fence sitters who want to hold women back; we need young men and women willing to get onto the streets to demand our rights from this rotten establishment.



**Gino Kenny TD says**

## Make it Medicine! Make it Happen!

**W**hen I was elected to the Dáil last February one of the issues that I wanted to highlight was the issue of accessibility to medical cannabis.

To be honest I had very limited knowledge about the issue other than a conversation with a family from Clondalkin whose child was suffering from Dravet Syndrome, a very aggressive and rare form of epilepsy. CBD oil is concentrated oil from the Cannabis plant and this has been proposed around the world as a possible treatment for a whole host of ailments particularly this form epilepsy.

a Cannabis Research Institution.

At the moment more than ten countries in Europe have enacted legislation for use of cannabis for medical purposes.

Outside of Europe near thirty states in the United States have made medical cannabis legal and recently Australia did the same.

The overwhelming evidence for the medical benefits has been published. Recently Professor Mike Barnes in Britain commissioned an All-Party Parliamentary report to Westminster on the massive benefits of medical cannabis to sufferers of chronic pain, MS, arthritis, cancer, epilepsy,



Vera's daughter Ava has Dravet's syndrome - a rare drug resistant form of epilepsy which can cause up to 20 seizures a day. Medicinal cannabis stills those seizures and Vera Twomey is marching from Cork for legalisation.

In July I introduced the Medicinal Cannabis Use Regulation Bill 2016 to the Dail to try to start the debate about the medical benefits of medical cannabis.

Since the bill was introduced it has been overwhelmingly positively received both in the media and in wider society.

### Campaigning

Public meetings and street stalls campaigning on this done by People Before Profit in Ballyfermot, Drimnagh and elsewhere have also met with a great public response.

The high profile case of Vera Twomey's daughter Ava who has been diagnosed with Dravet Syndrome has been a game changer in the debate.

Vera's absolute determination and campaign for accessibility for Ava's treatment has now brought about a review from the Department of Health on viability of medical cannabis in Ireland.

The report will be concluded by the end of January.

On the 1st December, under private members' business, People Before Profit will be looking for support for its bill on the accessibility of medical cannabis for those who require quality assured medical cannabis for their medical needs under a doctor's recommendation.

The bill also calls for a Cannabis Regulatory Authority to be set up and

fibromyalgia and many other disorders and conditions.

I believe the debate has not only started in Ireland in regards to medical cannabis but that things will be never the same again.

### Alcohol

Personally I believe cannabis as a whole should be decriminalised. It is less harmful than alcohol or nicotine and we need to take this trade out of the hands of the criminal gangs.

But on the question of the medicinal use of cannabis there simply is no serious argument against it. Policy and legislative change not only has to happen but will happen due to the public clamour for this government to act and address the medical needs of so many who are dependent on this.

The time for stigmatisation and criminalisation of citizens who want to treat their medical needs and their children's medical needs is over.

This has now to be enforced not only by this bill but by the State and by the medical community.

It was the visionary and forward thinking Irish doctor, William O'Shaughnessy from Limerick, who encountered the medicinal use of cannabis in India and brought it into the medical mainstream in Europe in the middle of nineteenth century.

Let's continue his forwarding thinking in the 21st Century.

Make It Medicine! Make It Happen!

hierarchies of the Church, Fianna Fail and Fine Gael refuse to acknowledge this.

### Time for a real citizen's assembly

There is now overwhelming support to Repeal the 8<sup>th</sup> with up to 80% in favour in some of the polls. Instead of listening

to the will of the people the government have kicked for touch.

Their citizen's assembly of 99 people and a retired judge is a sham. Over the next year these people will hear from 'experts' as well as submissions from the public on whether there should be a referendum to

## Now!



risks for children in DPS. Almost none of the children have any chance to continue with 3<sup>rd</sup> level education. They are condemned to poverty and unemployment.

### Right to work and right to education:

Ireland is one of the two EU states that don't give asylum seekers the right to work. This is not only designed to prevent them from establishing social and economic roots in this country. This is a specific policy to isolate asylum seekers from all aspects of life. In 2014 the HSE said, "lack of entitlement to work, when this restriction extends over a long period, may further compound mental health, with boredom, depression, sense of isolation and loss of self-esteem

### DPS as permanent misery:

More than 1,600 people have spent five or more years in the system. There are hundreds of asylum seekers who have been in DPS for more than 7-10 years.. Former judge Bryan McMahon called for an immediate, once-off amnesty to any asylum seeker in the system for more than five years, as a 'gesture of generosity in the spirit of the 1916 celebrations.

