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# Socialist Worker

## STOP IMF ATTACKS ON WORKERS' RIGHTS!

### ■ Dump the IMF/EU Deal

### ■ Demand a Referendum

THE IMF is plotting a major attack on workers' rights. Tucked away in a recent IMF report on the Irish economy was the statement that there will be 'a review of sector-specific minimum wage agreements, with a view to their elimination'.

It was a coded announcement to get rid of Registered Employment Agreements (REAs) and Employment Regulation Orders (EROs). A special review of these orders is about to be published and this will set the signal for a new round of attacks on low-paid workers.

Employment Regulation Orders were introduced in 1946 to protect the wages and conditions of the most vulnerable workers.

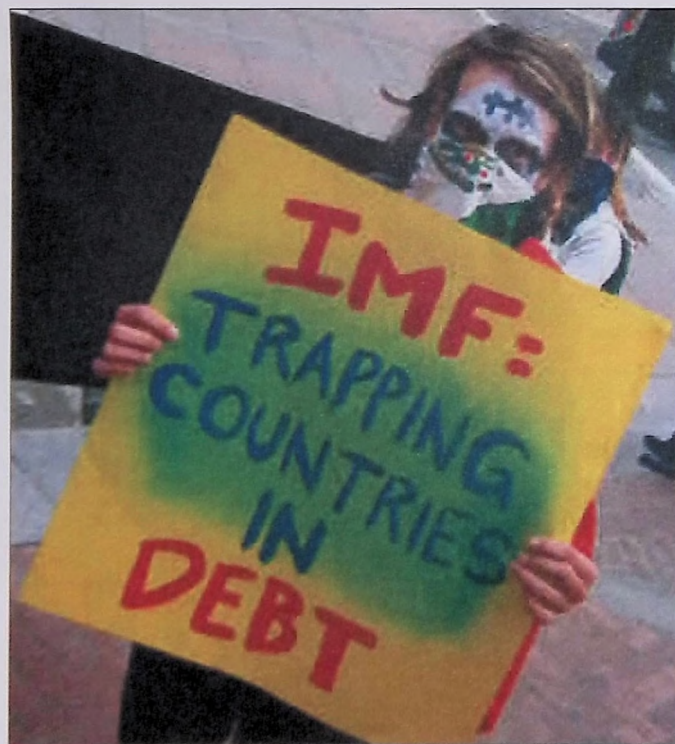
The Fianna Fail Taoiseach, Sean Lemass, summed up the philosophy behind the measures: 'It is necessary that the State should be in a position to intervene to prevent any progressive deterioration in working conditions in any industry, in consequence of the desire of a particular employer to secure a greater share of the market at the expense of his competitors and workers.'

In other words, to prevent a race to the bottom, there had to be some regulation.

Today 300,000 workers are covered by these labour market regulations. They include contract cleaners, restaurant and hotel workers, security staff, shop workers and building workers.

Registered Employment Agreements cover many parts of the building industry. Once an agreement on pay and conditions is reached between unions and employers, it is registered at the Labour Court and then becomes legally binding throughout Ireland.

Joint Labour Committees (JLCs)



exist in sectors such as catering or contract cleaning and fix minimum rates of pay and conditions.

Once agreement is reached on these JLCs, they become legally binding as Employment Regulation Orders.

One example is the agreement covering clothing and footwear retail workers in Dublin and Dun Laoghaire.

This states that normal working hours for employees be set at 37.5 hours a week; that no employee be forced to work more than 4.5 hours without a break of at least 15 minutes; that overtime be paid at the

rate of time and a half; that workers are entitled to eight days sick pay a year, after completing their first year's employment.

#### Shock Doctrine

These are very basic protections that every worker deserves. But the IMF hates these regulations because they interfere with the working of the 'free market'.

That is why they are working with the EU Commission to get rid of measures that protect workers' rights.

Ireland is to become the new guinea pig for dismantling labour

legislation.

The evidence shows that the IMF and the EU are employing 'shock doctrine' tactics to get rid of labour regulation altogether.

