

Socialist Worker

For latest news visit www.socialistworkeronline.net/

Text JOIN to 086-3074060

REPEAL NOT REPLACE!

Leo Varadkar has promised a referendum on Repealing the 8th Amendment for some time in 2018. As we explain in our centre page articles this is far too slow because every day Irish women are suffering and put at risk by the current state of the law.

Nevertheless there is likely to be a referendum and some stage and it is likely that the Irish people who voted Yes to Marriage Equality will vote Yes to repealing the cruel and repressive 8th Amendment. This Amendment enshrines conservative Catholic dogma in the Constitution and thus imposes it on us all. It's long over due for it to go!

Now those who fundamentally reject a woman's right to choose, who really don't want women to achieve equality and freedom will wage a rear guard action to REPLACE the 8th Amendment with some restrictive new clause in the Constitution.

They will try, if they can, to confine the right to abortion to cases of rape, incest and fatal fetal abnor-



mality or where the woman's life is in danger. And they will try, if they

can, to make this constitutionally binding.

We say this is not acceptable in the 21st century. The constitution is

no more the place for dealing with a woman's health issue than it is for dealing with male health issues. There are no constitutional clauses on vasectomy or prostate cancer.

It is also more restrictive than the recommendation of the Citizens Assembly which, absolutely rightly included social and economic conditions as grounds for abortion.

This is vital because in reality it is social and economic conditions that hinder and prevent working class women from accessing abortion. The rich have always been able to access it.

Socialist Worker says simply and emphatically that the issue of abortion can and must be decided by one person and one person alone – the individual woman herself.

Only she has to carry the fetus and only she has to birth the child. Only she can decide whether or not she is able and willing to do this. We call for 'Free, Safe and Legal Abortion – A Woman's Right to Choose' and will settle for nothing less.

Is Leo a Liar?

Leo Varadkar presents himself as a liberal progressive, neither of the left or the right, and much of the media, in Ireland and internationally, buys into this image. He's gay, he's half Indian, he's modern – he must be progressive.

But those who look beneath the PR spin at the reality of his record and policies will find a very different story.

Varadkar has always been known as a tough economic neo-liberal – that means a right winger and an absolute believer in the virtues of the free market.

That means he is strongly opposed to workers' rights and to trade unionism and he is strongly pro-business and bosses.

The way he ran his campaign for the leadership of Fine Gael confirmed this. His appeal was to the right wing of what is Ireland's most right wing party.

His two main themes were his attack on 'Welfare Cheats' and his claim that he wanted to represent 'those who get up early in the morning.' These are classic themes of



the hard right.

They play to the idea that the main problem in society is the feckless lazy poor at the bottom, many of whom are on the fiddle if not outright crooks. This is often very much the

views bosses have of their workers who they always think should be working harder.

And it is designed to get the middle classes and the upper ranks of the working class to focus their

resentment downwards onto the poor not upwards against the super rich.

FactCheck

But in fact both Varadkar's campaign slogans were based on lies.

In launching the welfare campaign his Department of Social Protection claimed they were preventing welfare fraud to the tune of €500 million a year.

As the Journal.ie showed in a careful FactCheck this was a fantasy figure based on vastly inflated statistics, The Journal concluded:

'From our analysis, even following what appear to be especially high multipliers used to estimate savings, that figure is closer to €51.9 million – just 16% of the €318 million officially estimated by DSP'

That's 16% of a figure that's only 3/5 of Varadkar's headline claim.

And the notion of representing those who get up early ignored the fact that the vast majority of those who get up early are low-paid workers: street cleaners, office cleaners, nurses, factory shift workers, building workers, super market workers and others whose wages Varadkar wants to hold down!

There's a lesson for us all here. Look beyond the smiling face and the open necked shirt, the spin and the PR. Look at the reality of his policies and their consistent bias towards the bosses and the rich.

As Socialist Worker goes to press we await the outcome of the Jobstown Trial. Whatever the verdict in this very important case we say:

SOLIDARITY WITH JOBSTOWN: PROTEST IS NOT A CRIME!

New public sector deal locks in austerity

Owen McCormack

Trade unions and the Government have negotiated a pay deal for all public sector workers. Some unions will start voting in the next week. The deal is a major setback and effectively locks in austerity measures brought in during the recession. It awards minuscule pay rises but effectively gives the Government a blank cheque in other areas.

It copper fastens pay inequality; newly recruited teachers for example continue to face a career of doing the same work for less money than their senior colleagues. The issue isn't even addressed in the deal. This is why the INTO and TUI teaching unions have initially rejected the deal.

It makes the attacks on public sector workers' pensions permanent.

The emergency pension levy is now made permanent and incorporated into an increased pension contribution worth 10% of earnings above €32,000. The poorer pensions given to post 2013 workers remain as a permanent feature.

It also makes permanent the unpaid hours – 2 hours extra a week in many cases – that were forced on workers as 'an emergency' during the recession. Workers can opt out of these unpaid hours, but extraordinarily face being docked pay on a pro rata basis!

The government is grabbing an extra 15 million hours of work out of public sector workers for no pay!

By accepting this deal, union leaders in Impact and Siptu have effectively accepted as permanent, measures that were meant to be emergency steps due to the recession.

Con job

The union leaders have accepted the con job of a report by the Public Sector Pay Commission. This was a fig leaf of a report which compared pension entitlements in the private sector to the public sector. It was used by the Government and media to attack the "generous" pensions paid to public sector workers.

In reality all it did was confirm how private sector employers want to rip up any decent pension provision for their workers. It then uses this to justify simi-



Younger workers to be left behind in new public sector pay deal



SIPTU recommend this shameful deal

lar attacks on the public sector. In other words it was a classic race to the bottom.

The pay increases offered are pathetic;

they won't even cover the cost of living increases and will do nothing for workers trying to cope with the rising cost of

childcare, of car insurance and astronomical rent rises. For many workers the increases are almost wiped out by making the pen-

sion levy and unpaid hours permanent.

There is an urgent need for workers to campaign against and reject this deal. During the recession the Government launched a vicious attack on all public sector workers. The media joined in and workers, not the bankers or developers, were effectively blamed for the state of the economy.

Union leaders accepted and sold to their members a series of rotten deals on the basis that they were temporary and we would win these conditions back eventually. Now they are asking workers to accept these changes for good; even while we are told the recession is over and 'recovery' is underway!

Struggling

Over 20,000 jobs were cut over the austerity years leaving many of our public services struggling to cope. This is dramatically shown in the health service.

The crisis in waiting lists, in A&E departments, and the recent closure of emergency beds for adolescents with mental health issues in Linn Dara are all caused by the attacks on workers' pay and conditions.

The health service cannot recruit or retain staff because pay and conditions are so bad. Newly qualified nurses are leaving the country to work abroad or are "poached" by private sector hospitals.

But the deal ignores this. Like the issue of pay equality it suggests that these issues are looked at AFTER the deal expires in 2020!

This deal should be rejected and union leaders told to demand a better deal for their members and the entire public service that people reply on.

Brid Smith TD of People Before Profit has issued a leaflet to public sector workers, especially health workers which says: "This is a terrible deal for workers. It locks in extra hours, higher pension costs and pay apartheid."

"If this deal goes through you will have these terms for the rest of your working life."

"Don't take the first deal you are offered. Vote No. Demand your union leaders fight for a better deal!"

Brid Smith is right.