### Mental health problems

The Irish Medical Journal reports that asylum seekers are 5 times as likely to suffer from psychiatric conditions as the general population. Asylum seekers are 10 times more likely to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder.

### Direct Provision: Not for care but for profits

According to Department of Justice figures (2000-2012) private companies running centres have received in excess

of €850 billion in state funding. Many of these companies are firms involved in the property, hospitality or catering business. Several have moved to shield their company accounts from public scrutiny to offshore jurisdictions such as the Isle of Man or British Virgin Islands.

Limited access to company accounts shows that Mosney received over €100 million; East Coast Catering €91 million; Bridgestock, €67 million; Millstreet €53 million; Shaun Hennery €25 million.

Direct Provision is a system of inequality and oppression. It is racist by nature. The longer it exists the worse the problems are getting. It must be ended to be replaced with a system that gives the asylum seekers the right to work, housing and other rights and there must be an end to all deportations.

There is enough money and resources in Ireland to provide homes and jobs for all but the wealth is in the hands of a tiny elite at the top.

### United Against Racism campaign

United against Racism is mounting a vigorous campaign to end Direct Provision. It has the support of many TDs, artists and public figures such as Robert Ballagh, Gerry Adams, Catherine Connolly, Brid Smith and Paul Murphy and of Unite the Union. It has organised several public meetings, a major rally and demonstration in Dublin attended by about 1000 people on 12 November and the campaign is spreading round the country with events in Belfast, Galway, Sligo and Tralee. There will be further meetings and rallies in the New Year including on 18 March, UN International Anti-Racism Day, and a motion to the Dáil.

living in poverty and in highly damaging environments. He said, "We are in a situation where we treat children in direct provision as being second-class citizens".

There are significant mental health

# Mass revolt in South Korea



Mass candle light protest in Seoul, 19 November.

Report from **Kim Chun** of Workers' Solidarity, Socialist Worker's sister organisation in South Korea.

Large scale protests demanding the resignation of right wing President, Park Geun-hye, have rocked South Korea for nearly a month.

The second week of November, in particular, saw a 1 million-strong demo in Seoul coinciding with the annual workers' national assembly held by Korea's main trade union federation KCTU.

It was the biggest turnout since the toppling of South Korea's military dictatorship in 1987.

Saturday 26 November saw the numbers on the streets of Seoul rise to 1.5 million with 1.9 million out nationwide!

What set off the revolt was the revelation that Park had engaged in myriad acts of corruption through her unelected childhood friend, whose involvement in state affairs has drawn parallels with Rasputin. Many big corporations were found to have

been actively complicit in Park's scams.

Although Park apologized twice in ten days, her approval ratings crashed to 5 percent – a record-low for an elected president.

The Prosecutor's office pushed her further into a corner by officially naming her a crime suspect last Sunday.

## Prosecution

But the Prosecution did not include bribery in their charge, which substantially reduces the maximum sentence for Park and her friends.

It also lets off the hook the corporations that paid lavish sums in exchange for labour reforms, favourable deals, and presidential pardons – a leniency that is drawing fire to the Prosecution itself.

Nevertheless the standoff between the President and the Prosecutor's office exposes the inability of the ruling class to respond to the situation in a coherent way.

This is a far cry from 2012 when Park came to power with the overwhelming

support of the ruling class. In keeping with their expectations, Park, who is daughter of South Korea's former dictator, pushed through pro-market reforms and strengthened military cooperation with the US and Japan.

Organised labour has spearheaded the fightback against Park. The 23-day strike of KCTU rail workers to stop rail privatization, a year into Park's presidency, removed the aura of invincibility from her hard-right government.

Last year, the KCTU was able to mobilize 100 thousand workers nationwide against labour reforms.

Such initiative has earned workers substantial popularity in the movement. A metal worker from a key supplier to Hyundai Motors received a big applause at the rally on the 19 November when he said: "Some say workers getting involved in the movement will invite a backlash. I beg to disagree."

"We are also part of the people and we will be at your side."

"This scandal made it clear how our bosses bankroll this government and the government protects them."

## Sewol ferry

Another pillar of resistance against Park has been the movement for the truth behind the sinking of the Sewol ferry in 2014, which took the lives of nearly 300 teenagers.

The utter incompetence, or absence of government rescue efforts during the few hours of the vessel's sinking and its determined efforts to sabotage investigations into the matter radicalised a huge number of young people.