During the general election, the Labour Party made an explicit commitment that 'they will strongly oppose efforts to dismantle it (the REA/JLC system) or render it useless from the point of view of employment protection'.

But Labour has agreed to embrace the IMF-EU deal and so will go along with the IMF-inspired attacks on workers' rights.

#### We Need To Fight Back

The reality, therefore, is that a vicious class war is about to be unleashed by the employers and their 'hard cop' friends in the IMF and the EU.

This war has been prepared for some time. Employers, for example, deliberately set out to break the law as a way of ridding themselves of burdensome regulation.

The latest report from the National Employment Rights Authority indicates that over 70% of employers in the hotel, catering and retail sectors have refused to comply with the regulation orders.

If they are prepared to use every weapon in their armoury to attack low paid workers, then we must not be found wanting when we take them on. In the next few weeks, we need to:

- Hold information meetings in local areas to explain the IMF plot to attack the pay and conditions of workers.

- Demand that the union leaders mount a serious campaign of resistance, including wide scale industrial action.

#### Inside:



### Socialists in Parliament: Page 6



### Niqab ban: Racism veiled as liberation: Page 4

## Coalition targets lone parents



By LEAH SPEIGHT

FOR THE first time in the State's history a Minister for Children has been appointed.

The newly appointed minister, Fine Gael's Francis Fitzgerald, has given an assurance she will hold a referendum on children's rights in 2011.

This is all to be part of a constitutional amendment on children to ensure full implementation of the UN convention on the rights of the child.

Changes in the wording of our constitution mean nothing to children of a lone parent.

In June 2010 a Social Welfare Bill was introduced under the previous Fianna Fail-led government. It was only in April of this year a letter was sent to the families



Francis Fitzgerald

affected.

The Dept of Social Protection, now run by Labour's Joan Burton, confirmed in writing the cuts to be introduced.

One parent families will have their payment cut when a child is 14 years old.

Regardless of any factor they will be cut, unlike other social welfare payments paid while seeking employment.

For families with two incomes the cost of rearing children is expensive; for a household with one income it is a struggle.

Children in second level education cost more than primary, and still require supervision. They should not be left home alone.

Loan parents are going to be forced into low paid jobs that won't cover the cost of childcare.

# Abuse of prisoners in Mountjoy Prison

By LEAH SPEIGHT

A JUDGE investigating Mountjoy prison has raised serious concerns of abuse of prisoners.

In 2009 Judge Reilly held an inspection of Mountjoy Prison; his findings resulted in a criminal investigation of prisoner abuse.

Lack of evidence was the reason no cases mounted to criminal prosecutions.

In his new report, presented in March 2011, the judge reported his findings as to why there was insufficient evidence.

Failures resulted from the non-recording of incidents or injuries within the prison by the authorities.

Also, officers could not be identified as they do not wear identifying marks or numbers.

Failure of management to enter the



sequence of events further complicated matters, according to the judge.

Again raising concerns of abuse he said "we came across cases where injuries were inflicted on prisoners

during removals or on escorts, and no record was made of such injuries in any journals."

He also confirmed abuse of authority in Mountjoy prison by some prison officers. Guidelines and pro-

cedures were issued by the judge to track and stop abuse of prisoners.

However, there's no joy in the Joy when the same unidentified officers are still working there.

## Labour sells out 300,000 low paid workers

By PEADAR O'GRADY

EAMONN GILMORE has confirmed that JLC pay rates will be 'reviewed' - that means cut.

Joint Labour Committees (JLCs) set minimum wages for over 240,000 low-paid workers in sectors such as catering, security and hairdressing.

The IMF-EU-ECB 'troika' (threesome) were unhappy about the promise to reverse the minimum wage for 60,000 workers from €7.65 back to €8.65 per hour.

Gilmore denied a deal to cut the JLC rates was a deal with the troika.

He says the JLC rates 'review' is separate.

No-one believes him.



Eamon Gilmore: Deal

His Fine Gael partner Richard Bruton said the cuts in JLC rates would 'more than compensate' for restoring the minimum wage.

Bruton called for 'closer scrutiny' of JLC rates by the EU-IMF troika.