STINK OF CORRUPTION HANGS OVER POOLBEG INCINERATOR PROJECT

Annette Mooney

When a tiny number of unelected officials can force through a deeply unpopular project, you know you live in a corporate regime. For decades the people of Ringsend, Irishtown and Sandymount in Dublin have expressed their opposition to having this Covanta incinerator here.

Even the mainly right wing city councillors voted to oppose it. But now it is built and has begun receiving waste because unelected officials decided.

On top of this on 14 June waste burning at the Poolbeg incinerator had to be suspended following a dangerous lime-leak in the very first week of operations at the plant.

As a result of the 'unscheduled' release of lime from the plant's fabric filter baghouse, which filters emissions during the burning process, eleven people had to be brought to hospital to be checked.

This incident, so soon after the opening of the plant, confirmed the fears expressed by many residents and campaigners.

On Monday 19 June Richard Boyd Barrett TD, Cllr. Andrew Keegan and Annette Mooney spoke at a well attended



Poolbeg incinerator

outdoor Public Meeting in Ringsend to discuss how best to monitor the Poolbeg incinerator.

Richard reported on US energy

corporation, Covanta's poor safety record but despite this Covanta is monitoring its own safety. The suspicion is that Covanta will try to cut down on

costs by not testing for dioxins as analysis costs are very high.

Covanta cannot be trusted to hand over the correct data to the

Environmental Protection Agency. Cllr. Andrew Keegan reported that Covanta were not giving full information on how much activated carbon, that ensure no dioxins enter the atmosphere, Covanta will use.

The meeting agreed to the following proposals:

1. That a baseline health study should be conducted on a large sample of people living in the vicinity. That this be monitored on a yearly basis to ensure there are no health effects from the incinerators.

2. That truck traffic going to the incinerator be reduced.

3. That Covanta be forced to fund a chemical engineer who will be nominated by the community as their independent monitor. This monitor to have the right to unannounced access to the plant at any time.

4. That the EPA and the Environmental Health Officers of Dublin City Council make regular unannounced visits to the incinerator and engage in more active independent monitoring.

■ To follow this campaign or get involved go to: <https://www.facebook.com/PoolbegIncinerator/>

Never miss an issue of Socialist Worker

Six month subscription €15/£10stg

Name _____

Address _____

Tel _____

Email _____

I would like to receive _____ copies of Socialist Worker each issue
Return to PO Box 1648, Dublin 8, with a cheque/postal order or a bank lodgement receipt. Bank Details: Socialist Workers Movement, AIB, 37/38 Upper O'Connell St, Dublin 1. Account No: 85173469. Sort code: 93-11-36

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 May 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

Fill in the form and send to
SWP PO Box 1648 Dublin 8

Name.....

Address.....

.....

Email.....

Phone.....



Varadkar: new figurehead, but the same old policies

Seán Egan

Leo Varadkar's election as the head of Fine Gael and summary coronation as Taoiseach, facilitated by Fianna Fáil signals a continuation of the worst aspects of Fine Gael policy as well as a renewed attack on workers' conditions and on ordinary people in general.

While Varadkar spouts platitudes about 'opportunity' and being 'neither left nor right' his less guarded moments and his political past reveal that he is a free market fundamentalist determined to enrich the privileged at the expense of the rest of us.

Varadkar gained prominence in large part due to his impassioned critiques of Fianna Fáil corruption during Fine Gael's last stint in opposition.

His youth, take no prisoners approach and vigorous demands for transparency made him an attractive prospect for middle class voters wedded to right wing politics but frustrated by chronic FF incompetence and back room dealing.

This forthrightness did not extend past 2011 when he was appointed to the FG-Labour cabinet first as Minister for Transport and then talking over James Reilly's Health portfolio, continuing the coalition's policy of inhuman cuts to essential services.

Unpleasant

A particularly unpleasant episode in his tenure as Minister for Health involved a €12m cut to the €35m allocated to mental health in the 2016 budget.

This was undertaken despite the fake concern for mental health issues and stigma routinely and robotically expressed by Varadkar and others in the media and on the Dáil floor.

One of Varadkar's latest stunts and what defined his brief tenure as Minister for Social Protection is his nasty, welfare fraud witch-hunt.

The 'Welfare Cheats Cheat us all' campaign laid out a hateful, miserable and incorrect vision that vastly overestimated the amount of funds lost to welfare fraud and encouraged people to turn in their neighbours they suspected of fraud.

Worse still, roughly €200,000 was spent on what amounted to a public relations campaign for Varadkar himself, endearing him to the hardened reactionaries at the core of Fine Gael ahead of the party's leadership election.



Enda Kenny and Leo Varadkar

Varadkar's campaign though vicious is the natural outgrowth of the criminalisation of welfare that was enacted by Joan Burton as Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection. Under the FG-Labour coalition hundreds of welfare claimants suspected of fraud were dragged into garda stations and humiliated.

This served the sole purpose of the appeasement of nasty right wingers by an uncaring government.

Much has been made of Leo Varadkar's ethnic identity, his youth and his sexuality - especially in the foreign press.

Varadkar himself has used his age to project an image of himself as a reformer and distinct from the dusty, corrupt old boys club of Irish politics.

It has been said that he is representative of a young, increasingly progressive and diverse population.

The contradiction at the heart of this depiction is Varadkar's backward ideology and his wrong side of history political past. Despite resembling a changing Ireland, he has stood squarely in the way of progress.

Lauded

Varadkar was much lauded for his role in the Marriage Equality referendum, coming out of the closet and in doing so becoming the first out government minister.

However, just six years before when speaking on the issue of Civil Partnerships (a bureaucratic, half step towards marriage equality introduced under the FF-Green coalition) a then closeted Varadkar spouted tired, ugly rhetoric about the unsuitability of gay parents and opposed the legislation.

Similarly he has parroted conservative and glib attitudes to women's reproduc-

tion health even comparing the plight of the 12 women who daily leave the country to access abortion with a holiday to Amsterdam to smoke cannabis.

While Varadkar has bent to popular pressure and has scheduled a referendum on the 8th amendment for next year he will certainly favour a restrictive regime that will continue to undermine women's right to choose.

Just as Marine Le Pen attempted to provide a softer, feminised version of her father's fascist politics, Varadkar attempts to provide a trendy, palatable veneer for the backward ideas that have always animated Ireland's Blueshirts.

Thankfully an emerging youth movement politicised by the marriage equality campaign, the repeal movement and austerity conditions won't tolerate Varadkar's conservative, 'politics-as-usual' style, even

if it is clouded in shallow identity politics.

Varadkar's come out swinging in his attempt to silence dissenting forces in the Dáil, in the latest chapter of their marriage of convenience FG and FF are attempting to limit the input of smaller in political debates.

The major parties of Irish capitalism were shaken by their weak results in last year's elections and are increasingly unable to stand up under vigorous opposition scrutiny as evidenced by the endless saga of state corruption revelations.

Regardless, Varadkar's vicious agenda will be resisted both inside the Dáil and outside on the streets by socialists, trade unionists, feminists and young people who demand real change in Irish society not a cosmetic renovation of the same old right-wing politics conducted by a vain, insipid leader with an axe to grind.

The Corbyn Earthquake

John Molyneux

Crowds of young people at Glastonbury this year have been spontaneously erupting into chants of 'Oh, Jeremy Corbyn!'

Nothing so symbolises the political earthquake brought about by Jeremy Corbyn's dramatic campaign in the recent British general election. Crowds of young people at a music festival chanting the name of a sixty eight year old white male Labour politician! This is unprecedented - more normal would be to be booed or ignored.