At the 19 November rally a high school student yelled at Park:

"An accident, you say? Rubbish! I'm tired of your lame excuses, you are the one responsible."

"Ever since the disaster, I could not sleep well for even a single night. You are a murderer."

The deepening economic crisis has in-

tensified the internal rift in the ruling class leading to graphic details of their inside dealings being leaked through the media.

In short, it was the confluence of sustained resistance from below and conflict within the ruling class that produced the present crisis.

A large part of the ruling class does not wish to see Park ousted by a movement from below at a time of heightening economic and geopolitical crisis.

They also worry that calls for the punishment of the Corporations would grow stronger. But so does popular anger the more Park refuses to go.

The ruling party is divided as never before. Key party figures openly called for Park's impeachment and some left the party.

The establishment opposition parties, meanwhile, have distanced themselves from calls for Park's resignation, and as a result have lost the initiative to the street protest movement.

Now they seek to regain the initiative with a motion to impeach the president. Regrettably, even the social-democratic Justice Party, which had been part of the movement from the beginning, is cooperating with the establishment parties on this scheme.

Once the impeachment process is launched, the movement will come under greater pressure to abstain from direct action such as protests and strikes and to wait for the constitutional court to decide Park's fate.

But in order to ensure Park's demise and reverse her reforms, it is crucial to deepen the movement independently of the opposition parties.

In particular, the movement can become more devastating if workers seize the moment of heightened anger toward the government and bosses to go on strike over economic demands.

So it comes as great news that rail workers rejected the calls by opposition parties to end their strike.

Rail workers have been on strike against wage cuts since a month before the street protests erupted. The movement will face many ups and downs and unexpected twists and turns. The influence of the left inside the movement is growing owing to their initiative in calling for the first protest and due to the large presence of organised workers.

This creates significant room for the revolutionary left to pull the movement into a more radical direction.

## How did Clinton lose?

Becca Bor

The U.S. election results show clearly that it was not so much that Trump won the election, but rather that Hillary Clinton lost.

She lost because the Democratic Party is so far refusing to challenge the voting count; she lost because the Democratic Party has never fought to dismantle the highly undemocratic Electoral College; but most importantly, she lost because she was never able to overcome the so-called "enthusiasm gap" of voters.

Clinton won the election with 2 million more votes than Trump, yet she lost the Electoral College vote. Trump received 306 electoral votes, whereas Clinton received 232.

The Electoral College is an archaic voting mechanism from the 18th century implemented because the Founding Fathers believed only the informed few (elite, wealthy politicians) should have the ability to vote directly for the president.

Additionally, the number of electors per state was based on population plus two, which at the time over-represented the slave-holding states against the northern industrial states, since the US constitution counted slaves as three fifths of a person.

Today, the Electoral College over-represents states with small populations, which generally are whiter, more rural



Bill and Hillary Clinton

and more conservative. For example, one elector represents 196,000 people in Wyoming and 705,000 in California. States with larger populations also tend to be where immigrants, students, people of colour and more progressive folks tend to live because of their large cities..

## Dismantling

Neither the Democrats nor the Republicans have an interest in dismantling the electoral college because they have no real interest in democracy. Both parties are committed to the interests of the ruling class and maintaining its strength.

However, given Trump's racist, misogynistic, white nationalist campaign, one would think that the Democratic Party would put up a fight and challenge the election result, especially since there have been repeated reports of voter suppression and voting irregularity.

In New Hampshire Clinton lost by only 3,000 votes; 12,000 in Michigan; 27,000 in Wisconsin; and 68,000 in Pennsylvania. Clinton and the Democratic Party, instead, have announced that they will work with Trump and support his administration.

As this is written, Green Party

candidate Jill Stein has raised close to 7 million dollars to challenge the election results in three swing states, Michigan, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania, because of reports from computer scientists of possible hacking into voting machines.

The purpose of the challenge is to look into voting processes through an international body to ensure lawful elections.

Regardless of the Electoral College and the popular vote, the Democrats blew this election because they refused to listen to their base that wanted real change from the status quo.

Bernie Sanders' campaign showed that millions of people wanted a political revolution because they are sick of wealth inequality; the free reign of Wall Street; racist, sexist and anti-immigrant policies and institutions that oppress the majority of people in the United States.

## Insider

Whereas Bernie represented a blow to Wall Street and the corporate interests of the US, Clinton represented the 1%, the political insider, the war hawk and the career politician.