James, a cleaner who makes a JLC rate of €9.50 an hour said:

"If they cut my pay we will have to go without heating or electricity.

"Can Gilmore live on this?"

SIPTU's Jack O'Connor pathetically conceded a need for 'reform' of the JLCs, but warned: "The trade union movement will vigorously resist any attempt to dismantle them."

Cuts in low pay mean knock-on cuts for every other worker and no prospects for those on minimum wage.

Strikes and protests in every sector by every worker should greet any cuts in JLC rates.

## Cloyne Report: Children First?

By PEADAR O'GRADY

THE CLOYNE report covers Catholic Church cover-ups of child abuse in the Cork diocese from 1996 to 2009.

The inquiry was prompted by reports that child protection practices were "inadequate and in some respects dangerous". In one case the Bishop, John Magee, took eight years to inform Gardai that a child had been raped by a priest.

The bishop "apparently focused on the needs of the accused priest".

It is beyond belief that the state's guidelines 'Children First' still have no statutory basis or funding.

Government policy could be renamed 'Cover-ups First - Children Last'.

## Bray Fire-fighters protest



Protesting against management policies and the threat of privatisation

By JIMMY SMYTH

ON 13TH April, fire-fighters in Bray held a protest over changes in practice and threatened cuts to their service that have already resulted in

the deaths of two of their fellow workers.

In September 2007, Mark O'Shaughnessy (26) and Brian Murray (46) were killed attending a blaze in an abandoned factory.

Their families and workmates have been calling for a public, independent inquiry into their deaths.

The new union Irish Fire & Emergency Services Association (IFESA) and

the families are blaming the deaths on the policies pursued by the local council.

One of which is "call-vetting" where emergency calls are screened by senior managers in the fire service and Wicklow County Council who decide which calls to answer.

This creates a delay which results in fire worsening and becoming more difficult to extinguish

IFESA was formed last year following a mass defection from SIPTU, because the workers did not trust Jack O'Connor to stand up to the threats of privatisation the fire service is facing.

The Bray fire-fighters are set to continue their campaign over the coming weeks. More info: www.ifesa.ie

## TV License fee set to rise with new 'Poll Tax'

By LEAH SPEIGHT

THE PRICE of a TV license is set to rise with a new public broadcasting charge.

This is just another hit on struggling households. Media experts said the

new fee will target those watching TV on the internet.

Minister for Communications Pat Rabbitte revealed he supported changing the license fee collection system.

He said he had an open mined when it came to

bringing in a universal charge.

This would see all houses charged a fee regardless of whether they have a TV or radio.

John Kennedy from Siliconrepublic.com compares this to a "poll tax."

Mr. Kennedy added "we're a small country and we're paying people in public service broadcasting salaries you wouldn't see in London."

The current review in Minister Rabbitte's department should look at top salaries in RTE.

### 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 Brown 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 parties 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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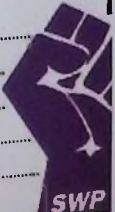
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## Attacks on public sector workers continue

By AINE DILLON

AS THE public sector union season opened with the annual delegate conference of the Public Service Executive Union (PSEU), followed the next day by the Civil Public Services Union (CPSU), Labour Party ministers Brendan Howlin (Public Expenditure & Reform) and Pat Rabbitte (Communications) delivered a shot across the bows.

Howlin's comments that the public sector was not fit for purpose and Rabbitte's warning that public service pay would be cut again unless significant savings are delivered under the Croke Park agreement were accompanied by reports that the conditions of some 240,000 private sector workers protected under long-standing sectoral agreements are to be revised in return for restoring the minimum wage.

Despite these threats, the CPSU conference defiantly voted not to cooperate with the reforms proposed in the Croke Park Agreement and to take industrial action if further pay cuts are introduced.

The atmosphere at the PSEU conference was very much shaped by the need to defend the perceived protections of the agreement.

Nonetheless, a proposal to establish a strike fund in advance of 2014 (when the agreement ends) was overwhelmingly supported, and attempts by the union's President to end the conference 10 minutes early rather than debate this motion were opposed.