Indeed there is no real precedent for the whole Corbyn phenomenon. Systematically despised, denounced and dismissed by the entire political establishment from the right wing of the Tories to the majority of the Parliamentary Labour Party and the entire mainstream media from the Daily Mail to the 'liberal' Guardian Corbyn was universally deemed unelectable.

At the start of the election campaign Corbyn was 20 to 25 points behind in the polls. Indeed it was precisely because Theresa May, believing these polls, felt assured of a landslide victory, that she called the election in the first place.

To turn that deficit around and to succeed in denying May and the Tories an overall majority was an extraordinary achievement and inflicted a devastating defeat on the Tory leader.

It is true that Theresa May fought a dreadful campaign, including her refusal to participate in the TV Leaders Debate, but the reason it was so bad was not just personal incompetence. It was her fundamental political miscalculation. She thought she was headed for a walk in the park and she found herself facing a people's revolt.

The turning point was the leaking of the Labour Manifesto three days before it was due to be published. The leak was probably a Blairite move to undermine Corbyn on the assumption that this radical programme would cause a scandal.

Radical

In fact its radical policies, which the press publicised by attacking them, turned out to be very popular. Large numbers of people actually liked the idea of taxing the rich and the corporations, redistributing wealth and reducing inequality, getting rid of zero contracts and raising low pay. They were inspired by proposals to defend and improve the NHS and other public services, end benefit cuts and abolish tuition fees.

Labour's manifesto - its most left wing statement in living memory - tapped into and expressed the pent up anger among millions of people at nearly a decade of neoliberal austerity and cutbacks.

It broke through the barrier of 'apathy' and suspicion that had hitherto sealed

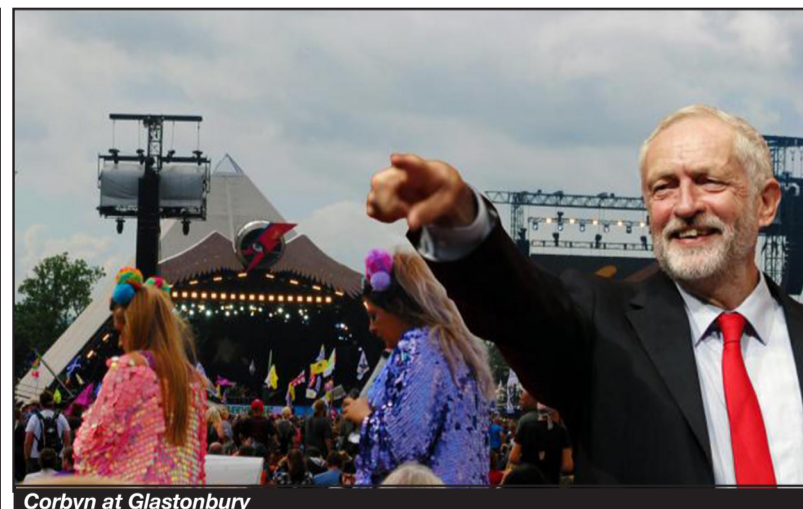
many people, especially the young, off from politics. One of the reasons many of the polls seriously underestimated Corbyn's support was that the 'model' they used, based on past experience, assumed most young people wouldn't vote. But it was different this time.

Corbyn's campaign was also different from business as usual. Whereas Theresa May didn't go anywhere except to a carefully handpicked small audience, Corbyn went out and met the people and addressed mass rallies.

On one Saturday ten days before polling day he spoke to 5000 in Birmingham, 5000 in West Kirby and then 15,000 at a Libertines concert in the evening- where he was cheered to the echo. No other leading British politician could have done anything like this or would have dared to try.

This rising mass grassroots support was also reflected in the mass canvassing teams sent to knock on doors - much of it organised by the left-wing Momentum campaign.

Another striking feature of the Corbyn campaign was its extensive and astute use of social media with a stream of powerful videos and memes. The fact that many of these proved very popular, and were taken up and shared on a huge scale by Corbyn's support base created an 'alternative public opinion' and political culture below the radar of the capitalist mainstream media



Corbyn at Glastonbury

and their hysterical attacks.

In the course of the election campaign there were two dreadful terrorist atrocities, in Manchester and London. It was widely expected that this would help May as she reacted with authoritarianism and barely concealed islamophobia, but the people of Manchester and London responded brilliantly and Corbyn's campaign seems not to have been affected.

Indeed his speech pointing to the link between terrorism and British foreign policy with its successive wars and invasions of Muslim countries received widespread support. And racism does not seem to have figured much in the election and the main racist party, UKIP, was wiped out - again

confounding many expectations.

There are many lessons for the Irish and international left in this whole development, the most important of which is that radical and socialist policies are popular if they can gain a hearing.

However, one note of caution is also necessary. Had Corbyn actually won and formed a government this would have been only the start of an even more intense battle as all the forces of the 1%, the state and the media would conspire to crush him as they did Syriza in Greece.

In those circumstances the mobilization of people power and revolt from below would have become even more urgent and necessary.

#socialism 1.01

John Moynaux

HOW THE POOR DIE



Grenfell Flats

It is not easy to write about Grenfell. The sheer horror of it: the burning tower in the night, people jumping to their deaths; the babies thrown from windows in desperation; families on their mobile phones knowing they won't get out.

To write about it you have to think about it and the thinking hurts.

The matter is made worse by the fact that as I write, ten days after the fire, we still don't know how many died. The official figure – and it has been slowly but inexorably rising – is now 79. It may be higher when you read this. Of these only 9 have been confirmed identified.

Many local people are convinced that far more died – they fear that it may be hundreds. This suspicion has been backed up by Shadow Home Secretary, Diane Abbott.

When you look at the building which had 127 flats with 227 bedrooms and was densely inhabited and when you look at the speed and horror of the fire it looks all too likely that the toll is higher than being said.

This raises the suspicion that the figures have been drip fed by the authorities to minimise shock, rage and reaction on the streets. But we don't know for sure.

And the uncertainty makes it hard to write because hard to get a proper measure of the tragedy in one's head.

Yet is essential to write about it. It is essential because EVERYTHING about the fire, everything about its causes and its consequences, about the response of the authorities and of the people exposes the real nature of the world we live in – a world that relentlessly sacrifices people for profit.

There is the fact that the Grenfell residents had been warning for two years that they were living in a potential death trap and ignored by the Council. There is the probability that the deadly cladding which caused the fire to spread so fast was added to improve the ugly appearance of the building for the benefit of the well-to-do neighbours. There is the fact that safer cladding was available and would only have cost about £5000 per apartment.

There is the fact that there were no sprinklers in the whole building and no fire escapes.

There is the fact that when concerns were raised with him about cutbacks in the London Fire Service, Boris Johnson, then Mayor of London told the complainant to 'Get Stuffed!'

There is the fact that the post-fire response of the council was, as even Theresa May has been forced to admit, woeful. There is the fact that when Theresa May paid her 'Official Visit' she was too scared to meet the residents or survivors and they had to send the Queen to try to repair the damage.

There is the fact that May has announced a relief fund of only a pathetic £5 million, with payments of only £5,500 for each affected household. There is the fact that in contrast the response of the local community has been magnificent.

Then in what ought to be, the final insult, but probably isn't, there is the report today that Rydon, the company behind the refurbishment of Grenfell Tower, is about to get a £65million construction contract in west London.

According to industry publication, Construction News,

this has been approved by Ealing Council's cabinet.