After all, it was Clinton who lost to Obama 8 years ago in the primary because the country was ready for change and was lured in by Obama's promises to be an anti-war, pro-immigrant Black president.

In this election, Clinton got 10 million fewer votes than Obama did in

2008. Though many Bernie supporters came out and voted for Clinton, a large number of them couldn't bear voting for someone who stood for everything Bernie claimed to be against.

Millions of voters stayed home - uninspired and demoralised at the pathetic spectacle the election became.

Clinton's loss does not mean that the United States is a backward right-wing country. It is, in fact, polarised.

The right wing has been galvanized and invigorated by Trump's win, yet let's not forget that they came out with their racist hate after Obama was elected and after 9/11 as well.

Trump's appointment of white supremacists mainstreams their bigotry, and the Democrats willingness to work with Trump only further pushes the political establishment to the right.

On the other hand, there has been non-stop protests at Standing Rock against the North Dakota Access Pipeline and waves of walkouts, protests and actions against Trump's election.

Since Obama and the democrats remain unwilling to stand up for the environment, for Black lives, for women, for immigrants and for workers, more and more people are grappling with how to make change in a highly undemocratic, unrepresentative and violent society.

Clinton lost because she is the status quo and the status quo is literally killing the working class, as the rich look on from their penthouses and yachts.

# Travellers and Refugees Unite

Last week it was reported was extensively reported in the media that a small group of Travellers in Mayo had protested against the housing of Syrian refugees in the area.

It is, of course, a pity that not all such tiny protests get so much coverage.

However Socialist Worker has received this statement on the matter by Mayo Travellers Support Group.

We are pleased to publish it here because it represents an exemplary response to the situation. Travellers, refugees and all the homeless have urgent housing needs and it is clear that Ireland has the resources to meet those needs.

Allowing one section of the community to be played off against another only assists those who are not interested in helping any of the needy or desperate.

**Mayo Travellers Support Group (MTSG) has issued the following statement regarding the protest held in Castlebar on Wednesday 23rd November 2016**

*MTSG fully supports the government initiative offering safe haven to Syrian refugees fleeing the war in their country and recognises the appalling situations and circumstances that these families have endured.*

*MTSG however also understands the frustrations of Traveller families who are living without safe and adequate provision of accommodation and the impact that this has to the health and well being of all family members.*

*The organisation does not support a situa-*



tion where one vulnerable community's needs are placed over another.

Paddy Maughan Chairperson of MTSG said "As a Traveller I believe that everyone is

entitled to a safe home that meets their needs; many Travellers have been denied this right for a long time. MTSG work from an anti racist approach and in solidarity with all vulner-

able groups and therefore we welcome Syrian refugees to Mayo. Appropriate accommodation needs to be made available to meet the needs of all communities".

MTSG believes that investment is needed nationally and locally to support communities to build relationships and have a greater understanding of peoples lived experiences.

## The threat to Ireland and the world

People Before Profit's new pamphlet 'Profit versus the Environment – a Radical Alternative' by John Molyneux, is reviewed by James Grannell.

John Molyneux's pamphlet, *Profit Verses the Environment – A Radical Alternative*, is both timely and important. It begins with looking at the immediate threats to our environment in Ireland here and now and it shows that there are many from Derry to Cork and from Antrim to Dublin. It then moves on to consider the catastrophic global situation.

Hurricanes, droughts, rising sea levels, and flooding are just a few of the effects of climate change.

Six of the ten warmest years in Ireland have occurred since 1990. Ocean acidification has the potential to disrupt the global marine ecosystem on which our already threatened fishing industry relies.

Rising sea levels along with river and coastal flooding have and will decimate communities and displace families.

Along with this, outbreaks of diseases such as malaria and cholera are highly sensitive to climate change. The threat is real and it is now.

Molyneux exposes the link



between capitalist systems of profit and climate change and examines the disproportionate effect of climate change on poor and working class communities.

He also clearly outlines the simple, yet often unheeded, truth that because capitalism and the drive for profit are at the root of climate change, only the overturning of the global capitalist economic system will allow real

advances to be made in how we combat the looming global disaster that is climate change.

### Danger

By outlining the danger to the Irish environment as well as explaining the global causes and effects of climate change Molyneux cogently demonstrates the necessity for both a local and global response to the issue.

As corporate profit is the driver of the political establishment, this response must come from communities and ordinary people – those who have been left to pay the price of the lacklustre, paltry, and mealy-mouthed attempts made by capitalist governments to deal with the problem at hand.