Socialists have long opposed the concept of social partnership, the Croke Park Agreement being its latest incarnation.

That agreement freezes public sector pay and numbers, gives no guarantee against future pay cuts and breaks the link between pay increases and pensions.

It prevents unions submitting cost-increasing claims and outlaws industrial action.

It introduced greater flexibility on the part of employees, requiring them to potentially move to new working locations up to 45km from their existing offices or homes.

It is not worth saving. CPSU workers are right not to be bullied by the government; they did not cause the financial crisis and should not be expected to pay for it.

In the coming weeks, workers in the wider public sector will meet for their annual conferences.

Activists in those unions need to get together now to spread the defiance of the CPSU into the wider public service, and to put industrial pressure on the government to make the bankers pay for the mess they have created.

# Garda abuse of Shell protestors



By VANESSA O'SULLIVAN

THE TREATMENT of two women who were arrested recently during protests at a demonstration of the 'Shell to Sea' campaign was just one more breach of protesters' rights.

During a recorded conversation, two Gardai, accompanied by a sergeant, said that one of the women should be raped and then deported.

This incident displayed a callous disregard for this woman as a human being. But it was also a show of extreme arrogance on the side of the police.

This, however, is no change from their long tradition of human rights abuse in the Rosspoint area of Co. Mayo. The incident showed their growing smugness and arrogance

which has developed over the last ten years.

This is turn has led to the belief that the police can say and do whatever they like and get away with it. The fact that they taped themselves has

embarrassed the top brass at Garda HQ and forced the state to open up an inquiry into the incident and also a previous incident from 2006.

In a statement made by the Department of Justice, new

minister Alan Shatter (Fine Gael) claimed that protesters were actually exploiting the situation with "the aim of undermining trust in the Garda Síochána and of compromising the policing of the

## Oil and Gas deal: Rabbitte refuses to act

By VANESSA O'SULLIVAN

THE FIANNA Fail/Green Party government bent over backwards to accommodate Shell and other oil and gas companies. They allowed these companies to break European laws; one example being the permitting of separate planning in relation to certain aspects of the Corrib gas project.

On the day of the recent general election, the outgoing Fianna Fail minister, Pat Carey, sneaked into government buildings to sign the last offshore agreements for Shell Oil.

During that election both Labour and Fine Gael shouted from the rooftops claims of bringing change, leaving the Fianna Fail era behind.

Despite this, it is now the Labour Party minister, Pat Rabbitte, who is forcing the Corrib project through, who this week has refused to reverse the consents signed off by Carey.

embarrassed the top brass at Garda HQ and forced the state to open up an inquiry into the incident and also a previous incident from 2006.

In a statement made by the Department of Justice, new

minister Alan Shatter (Fine Gael) claimed that protesters were actually exploiting the situation with "the aim of undermining trust in the Garda Síochána and of compromising the policing of the

dispute".

The latest outrage in Rosspoint is one further example of how the rights of protesters have been picked apart by the state.

Other recent examples include: Thomas Cook, where police used a battering ram to break through a glass door at the behest of the bosses; the MTL dock strike, where dockers were served with several injunctions.

One of these dockers is currently being prosecuted for a floating picket.

Another example is the student demonstration of November 2010 where protesters were beaten for staging a peaceful sit-in at the Department of Finance.

The only way to stop this abuse of power is by changing the system altogether.

Seven members of Ireland's Defence Forces serve in Afghanistan - a war which drew much opposition when it began almost ten years ago but which has since largely been forgotten.

Also that week, an international network of anti-NATO activists met in Dublin at an event hosted by the Irish Anti War Movement and the Peace and Neutrality Alliance.

The event was extremely successful and agreed to send contingents to protest at the NATO Summit which takes place in Bonn in early December, and also to the 2012 NATO Spring Summit in Washington.

The groups are planning actions in the lead-up to the Bonn protest to expose 10 years of NATO's war in Afghanistan.

## ECB interest rate hike hits mortgages

By MICHAEL WALLACE

ON APRIL 7<sup>th</sup>, the European Central Bank (ECB) announced it was hiking up its interest rate by 0.25% to 1.25%, in an attempt to "reduce" euro zone inflation and keep wages down.