Finally there is the crucial background fact that Grenfell Tower was in the borough of Kensington and Chelsea, an area which encapsulates and condenses all the inequality and contradictions of neoliberal Britain. North Kensington, where Grenfell was, is one of the poorest, most deprived areas in the whole of the country; South Kensington and Chelsea is one of the richest – the home of Harrods and the billionaires.

Are there sprinklers in Harrods? We don't even have to ask. It is the poor who die like this never the rich.

Grenfell then shows us the reality of Tory Britain, austerity Britain, the Britain that is the legacy of the Mays, Johnsons, Camerons and Blairs.

But no one should imagine this is just about Britain. In Ireland we have had the Stardust Fire and the Carrickmines fire and continue to have, as anyone who knows housing or construction knows, countless buildings and homes seriously at risk in terms of health and safety. And they not in Foxrock or Dublin 4!

And today we hear of over 140 burned alive in Pakistan as villagers – poor people again – gathered fuel from a crashed tanker, and from China of 118 missing, presumed dead, from a mudslide in a village in Sichuan.

From Grenfell and Carrickmines to Sichuan, from earthquakes and floods to hurricanes and droughts the cruel logic of inequality and class shapes the death tolls.

This is the world we have to change.

How suicidal m

Emma Hendicks

In Ireland up to 12 women a day either leave the country for an abortion or access illegal abortion pills. The only legal abortion in Ireland can be procured under The Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act 2013 (PLDPA).

This Act allows abortion if a woman's life is in danger, including risk of suicide.

Once it is determined that a woman's life is at risk due to suicide, a doctor and two psychiatrists have to unanimously agree that termination of a pregnancy is the solution.

And this system is failing. It is barbaric, perpetuates shame on already vulnerable women and is not working. The horrific story of a teenager recently held against her will shows just how unworkable the PLDPA is.

We know from court documents that a mother and daughter (minor) contacted healthcare professionals as the young woman's pregnancy was making her suicidal. The mother and daughter were then transferred to Dublin under the presumption of acquiring an abortion for the young woman.

On arrival the young woman was sectioned under the Mental Health Act 2001. The PLDPA was not invoked. Although the woman was at risk of self-harm and suicide the psychiatrist said "this could be managed by treatment and that termination of pregnancy was not the solution at this stage".

Our Bodies – Not Our Choice

This young woman's freedom and choices were completely taken away from her. The stress of the pregnancy was already making her feel suicidal and on a single psychiatrist's word she was then sectioned. Fortunately, a second psychiatrist saw the young girl and deemed that she should not be sectioned under the Mental Health Act. She was



then discharged.

We don't know if she received the abortion she so desperately wanted, but we do know that if she did receive the necessary healthcare it was certainly delayed by the inability of Irish law to allow women choice

in pregnancy.

How can we expect the law regarding abortion and suicide to work if access to it requires your psychiatrist to be pro-choice?

What was the intention in the first psychiatrist's intervention?

Mobilise for free safe

Marnie Holborow

Hardly a month goes by that we are not reminded of the barbaric obstacles put in the way of women in Ireland exercising choice over their lives.

At the end of June, the UN ruled that failing to provide an abortion for 40-year-old Siobhán Whelan, who was carrying a foetus with a fatal abnormality, amounted to a violation of human rights.

In the same month figures showed that among the thousands of women travelling to Britain for an abortion, 15 were under the age of 16 and 520 felt too ashamed to give Irish addresses.

Also in June, there was the case described above in which a girl who wanted an abortion was sectioned under the Mental Health Act.

It is truly extraordinary that the Irish political establishment has got away with this for so long.

As in so many social issues – whether it be housing, poverty or mental health – the vast majority of women matter little to those in power.

What have we got from our supposedly mould-breaking Taoiseach?

The promise of legislation for a referendum on repeal in 2018.

He could easily have chosen to speed things up and commit to a referendum once the Oireachtas committee on the Citizens Assembly has reported back in the Autumn.

His social liberalism is paper thin. Back in 2014, with an eye on the Fine Gael leadership Varadkar went as far



to say that he was "pro life" and that while on demand', he thought current laws put lives of women at risk, he opposed 'abortion on demand'. "There are two lives involved in any pregnancy.

"For that reason, like most people in the country, I do not support abortion on request or on demand."

Further back, in 2010, when asked

whether he believed Ireland should legalise abortion, he simply answered "I do not".

Varadkar may model himself on the 'neither left nor right' of France's new President but his position on abortion puts him markedly to the right of Macron who has said that he will never stop defending a woman's right to abortion.

Must women be?



It wasn't in the best interest of the young woman and was stripping her of all her rights just because she wanted an abortion. Was she just to be sectioned until she gave birth? Was that the cure for her suicidal tendencies?

What would be the outcome? Are we to accept that a young woman being locked up and forced through a pregnancy that impacts upon every part of her being will in any way make a positive impact on her life? Is this saving a life

or ruining a life? Ireland, a country that forces children to have children!

When this young woman was at her most vulnerable and her life was at risk, her cries for help were ignored.

Not Suicidal Enough

Recently the Abortion Support Network has reported similar instances of barriers to accessing abortion under the PLDPA. Two women who required visas to leave the country had told their medical professionals that they were suicidal and wanted an abortion. They were denied abortions under the PLDPA as they were told "they weren't suicidal enough".

One woman was granted an abortion after her third suicide attempt, the first two attempts not being sufficient evidence of how much the pregnancy was affecting her life.

The second woman was initially denied an abortion under the PLDPA and eventually granted one. Both of their terminations happened later in the pregnancies than they should have.

So how worthy do you need to be to have an abortion in Ireland? How suicidal is suicidal enough?

Why in Ireland, even within the law, are we allowing women to be treated so horrifically? Time and again the state victimises women who need bodily autonomy.

If we continue to put conditions in place for women to access abortion, women will continue to not meet these conditions.

We know 26 women had abortions in Ireland in 2016 under the PLDPA but there are no records on the number of women who were refused abortions or who were sectioned for asking for one.

Ireland's abortion laws are like a ticking time bomb waiting for the next tragic case to be revealed.

Free, Safe and Legal access to abortion in Ireland is the only way we can protect women.

Free and legal abortion



Varadkar must be forced to bring forward the referendum and put an end to the archaic laws that humiliate women.

Young people are impatient for change and the broad and strong campaign to repeal the 8th needs to seize the window of opportunity to win free safe and legal abortion – nothing less.

We must challenge the anti-abortionists when they mobilise

On July 1st they will hold their annual so called pro-life rally in Dublin. Its numbers will be swelled by support from the Catholic Church and conservative politicians. Repealers should not fear being labelled confrontationalist. We need to show them that their day has gone.

The Citizens Assembly showed that liberalization of abortion is realizable. They leap-frogged all the caution of mainstream politicians and openly declared that 'socioeconomic issues' and 'on request' are grounds for abortions.

But, steered by legal 'experts', the Citizens Assembly also left the door open to replacing the 8th amendment with a wording to allow the Oireachtas to legislate which also might include the rights of the 'unborn'.

This concession to Catholic teaching is unacceptable. It again takes choice away from women. People Before Profit TD, Brid Smith, at a recent rally for repeal in Dublin put it very clearly: "We need to build pressure to repeal, not replace, the 8th Amendment. We will accept nothing less".

Even so-called left-wing parties still bend the knee to Catholic conservatism. The Labour Party's policy is to support abortion only in cases of rape, incest, sexual assault, risk to life, fatal foetal abnormality and risk to mental and physical health. In 2015 they even felt the need to include in their policy that 'sustaining embryonic and fetal life should be recognized as an important social role'!