This pamphlet isn't just a manifesto of complaint against the status quo. It is full of positive suggestions on

how we can reduce the negative impact that humanity is having on the environment. The later part of the pamphlet contains People Before Profit's environment policy, which was adopted at our policy making conference in September 2015.

This covers areas ranging from public transport and the building of sustainable homes to the protection and extension of our forests, alongside the party's policy on GM foods, fossil fuels, and nuclear power.

Ultimately, if we want to bring about change, if we want to save the environment and ourselves as a species reliant on that environment, we need to mobilise people power and community power.

We need to become educated about the connection between capitalism and environmental disaster and be able to argue and debate our points in the home, at the doorstep, and on the streets.

Our children's future is too important to be left in the hands of the capitalist task-masters and their political puppets.

Get this pamphlet, read it, discuss it. The working class are the agents of change; we can't afford to wait until it's too late.

## Students and choice: UCD keeps up the momentum

Barney Doherty

For the first few months of this year's college term the radical left has been a significant if not the main force in terms of activism on campuses. While it is certainly more difficult for reactionary forces to organise among usually more liberal student bases, the left cannot become complacent.

In early November in UCD, a small pro-life group managed to force the Students Union (SU) to call a referendum on changing the Student Union's Pro-Choice stance on abortion to what they called a 'Yes to Neutral' one.

The SU received its original mandate when 73% of students who voted in a referendum in 2013, backed a woman's right to choose.

The Neutral campaign's basic argument was that if an SU referendum

was not won by the entire student body, it is not fair to have their representative body campaigning on an issue some disagree with. This was a weak argument and ignored the democratic and political tradition of unions.

It is worth pointing out that the Pro-Life campaign could not actually present themselves as such and instead were forced to hide behind calls for equality and free-speech.

### Demand

In fact, one of the strangest parts of the campaign was their demand that the SU's money be spent on microwaves rather than fighting for the rights of female students.

The Neutral campaign was well designed and quite tactically astute, deploying similar language to the wildly popular 'Yes Equality' campaign which swept college campuses during the Marriage Equality Referendum in 2015.



Despite this smudging of the issues almost 5,000 UCD students cast their

vote and the result was a resounding 36% for Yes and 64% for No.

This was a vital victory for the Pro-Choice movement both on and off UCD campus. A defeat, even if not fully pro-life, would have significantly damaged the momentum of the wider campaign.

While the Pro-Lifers were unsuccessful in UCD it is quite likely this strategy will be repeated in other colleges to attempt to stem the rise of the Pro-Choice movement.

Another danger that emerged from the debate was a vague idea of moderation.

Some argued that we must strive to find a middle-ground compromise, an idea also prevalent in the media.

This must be challenged – women's basic rights should not be compromised – which is why we must continue to grow the radical left in colleges and remain principled to normalise left-wing politics and demand no limitations or concession but 'Free, Safe and Legal' abortion in Ireland.

# Socialist Worker

## HOUSING CRISIS: TIME FOR ACTION

Shaun Harkin, Derry People Before Profit.

In 1968, Eamonn McCann was among a handful of activists who launched the Derry Housing Action Committee to challenge housing conditions and the lack of provision.

Derry's notorious housing crisis was the responsibility of the city's Unionist controlled local Council, in power through gerrymandered voting, and the sectarian policies of the Unionist dominated Northern Ireland government.

Now, almost fifty years on, housing conditions and the lack of provision in Derry and across the North are once again at a crisis point.

However, this time the responsibility lies with the Sinn Fein/DUP power-sharing NI Executive.

In the Derry and Strabane area alone, there are more than 4,200 on the social housing waiting list and more than half are listed in 'housing stress'. Shockingly, there are more than 1,700 houses listed as vacant.

### Homeless

The North's homeless population is continuing to grow; last year almost 20,000 people and families asked the Housing Executive for help.

Across the North, almost 38,000 are on the social housing waiting list with nearly 23,000 in housing stress. More than 12,000 were listed as statutorily homeless.

Mass demonstrations, civil disobedience



Donald Hoodless, Chair of Housing Executive

and sit-ins across the North in deprived Catholic areas led to the creation of the Housing Executive in 1971.

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) was tasked with providing affordable quality housing and was a major

achievement of the Civil Rights movement benefiting all working class communities across the North.