In making this decision, Jean Claude Trichet, head of the ECB, claimed this would "not hurt Ireland," and would benefit "all of the euro zone".

In truth, this hike will worsen the already precarious position Irish mortgage holders find themselves in, and that the ECB simply doesn't care.

Already, one in ten mortgage accounts are in arrears, and this hike will likely push even more people beyond breaking point.

This increase will affect 75% of all Irish mortgages, including 400,000 people



Jean-Claude Trichet

on tracker mortgages as well as those on variable, who have already been hammered for 18 months by continuous domestic rate hikes.

The 0.25% increase means that someone on a €300,000 tracker are now forced to find an extra €480 annually, while those

measures, this hike is a nightmare they could have done without.

With Fine Gael/Labour more concerned with pouring yet another €24 billion into paying private banking debts, the way is open for Irish lenders to quickly inflict this extra agony onto struggling

on a €400,000 tracker will have to pay another €630 a year in repayments. Variable mortgage holders will have to pay slightly more.

At a time when families have already been hammered by rising costs, unemployment and ruthless austerity

Not only have ordinary Irish workers been made to pay for banker debts through bailouts, now they're being bled dry through rate hikes. Enough is enough!

It's time to fight back against this disgraceful injustice.

No more bailouts; no more repossession threats; no more rate hikes!

families, with minimal government objections.

But this isn't the end. Two more ECB rate hikes of 0.25% are expected before Christmas.

This would leave the unfortunate person on a €300,000 tracker facing an additional €1,300 to find before the end of the year.

This is a catastrophe! The numbers of people in arrears and facing the dreadful threat of repossession will soar.

### Fightback

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It's time to fight back against this disgraceful injustice.

No more bailouts; no more repossession threats; no more rate hikes!

No to War  
No to NATO

## NATO and anti-NATO meetings

By AINE DILLON

NATO FOREIGN Ministers met in Berlin on 15 April.

At the conclusion of the event, NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen stated that NATO "is absolutely determined to continue its operation for as long as there is a threat against Libyan civilians and it is impossible to imagine that threat disappear with Qadhafi in power".

So they have finally admitted that regime change is the goal of Operation Unified Protector.

Times.com reported that the Foreign Ministers' summit was preceded by a meeting of non-NATO countries which are part of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan.

Seven members of Ireland's Defence Forces serve in Afghanistan - a war which drew much opposition when it began almost ten years ago but which has since largely been forgotten.

Also that week, an international network of anti-NATO activists met in Dublin at an event hosted by the Irish Anti War Movement and the Peace and Neutrality Alliance.

The event was extremely successful and agreed to send contingents to protest at the NATO Summit which takes place in Bonn in early December, and also to the 2012 NATO Spring Summit in Washington.

The groups are planning actions in the lead-up to the Bonn protest to expose 10 years of NATO's war in Afghanistan.

To get involved or for further information visit [www.irishantiwar.org](http://www.irishantiwar.org)

## MFG strike stalls redundancies

By JIMMY SMYTH

SIPTU MEMBERS at Meitheal Forbatha na Gaeltachta Teo (MFG) in Connemara returned to work on 11 April following a Labour Court recommendation.

They had been on strike for four weeks in protest at the imposition of pay cuts and compulsory redundancies.

The Labour court recommended the company withdraws the compulsory redundancy notices and that both sides engage with the Labour Relations Commission.

While SIPTU officials may welcome this outcome the workers at MFG need to be prepared to strike again if MFG do not withdraw the threat of job losses and pay cuts completely.



## Niqab ban: Racism veiled as liberation

By AINE DILLON

ON 11 April, French police began to implement a law banning wearing the niqab (face veil worn by Muslim women) and burqa in public.

This is despite the fact that the French Interior Ministry states only 2,000 women, out of France's 64 million population, wear the niqab.

Anyone caught wearing it will be escorted to a police station and liable for a €150 fine or lessons in the values of French citizenship.