Sinn Fein is no different. They

support abortion only in limited circumstances and have rejected pro-choice positions in previous Ardheiseanna. Louise O'Reilly, one of their representatives on the Oireachtas committee, stated that they support the Citizens Assembly but then, in direct contradiction, said that they want to 'repeal the eighth and enact legislation on the grounds of rape, incest, and fatal foetal abnormality'.

This is a lot more restrictive than the Citizens Assembly.

Now is not the time to make concessions to a mythical middle ground. Anger at Church domination is running high as the reaction to the Sisters of Charity over the National Maternity Hospital proved.

That incident also showed that people power can stop the old order in its tracks. There are new political forces, like Strike for Repeal who can give expression to the frustration that many young people feel.

Winning abortion rights for women in Ireland is not just a woman's issue. It is about power and control and allowing working class and marginalized women to have the access to abortion facilities that wealthier women can have.

People Before Profit is gearing up for a summer of mobilization to win repeal. The March for Choice on 30th September will be an opportunity to come out en masse to show that women can wait no longer. We will be organizing local meetings and street activities. Text 087 283 9964 to get involved.

Brid Smith says



Seanie FitzPatrick is innocent, OK?

It is over a month now since Seanie FitzPatrick was acquitted on all charges and, as far as the media is concerned its all forgotten. It should not be. When Seanie FitzPatrick walked free from the high court it expressed all that is rotten in Irish society.

The fact that the dismissal of his case coincided with the ongoing determined attempt by the State to criminalise and jail the Water Charges protestors of Jobstown reinforced the point and rubbed salt in the wound.

Let's start with the official story. The official story was that the Judge ordered the jury to acquit FitzPatrick because of incompetence on the part of the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement (ODCE).

Judge Aylmer said the investigation fell short of an 'unbiased, impartial and balanced investigation'.

He said that the leader of the investigation was inexperienced and made fundamental mistakes, which included failing to seek out evidence of innocence as well as guilt and trying to build a case (unlike at Jobstown of course), coaching witnesses and failing to take statements properly and, astonishingly, the large

protested against bankers or austerity or even if they had ever made comments on social media about these things. And failure to disclose any of these things would incur a fine of €2000!

Since Mary is a well known campaigner she had no choice but to disclose and was duly ruled out by the Judge. But this shows that there, was from the outset an attempt to produce a jury favourable to the view that Seanie FitzPatrick was 'innocent'.

And this process was paralleled in the Jobstown trial by the Prosecution trying to get a jury hostile to the protestors by barring anyone from Tallaght or anyone opposed to water charges. (In this case the defence team were able to partly stop this attempt at jury rigging). Because those that know Sean FitzPatrick is innocent are equally convinced that Paul Murphy is guilty.

But this is only a tiny bit of the whole picture most of which remains shrouded in secrecy, as it always does. There is an established pattern here. A scandal emerges and there is a suggestion of corruption in the highest places. The government announces an inquiry to 'establish the facts'.



Seanie FitzPatrick

scale shredding of relevant documents at the time of the first trial in May 2015.

Even if this were the whole story it would be shocking. First of all it makes no sense in its own terms because the shredding of documents probably aided the defence and damaged the prosecution. Secondly, why on earth was an inexperienced and unqualified investigator appointed to a case of such importance when the State would have known it would be up against the best lawyers money could buy?

Unless of course 'they' wanted the case to fail from the beginning – perish the thought!

But this is not the whole story. The 'whole story' is deeply hidden and will remain so till it's far too late to do anything about it.

However, by pure chance, we know a little bit of this back story. My sister, Mary Smith was summoned for Jury Service and when she arrived at court found she was one of 200 or so scheduled to serve on the Seanie FitzPatrick trial.

Before the jury was selected they were told by the Judge that they were obliged to rule themselves out: if they had 'strong opinions' about bankers; if had been affected by austerity, if they had ever

The inquiry inquires – for years – at vast public expense and sometimes a few facts emerge BUT NOTHING IS DONE AND NO-ONE IS HELD TO ACCOUNT. Because, of course, everyone is innocent until proven guilty and somehow nothing can be proven.

So from Charlie Haughey to Bertie Aherne to Denis O'Brien and Michael Lowry through to NAMA and Project Eagle and Noirín O'Sullivan and many others THEY GET AWAY WITH IT.

Naturally we can speculate. Did Seanie say to his mates in the golf club 'I know where all the bodies are buried. If I go down I'll be taking others down with me'? Did the establishment just decide amongst themselves that jailing Seanie would set a bad precedent? How many others would have to be jailed too?

We don't know. The Irish establishment may be incompetent when it comes to running a health service or housing its people but one thing it is absolutely expert at – covering its tracks.

There is a golden rule that applies here: THOSE THAT HAVE THE GOLD MAKE THE RULES. That's how it works and how it will go on working until we, the people, change the whole rotten system.

Solidarity with Palestine and the Palestinians



Dublin City Councillors with Irish Palestine Solidarity Campaign

Flying the flag of International Solidarity

In a remarkable series of symbolic gestures of solidarity with the people of Palestine, Dublin City Council, Sligo, Donegal and Galway County Councils all flew the Palestinian flag during the month of May over their municipal buildings.

These are small but important statements of our solidarity with:

- the people of the West Bank living under a brutal Israeli occupation that worsens with each passing day
- the people of Gaza who have endured three military invasions, each one more murderous and brutal than the last, within the last ten years and who today endure an horrific and inhumane blockade and siege,
- with those Palestinian citizens of Israel denied full citizenship rights and equality of treatment before the law
- with the near 7 million Palestinian refugees denied the UN-endorsed Right of Return to their homeland

They were actions in which we loudly declared our unambiguous support for Palestinians in the struggle for freedom and justice: Our government may be afraid to stand up to Israel and defend the Palestinian's right to self-determination, but we are not.

Anyone who has read, seen or heard of the reality for Palestinians under the Israeli apartheid regime cannot but be angered at the inhuman treatment of one group of people by another – it cuts to the core of what it means to be thinking and feeling human beings, sisters and brothers together, to see one group being treated as less than human:

What must it be like to have a nuclear armed, heavily militarised and economically powerful state occupying your homeland, demolishing your homes, burning your olive trees and crops, confiscating more and more of your land to facilitate the building of internationally outlawed settlements, your movement arbitrarily restricted, your access to clean water and electricity rationed, your chances of gaining employment and retaining it reduced, your children imprisoned, your sons and daughters murdered for no reason other than being Palestinian.

The international political community is at best indifferent and at worst complicit with Israeli crimes – trading with the state as if it isn't engaged in some of the worst abuses and crimes against humanity.

So the change will come from the people, left-wing political parties and progressive social movements.

Civil society campaigns like the global BDS movement (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions), have scored significant victories in hitting Israel economically but we must also campaign to put pressure on our own governments to live up to their international legal obligations and uphold the Palestinian fight for national self-determination, freedom and justice, and demand the creation of a one secular and democratic state for all of the people living between the Mediterranean and the River Jordan.

John Lyons, People Before Profit Councillor for Beaumont-Donaghmede, Dublin North Central
It was John Lyons who moved the motion on Dublin City Council to fly the Palestinian flag through the month of May.

'After decades, I have the privilege to be the prime minister who is building a new community in Judea and Samaria," stated Benjamin Netanyahu in late June, referring to Amichai, the first entirely new state-approved settlement to be constructed in the Occupied Palestinian Territories since the Israeli-Palestine Oslo peace accords were signed in 1993.