But as a result of Tory Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's privatising 'right to buy' policies the NIHE's stock has declined from

171,000 houses in 1991 to only 89,000 homes today.

Derry People Before Profit activist Willie White campaigned for housing in the 1960s. Now he says,

"The present crisis is a direct result

of neo-liberal policies directed from Westminster and implemented locally by the DUP/SF Stormont administration.

The growth in housing associations has also led to a shift in accountability away from tenants and their elected representatives to privately constituted boards of directors with their highly paid CEOs and privately owned management companies."

### Housing Associations

The NI Executive's promotion of housing associations is privatisation of public housing through the back door.

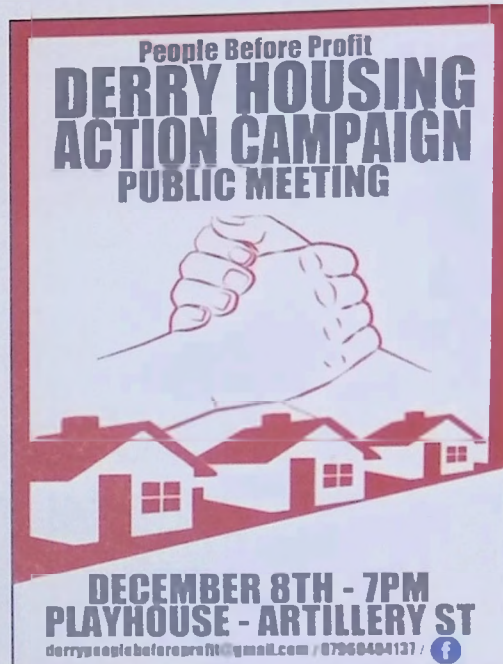
Looking at the experience with housing associations in Britain Eamonn McCann MLA warns:

"Rents will go up, services get worse and fat-cat salaries for top managers will become standard.

"Housing Associations admit that their rents are between a fifth and a third higher than those of the Housing Executive. This means that the rent isn't always covered by Housing Benefit."

The NI Executive is laying the basis for further privatisation and the complete destruction of the NIHE by refusing to allow it to borrow to build new homes and renovate existing stock.

Just as it took mobilisation on the streets to put the housing issue on the agenda in the sixties so to address the housing crisis today we need mass demonstrations, civil disobedience and sit-ins led by residents from all communities and backed by unions and anti-austerity activists across the North.



## Support BDS: Boycott Hewlett Packard

Gavin Campbell

Palestine solidarity activists are organising an international week of action targeting US computer and information technology giant Hewlett Packard.

The Palestine-led BDS movement has called for a focus on Hewlett Packard because of its complicity with Israeli apartheid and ongoing violation of Palestinian rights as a main supplier of the Israeli military's information technology.

HP Enterprise Services Israel developed the Basel System, a biometric identification system which is used throughout the West Bank and Gaza.

HP systems are key to limiting Palestinian movement and enforcing a regime of segregation.

HP also provides printers and administers IT systems for the Israel Prison Service.

### Motion

Derry City and Strabane District Council recently passed a motion supporting the Palestinian struggle, BDS and committing itself to implementing the BDS campaign.

The recently launched Derry branch of the Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign backed the motion and is organising ongoing



Calling out HP for complicity with Israeli apartheid.

activism to make Derry and Strabane Israeli Apartheid Free Zones.

The Derry IPSC held a rally at November's full Council meeting where Councillors were requested to return HP printers and back the IPSC's request for the Council to end HP procurement.

Belfast People Before Profit Councillor Matt Collins recently attempted to bring a motion of

support for BDS to be debated at the Belfast Council chamber. However, it was deemed 'illegal' by a Council official and blocked from even being discussed.

Nevertheless, the BDS movement is growing in Belfast and across Ireland.

More Councils should follow the example of the Derry motion and then campaign to make sure BDS is enforced.

## SUPPORT OUR TEACHERS!



### Statement from People Before Profit.

NASUWT teachers across the North are set to strike on Nov 30th.

The teachers are striking over pay, workload and job insecurity- issues familiar to teachers North and South. The government offered the teachers an insulting 0%!

They wanted to freeze teacher's pay for a year and then give them only 1% next year.

Stormont want to use the teacher's pay to fund schools. This is a disgrace. Instead of lowering corporation tax Stormont should be taxing the rich to pay for our schools and teachers.

Workers deserve more. People Before Profit will be visiting picket lines and supporting the teachers in every way we can.



Gerry Carroll MLA drumming up support