In addition, anyone found to have forced a woman to wear the niqab, including presumably mothers, will face a fine of €30,000 (€60,000 in the case of a minor) and up to two years in prison.

We are also told that the law is about separating church and state and promoting women's equality.

President Sarkozy has said that the niqab is a symbol of the subjugation of women.

Too bad that this formidable fighter for liberation does not direct his attention to the damage done to women by the fashion and cosmetics industries.

So what is this law really about - stigmatising Muslim women in an effort to gain votes.

Next year presidential elections take place and polls show Sarkozy trailing 2 points behind Marine Le Pen of Le Front National.

Although only now implemented, the law was passed last year in France's lower house on the eve of the Bastille Day, France's national day commemorating the 1789 revolution.

The French government is also using 'Marianne' in its poster explaining the law.

Marianne is a highly-charged symbol representing democracy, liberty and equality.

Nowadays, she is most often portrayed as the bare-breasted hero of Delacroix's painting *Liberty guiding the people*. In the government poster, Marianne's breasts are

covered - the implication being that the republic, and the values which it represents, is under attack from Islam.

Instead of liberating women, this ban will confine women to the home.

Sarkozy is playing politics with the lives of Muslim women and men. Already, France's national consultative commission on human rights has reported a rise in attacks on mosques and warned that the public debate on niqabs has allowed a rise in anti-Muslim sentiment.

The niqab and burqa are extreme interpretations of Islam's requirement for modest dress and no doubt there are cases where women are forced to wear them, but it does not follow that this is always the case.

Women are perfectly capable of making their own decisions to cover their heads and faces.

Some do so because they come from countries where the wearing of the niqab is regarded as cultural tradition.

Others wish to demonstrate their piety or show their disdain for the increasing sexualisation of western culture.

However the largest number of young women, including citizens of France and Britain, cover their heads and faces to show that they are not afraid to be Muslim at a time when Islam is under increasing attack.

Socialists have long supported a woman's right to choose what happens within her body; we must also defend her right to choose how she covers that body.

That does not mean that we ignore arguments about religion or sexual oppression, but if the ideas of *liberté, égalité et fraternité* mean anything today then they should mean siding with a Muslim woman and her right to be on the streets, rather than lining up with the far-right and the police against her.

Socialists and feminists who are incapable of this solidarity should take a long look at the ideas they claim to hold true.

# Revolution

*The downfall of Hosni Mubarak was a historic achievement. But the revolutionary process is ongoing. Here Mostafa Omar looks at the struggle for the future in Egypt.*

IT IS probably fair to say that the revolutionary uprising and process underway in Egypt is one of the greatest popular revolutions in modern history.

The sheer numbers of those who participated in the uprising is unprecedented and astonishing.

It is estimated that between January 25, when the demonstrations started, and February 11, when the dictator Hosni Mubarak was toppled, at least 15 million people out of a population of 80 million took part in the mass mobilizations.

More than all the protests that took place in all the countries of Eastern Europe at the time of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

It is true that young people led the charge on January 25, and that most of the 400 martyrs who were killed during the uprising were under the age of 30.

But also, from day one, millions of workers, poor peasants, poor housewives and all sectors of society took part in the mobilizations across the country.

When you walked across Tahrir Square in Cairo, you saw group after group of poor workers, of struggling government clerks; you saw peasants; you saw poor housewives who fight every day in order to keep their children fed and alive; you saw thousands of disabled people on crutches and wheelchairs, ignored by the government for decades; you saw thousands of retirees who can't afford meat and even certain kinds of vegetables; you saw men and women, Muslim and Christian.

All of these groups came to participate - and when the regime cracked down, they came to protect the youth who were leading the occupation of Tahrir Square.

The masses of poor and working-class people who took part in the uprising - as everyone else who took part - wanted democratic reforms.

But workers and the poor also want social justice and the redistribution of the country's wealth after 30 years of privatization, impoverishment and neoliberal policies pushed by the Mubarak regime.

### Workers' Power

There is no doubt that the strikes by industrial workers that took place starting on February 9 across Egypt were a key reason why Mubarak's

generals decided that he had to go.