With an extreme right-wing Israeli administration pushing Israeli society, through fear, further to the right and toward "creeping fascism", according to former Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak, a government emboldened by the utter failure of the international community to hold it to account for its repeated and continuing breaches of international human rights laws and obligations, the local political moment looks bleak for the Palestinians.

The illegal settlements continue to steal Palestinian lands as they divide and fragment the West Bank ever further; a humanitarian crisis threatens the Gaza Strip, the biggest open-air prison on the planet, thanks to the horrendous siege and blockade established by Israel in 2007.

Take a step back and look West and we find Donald Trump is in the White House appointing David Friedman, long-time supporter and funder of the illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank, as his ambassador to Israel.

Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, comes from a well-known pro-Israeli family that also supports and funds the illegal settlements in the West Bank; and the one policy commitment that Barak Obama made in his last year of office that Donald Trump will certainly not attack and repeal is, of course, the financial package of some \$38 billion to Israel over the next ten years, making Israeli the single largest recipient of US financial aid.

And finally, in the West Bank and Gaza Strip the Palestinian political leadership is divided as never before.

Despite the recent calls for unity during the mass hunger strike of over 1,200 Palestinian prisoners and administrative detainees, relations between Hamas in Gaza and Fatah in the West Bank are at an all-time low, due in the main to the role and function of the Palestinian Authority, dominated as it is by Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah.

It is a quisling political organisation that colludes with the Israeli state and security forces to suppress Palestinian opposition and resistance to the occupation, in the all-but-dead hope of establishing a Palestinian state on the ever-shrinking lands of the West Bank and Gaza, some 22% of what was once called Palestine.

Israel: An Apartheid State

A recent UN report of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, "Israeli Practices towards the Palestinian People and the Question of Apartheid" found that the State of Israel is indeed an Apartheid State, noting that the strategic fragmentation of the Palestinian people is the principle method by which Israel imposes an apartheid regime upon the Palestinians:

Since 1967 Palestinians have been divided and forced to live under four different sets of laws:

1. Civil Law, with special restrictions, governing Palestinians who live as citizens of Israel
2. Permanent residency law governing Palestinians living in the city of Jerusalem
3. Military law governing Palestinians, including those in the refugee camps, living since 1967 under conditions of belligerent occupation in the West Bank (2.7 million) and Gaza Strip (1.9million)
4. Policy to preclude the return of Palestinians, whether refugees or exiles, living outside territory under Israel's control.

These four domains taken together constitute one comprehensive regime developed for the purpose of ensuring the enduring domination over non-Jews in all land exclusively under Israeli control.

Apartheid: a systematic regime of racial domination is evidenced in how the state of Israel implements laws regarding ownership of land and demographic engineering – the Law of Return which allows any Jew, with or without a connection to Israel, to enter Israel and obtain citizenship.



Donald Trump wrecks the planet

Dave O'Farrell

Of all the crazy and dangerous things done by Donald Trump his disastrous environmental policies will probably have most serious lasting effect.

Trump has long been notorious for his climate change denial stance. In 2014 he tweeted that:

"The concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese in order to make U.S. manufacturing non-competitive."

Following on from his campaign pledges to open new coal mines one has already opened in Pennsylvania and he has pushed ahead with plans to lease 1,700 acres of wilderness in Gunnison National

Forest in Colorado to Arch Coal.

This will allow them to expand their existing mining operations in the region, mines that Environmental Protection Agency data have shown to be the largest industrial emitter of methane in Colorado between 2013 and 2015. This is on top of the continued extraction of shale gas via fracking.

Of course by far the most damaging anti-climate move of his administration to date has been pulling out of the Paris Climate Accord. After refusing to confirm or deny his intention to do so at a G7 meeting in Italy in May he announced his decision at a press conference. His speech dripped with economic nationalism not far removed from the infamous tweet about China and global warming mentioned earlier.

"We're getting out. We don't want other leaders and other countries laughing at us any more. And they won't be.

The same nations asking us to stay in the agreement are the countries that have collectively cost America trillions of dollars through tough trade practices and in many cases lax contributions to our critical military alliance."

Trump's attitude to climate change is of course typical of many in the Republican



Trump's message to the planet



Party and shouldn't be a surprise from a President who appointed the CEO of Exxon Mobile as his Secretary of State. Denial of climate change or even just refusal to do anything significant about it has long been evident among those who hold strongly neoliberal economic views.

When faced with plans for regulation

which may hurt their profits fossil fuel companies are more than capable of utilising their vast wealth and power to scupper those plans without a thought to the long term consequences for the mass of the world's population, now and in the future. And Donald Trump is busy showing that he's their man.

Imperialism in Mosul and Raqqah: A tale of two cities

Memet Uludag

Surrounded on the ground by the Iraqi army in Mosul and Kurdish fighters around Raqqah in Syria, and with the heavy bombardments by US air strikes, ISIS is losing the key battles in Iraq and Syria, while civilians are suffering huge casualties.

One of main themes in ISIS propaganda was its claim to be a sovereign state and to control vast territory joining the desert lands of Syria and Iraq and more importantly linking strategically and economically important cities such as Raqqah and Mosul. ISIS is under heavy attack in both cities and faces defeat

Western intervention is not the answer

But the military defeat of ISIS is not going to bring about a solution to the evermore complicated and terrible situation in Syria and Iraq.

The picture in post-ISIS Syria is bleak. At the moment there are different anti-ISIS coalitions formed by forces that have conflicting ambitions and plans for the future of the various regions in both countries. The US has formed tactical alliances with opposed forces. The danger of new sectarian divisions emerging within the current conditions in Iraq and Syria is very high.

What US imperialism did in Iraq in 2003 can easily repeat itself in Syria. A permanent US military presence in Syria may be one of the outcomes of the battles fought today. Furthermore, a military defeat of ISIS and its organisational structures will not eliminate the conditions and destruction within which such forces emerge. The defeat of Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan didn't stop the emergence of ISIS in Iraq in 2004.

Destruction and civilian suffering

There are hundreds of thousands of civilians trapped in the densely populated cities Mosul and Raqqah. They are caught



Mosul after US air strikes (from the Washington Post)

in intense fighting between the forces on the ground and the air strikes by the US.

US air strikes are killing hundreds of civilians. According to United Nations war crimes investigators, intensified air strikes supporting an assault by US-backed forces on Raqqah are causing a "staggering loss of civilian life".

The US Army has admitted that it killed up to 500 civilians in Mosul but this number comes with an attitude of "we don't do body counts". Independent observers estimate the death toll to be much higher, reaching into the thousands.

On 17 March of this year, in a single air strike the US had killed 101 civilians including many children. There is no precision bombing in these cities but the continuous killing of civilians adds hugely to the numbers killed by ISIS.

Reportedly, the US-led forces are dropping white phosphorous on both Raqqah and Mosul.

Many of the economic and civilian infrastructures in Mosul and Raqqah are destroyed beyond repair. Many families have lost their homes in the bombing. They are facing a future of extreme poverty and political chaos. The campaigns against ISIS in Mosul and Raqqah come at a very heavy human cost.

More refugees

There are tens of thousands of refugees from Raqqah who have fled to camps in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. Recently, about 10,000 civilians have fled to a camp just north of Raqqah, with hundreds more arriving each day. More than 750,000 have been forced to flee since military

operations began in Mosul. Internally there are more than 5 million displaced people in Syria and Iraq, adding to those already displaced by the post 2003 conditions in Iraq.