Since February 12, from within hours after Mubarak quit, all over the country oil workers, teachers, nurses, bus drivers, janitors, journalists and pharmacists - all the way to clerks in posh country clubs - have been organizing and protesting.

Workers' demands vary from one sector to another, but there are four main issues: Workers everywhere want to raise wages and benefits; they want permanent status for the millions of temporary workers; they want an end to the neoliberal policies of privatisation and the renationalisation of companies sold off by Mubarak; and they want all CEOs appointed by Mubarak fired.

In the crucial industrial city of Mahalla, for example, 24,000 textile workers struck last month, drove out the corrupt CEO, and forced the army to accept their own nominee as the replacement.

It is the same story in other factories and companies across the country: workers' expectations are very high, and their militancy and confidence is phenomenal.

1,200 government print workers who produce school curriculum books went on strike to protest low salaries - an average of \$100 a month - an outrageous CEO salary of \$60,000 a month, disrespectful treatment at work, temp contracts, terrible health care provisions and on and on.

Three hundred workers attempted to rush the building to get to the CEOs office, but an army unit stopped them.

So the strikers laid siege to the company building and locked their corrupt CEO in his office on the fifth floor for 36 hours.

The CEO caved. The strikers were ecstatic and almost dispersed.

But some angry young workers whose temp contracts had been recently terminated were infuriated and attempted to storm the building again.

Meanwhile, an older, militant woman pleaded with the rest of the workers not to abandon the youth.

They sent the union rep and the army officer back upstairs to tell the CEO to reinstate all temp workers, and offer them permanent contracts immediately.

Workers are breaking with the government-run union

federation and forming independent unions.

A section of militant workers are also in the process of forming a new political party: The Workers' Democratic Party.

In one university after another, mass student and faculty rallies are taking place to elect college presidents and deans in order to get rid of those appointed by Mubarak.

And in all of the colleges, the students forced the government to finally implement a year-old court order to remove secret police from all campuses.

High school and middle school students also formulated their demands and grievances.

They rallied to demand an end to corporal punishment and removal of all sections in the curriculum that refer to Mubarak's so-called accomplishments.

Journalists are ousting pro-Mubarak editors.

Cinema actors and workers rebelled against the autocratic union president.

Fans are boycotting many of their once beloved famous actors and singers who supported Mubarak.

The Boy Scouts of Egypt are demanding elections - and on and on.

At every soccer match, you find hundreds of people still chanting against Mubarak and the former interior minister, or calling for the removal of governors and so on.

### Backlash

Of course, the emergence of these revolutionary forces across society has been met from day one with vicious opposition from the ruling class.

The Egyptian capitalist class is stronger and more established than the elite around Ben Ali in Tunisia or the Libyan regime of Muammar el-Qaddafi.

The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces is a sanitized name for Mubarak's own top army generals.

Remnants of the NDP and secret police burned a Coptic church in Helwan, south of Cairo - in order to whip up a civil war atmosphere between Muslims and Christians, with the hopes of splitting the revolutionary camp.

Moreover, soldiers brutalized protesters at Tahrir Square on March 9, using electric batons and torturing those it arrested.

At the beginning of March, there was a widespread feeling of anxiety among millions of

people who support the revolution that all was not going well.

But then mass demonstrations and an unrelenting popular opposition finally forced the Council to dismiss the Mubarak cabinet on 3 March.

On 4 March, while millions were celebrating this victory, revolutionaries laid siege to the headquarters of the secret police in Alexandria and shut it down.

The next day, protesters marched on secret police headquarters in city after city.

In some places, protesters occupied these buildings, freed political prisoners in torture chambers and walked out with tons of secret documents, detailing repression and torture.

The dismissal of the Mubarak-appointed cabinet and the defeat of the secret police gave a tremendous boost to everyone who supports the revolution.

That same week tens of thousands of Christians, along with large numbers of Muslim supporters, occupied the north side of Tahrir Square to demand that the army rebuild the burned church and provide protection to Christians.

After eight days, the army caved in and rebuilt the Church.