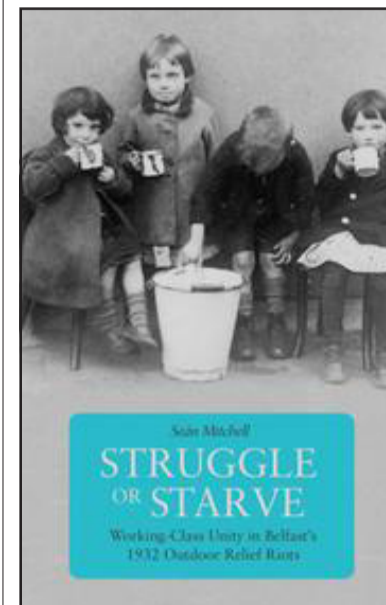
Refugees are facing extremely harsh conditions. Tens of thousands of children can't go to school. Many people are sick. Illnesses are spreading. Even if they are able to return to their cities people are facing harsh poverty and homelessness. Various agencies are appealing for urgent support to meet the critical needs of vulnerable children, women and men displaced.

Imperialist interventions and wars don't provide freedom and safety but death, devastation and chaos, giving people no chance to organise, mobilise and re-build their lives. Haven't we seen it all many times before?

Two books for the struggle

There are two new books that may be of particular interest to Socialist Worker readers.

The first is *Struggle or Starve* by Seán Mitchell who is People Before Profit North-South Coordinator. It tells the story of working class unity in Belfast's 1932 Outdoor Relief Riots.



In October 1932 the streets of Belfast were gripped by rioting. Railing at the indignity of the state's 'relief' programmes of poverty pay and hard out door labour, thousands of unarmed demonstrators fought pitched battles against heavily armed police. The event became known as the Outdoor Relief Riot – one of the very few instances in which class sympathy trumped sectarian loyalties in a city known for its division.

Through archival research and first hand accounts Seán Mitchell recovers this inspiring episode in working class history. As renowned socialist film maker, Ken Loach, has said 'This is an important story to tell...An inspiration to unite again in today's struggles'.

The second is *Lenin for Today* by Socialist Worker editor, John Molyneux. A hundred years after the Russian Revolution Lenin remains a world figure of immense stature. But in *Lenin for Today* Molyneux goes beyond that.

Vermeer – the artist and his times

John Molyneux

The new exhibition at the National Gallery, *Vermeer and the Masters of Genre Painting*, which runs till 17 September, is well worth a visit. This is both for the art in itself – Vermeer is a wonderful painter and many of the other artists featured are also very good – and for what it tells us about the relation between 'great art' and 'the times' i.e. the history and society, in which it is produced.

This exhibition features ten great paintings by Vermeer (he only ever produced about thirty odd) alongside works by other artists from the 17th century Dutch Republic – the likes of Gabriel Metsu, Pieter de Hooch, Jan Steen and Gerard ter Borch – who painted similar subjects, ie domestic interiors, women playing musical instruments, counting money, receiving suitors and so on.

What this shows is that Vermeer, as is almost always the case with major artists, was not some lone genius simply expressing the unique quality of his own soul, but part of a collective working on common themes which, for historical reasons, had a real resonance in that society. It was the same with Picasso, Braque and the Cubists in Paris around 1910 or Leonardo, Michelangelo and Raphael in the Renaissance.

So the question arises as to why scenes of middle class domesticity had such an appeal at this time. The key lies in their class character. The Dutch Republic was the product of a 'bourgeois revolution' between 1556 and about 1600 in which the middle class of 16th century overthrew their Spanish Habsburg rulers and the



'Woman holding a balance' by Johannes Vermeer, 1664,

aristocracy associated with them.

This changed the whole nature of art which had previously been totally dominated by the Church and the Court. The middle class emerged, for the first time, as the main consumers of art.

Moreover, by the 1660s when these paintings are produced, the heroic period of the Dutch Revolt is over and the middle class is settling in to enjoy the fruits of its victory – they are prosperous and contented and want to see their new life celebrated on their

walls.

This is also a society in which women, by the standards of the day, are relatively emancipated, and this too is reflected in these works which feature women more than men.

Having said this it is also clear that there is a significant qualitative difference between Vermeer and the other artists presented here. As you go into each room it is the Vermeer that catches the eye and dominates. His paintings are simply that bit more alive, more vibrant, more intense than all the others.

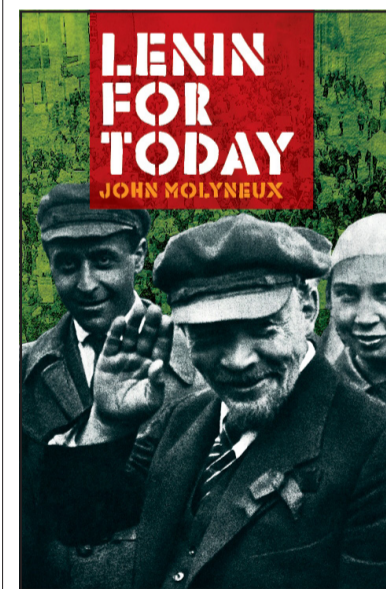
In my opinion it is principally Vermeer's extraordinarily sensitive use of light that is key to this.

It lends to his work an apparent transcendental quality. When de Hooch paints a *Woman Weighing Coins* it's a woman weighing coins; when adjacent to it we see Vermeer's *Woman with a Balance* it is a woman weighing her whole life in the balance.

The conventional art critical response to this difference is to say that Vermeer's work is 'timeless'.

They say the same of Rembrandt and Das Vinci and many great artists but really what is happening is that the artist is responding so intensely to the essence of their historical moment that it continues to resonate, especially as there are important continuities in the social relations between the past and the present.

In this case there is a real continuity between the aspiration of the Dutch capitalist middle classes for domestic tranquillity and that of many of the capitalist middle classes today. It is this aspiration raised to the highest possible level that is expressed with such power by Vermeer.



He rejects the conventional view that Lenin had a manipulative attitude to working people and thus paved the way for Stalinism. Instead, as capitalism staggers from crisis to crisis and careers towards climate catastrophe, he presents a sustained argument that Lenin's main ideas – on workers' revolution, opposing imperialism and war, overthrowing the state, the need for party organisation and the fight against all forms of oppression – remain relevant today.

He calls for a renewal and development of Leninism, through interaction with popular struggle, as essential for preventing capitalism's descent into barbarism. Richard Boyd Barrett TD calls it 'A vital book for socialists today. It explains the crucial lessons from Lenin and the Russian Revolution and applies them to the 21st century'.

Socialist Worker

TORY-DUP COALITION? BUILD THE RESISTANCE

Shaun Harkin, *People Before Profit* candidate in Foyle

Theresa May's disastrous election has forced her to look to the DUP to form a coalition government. The Tories and the DUP are said to be negotiating a 'confidence and supply' arrangement to allow May to form a government. However, a firm agreement has still not been reached as we go to press.

May called the snap June 8 election believing the Tories could expand their Westminster dominance and win a mandate for their Brexit negotiation strategy. This has spectacularly backfired, forcing them to rely on the DUP to govern.

The DUP are without doubt one of the most reactionary parties in Europe. As a result of the election, many people in Britain are only now becoming familiar with them. Founded in the early 1970s by Ian Paisley, the DUP is opposed to Marriage Equality, a woman's right to choose, and is deeply sectarian and racist.

The Northern Ireland Assembly was collapsed because Arlene Foster, the DUP leader and former First Minister, refused to take responsibility for the RHI financial scandal.

However, RHI is only the latest in a long line of corruption scandals involving the DUP. These include NAMA's Project Eagle, Red Sky and the Social Investment Fund. Not only that, leading DUP members regularly mock the Irish language and



British Prime Minister Theresa May and DUP leader Arlene Foster

Foster recently described Irish language speakers as 'crocodiles'.

Weakness

The fact that May and the Tories are hoping to strike a deal with the toxic DUP is a deep sign of weakness. If the DUP and

the Tories reach a deal the government will remain weak and vulnerable. We should take every opportunity to expose its weakness and to press for different demands.

For their part, the DUP are attempting to use their new found position to extract concessions from the Westminster

government. This may include increased investment to the North of Ireland but will also include commitments from the Tories to assist the DUP in continuing to block the extension of basic rights for women and the LGBT community to the North. May plans to push through more auster-

ity across Britain and the North but her weak government can be stopped. The DUP should face relentless pressure to oppose Tory plans to push through more cuts to public services in the North.

Corbyn is proposing a radical change of direction in Britain. The same is needed in the North. We need an alternative to privatisation, public sector funding cuts and tax cuts for corporations. We need to increase taxes on corporations and the rich to properly fund health care, education, public transportation and social Welfare. We need to end the running down of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive by allowing it to borrow in order to fund renovations and new social housing builds. Student fees should be abolished.

Everyone who believes in equality and justice should back the efforts of Corbyn and the Westminster opposition to frustrate everything May and the DUP attempt to push through. We should also step up the fight for Marriage Equality, a woman's right to choose and for an Irish Language Act.

To oppose the Tory/DUP 'coalition of chaos' we need to unite the broadest progressive movement possible to fight for an alternative. Our goal should be making it impossible for the Tories and the DUP to push through their reactionary agenda. For this, we need opposition in parliament but also in the streets, workplaces and communities putting the needs of the many ahead of the few.

Westminster – a Polarised Election

Michael Collins, *People Before Profit*, analyses the results of the recent Westminster election.

The recent Westminster election saw a massive surge of support for Jeremy Corbyn. Labour gained 30 seats and ten percentage points in its total vote, representing the biggest swing from the Tories to Labour since Clement Atlee in the 1945.

The election smashed the myth that left wing policies are unpopular.

Corbyn's manifesto attracted huge support from working people. His campaign was based on the many not the few.

Plans to tax the big corporations, to challenge the power of the elites, and invest in jobs and services were a relief from the years of neo-liberalism brought about by successive New Labour and Tory governments. Despite the establishment onslaught and media spin that he was "unelectable", his surge irrefutably showed the appeal of left wing politics.

Corbyn's vote has thrown the Tories into crisis. Having called the snap election to increase their mandate, they now face the reality that a Tory-DUP coalition is the only way they can cling onto power.

It will be an unstable government,

with the Tories coming under pressure for aligning themselves with a party with such an atrocious record when it comes to bigotry, racism, the environment, Irish language rights, and LGBT and women's rights.

Theresa May is now under enormous pressure to resign, even from within the ranks of the Tories.

A mass movement on the streets will be key to keeping up the pressure. With the People's Assembly set to mobilise in London on June 1st, and a major marriage equality march planned for Belfast on the same day it will be all to play for in the months ahead.

Results in the North

The same conditions which gave rise to Corbyn exist in the North, and indeed across Ireland. Anger over austerity, inequality, and the run-down of public services is widespread.

Drawing from Corbyn's example, we should be confident that our left wing ideas can gain a hearing.

But elections in the North aren't as simple as a straight fight between the left and the right. And following on from the Assembly election in March, the Westminster election became an even more polarised affair, with a battle to see

who would emerge as the biggest party between the DUP and Sinn Féin.

Smaller parties were squeezed. The Ulster Unionist Party lost all its seats, including in Fermanagh South Tyrone, Tom Elliot lost his seat to Sinn Féin (despite a Unionist pact)

Similarly, the SDLP were wiped out, losing all three seats, including Mark Durkin's Foyle seat to SF (an historic base for the SDLP).

So the DUP and Sinn Féin were the beneficiaries of this polarisation. Of the 18 seats, the DUP returned 10 MPs, with a 10% increase in their vote by 10%, while Sinn Féin returned 7 MPs, with a 5% increase.

Just as the British election became a battle between left and right, so the election in the North became polarised along communal lines.

Backdrop to Northern Election

The Westminster election came in the wake of a March Assembly election which saw SF come within one seat of the DUP. This led to intensified polarisation this time around.

The previous Assembly election, on March 2nd, was triggered when Sinn Féin collapsed the Executive over the DUP's role in the RHI scandal. In stark contrast



Sinn Féin and DUP were the beneficiaries of polarisation

to their stance during previous scandals such as expenses, Red Sky or NAMA, (where SF were often participants, or simply said little or nothing about the culture of corruption) they now opted to collapse the Assembly.

This was, in no small way, down to the growth of People Before Profit in areas like Foyle and West Belfast, and the fact that PBP had been to the fore in exposing both the DUP and Sinn Féin's role in rotten schemes like RHI, and the austerity Fresh

Start Agreement.

Sinn Féin's stance against Foster and the DUP increased their support and, with Foster on the ropes following the RHI fiasco, took them to just one seat behind DUP.

It was a major blow for Unionism, and served as "a wake up call" for Unionist voters to return to the DUP despite RHI. This set the stage for the June 8th Westminster election to become the most polarised ever between SF and the DUP.

People Before Profit – the Alternative Voice in the North

In this context PBP's vote is extremely significant. Despite a surge to the big parties, in West Belfast Gerry Carroll polled 4132 votes (10.2% of the vote); a very strong result when compared to other small parties. Stephen Agnew, for example, the leader of the Green Party and a sitting MLA for North Down since 2011, polled only 2,549 respectively (6.5% of the vote); People Before Profit have proved they have cemented a significant base in West Belfast.

Similarly, the vote of 1377 for Shaun Harkin in Foyle was extremely positive

given the contest was effectively a two horse race between Sinn Féin and the SDLP.

To have a radical socialist polling over 1300 votes on his first outing, in a first past the post election, shows there is a real space for left wing forces to continue to grow. It will be crucial in the weeks and months ahead to develop these roots at local level.

As this goes to press, the future remains uncertain. A DUP-Tory coalition is almost inevitable, but it is difficult to say

how long it will last. For Corbyn, forcing another election is a key priority, and with mass demonstrations planned for 1st of July, in Belfast and London, it is a distinct possibility.

Challenges

Similarly, if parties at Stormont fail to strike a deal there could be another Assembly election in October. People Before Profit will throw ourselves energetically into the challenges ahead.

We need an alternative voice in the

North; one which seeks to challenge the rotten sectarian set-up, and unite people around the kind of demands we've seen from Jeremy Corbyn, like taxing the big corporations, introducing a living wage, abolishing tuition fees, kicking the private companies out of the NHS, nationalising services like Royal Mail or the NI Housing Executive, banning zero-hour contracts, and investing to create jobs and improve living standards.

On all these questions, the NI Assembly has utterly failed. Inequality

here continues to grow, poverty levels here are higher than anywhere in the UK or Ireland, tax cuts for corporations are planned for 2018, and Stormont has borrowed millions of pounds to make thousands of public sector workers redundant.

This is why it is so crucial to have an alternative voice in the form of People Before Profit, which points to the failings of the establishment parties, and seeks to overcome sectarianism by uniting people in a movement for the many, not the few.