This was not only a great victory for Christians, who have been systematically discriminated against for decades, but widespread solidarity from Muslims for the protesters defeated for now the counter-revolutionaries' divide-and-conquer scheme.

### Law and Order

The Army Council is supported by large sections of the frightened middle classes and, of course, the wealthy.

The Cabinet recently announced a draconian law that would criminalize certain protests and strikes in periods of emergency in the future.

Both the army and the cabinet can now rely on a new ally in their campaign for "stability" and "law and order": The Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic Fundamentalist Group.

They recently told people that it was their religious duty to vote yes in a referendum in order to prevent the establishment of a secular state with equal rights for the minority Christians.

Incredibly, in this effort, the

# on in the air



Muslim Brotherhood formed a de facto bloc with their former jailors, Mubarak's NDP. However, a growing minority of people who initially supported the Supreme Army Council and believed the lie that it aims to defend the revolution is rethinking its position. Some are drawing the conclusion that the army is complicit in counter-revolutionary actions. Workers' strikes continue to spread and become more

militant. Railway workers shut down all train movement in the south of the country, thus cutting off all entries and exits to the tourist cities of Luxor and Aswan, in an effort to push their demands for fair wages. Meanwhile, workers continue to build new independent unions and the new Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions. As the Muslim Brotherhood, Islamists and liberals all scram-

ble to form new political parties ahead of elections that will take place later this year, workers and the left are also initiating their own organisations and parties to fight for workers' demands and a radical democracy. For example, hundreds of militant trade unionists have come together to initiate the Workers Democratic Party. Also, hundreds of socialists, progressives and unionists are forming a broad left party called

the Popular Coalition. In universities, large groups of professors and teaching staff have been supporting and joining in on all kinds of student mobilizations to democratize the campuses. On a neighborhood level, popular committees to defend the revolution, initiated by socialists and other activists in Tahrir, have spread to more than 11 governorates – the Egyptian equivalent of states.

These committees have organised thousands of mobilisations around social justice issues and in favor of purging all remnants of the Mubarak regime. In contrast to the Supreme Army Council and the cabinet, which ignored women in all their appointments to ministries and constitutional committees, women play a much bigger role in the new unions, left parties and the popular committees to defend the revolution.

and the new cabinet to fulfill its promises of raising wages and eliminating corruption by the business elite. However, the Council and its cabinet daily show their contempt for the masses of poor people – to the point where the new prime minister compared strikers to street thugs. As time passes and the promises by those defending the old system are broken, the revolutionaries could win over millions of new recruits to their efforts.

## 'Sir it is over. The people are in the saddle'

I LISTENED online to an amazing tape of a radio communication between the police headquarters in Alexandria (2<sup>nd</sup> largest city) and commanders in the field. On the tape, police officers are begging headquarters for reinforcements to deal with what they described as massive and dangerous crowds of 10,000, 20,000 and 30,000 people, closing in on them everywhere in the city. But the headquarters was helpless because all of the officers in the

field – literally all of them – were asking for reinforcements. The headquarters advised officers and units to retreat to the precincts (police stations), and the officers responded: "Sir, protesters are burning the precincts." The tape ends dramatically with the commander at headquarters asking a subordinate for an explanation for the police defeats. The officer simply told him: "Sir, it is over. The people are in the saddle."

The Alexandria story was repeated in Suez and city after city. People in Egypt will tell you: Gone are the days when we felt helpless and little; gone are the days when the police could humiliate us and torture us; gone are the times when the rich and the businessmen think they could run the country as if it was their own private company. Young artists painted revolutionary graffiti, rejecting corruption and celebrating equality between Muslims and Christians.

**Just Started**  
Most of what the Egyptian revolution achieved in democratic changes after February 11 can only be attributed to massive popular pressure and courageous mobilizations of thousands of revolutionaries, such as the marches on the secret police headquarters. Consciousness about the new situation is still developing. Millions of people who supported the revolution have not yet joined in these activities. They are still waiting for the Supreme Army Council

And as millions join the revolutionary wave across the Arab world, the balance of forces can continue to tip against the old order. The current organizing efforts by workers, students and political activists are laying the basis both for much bigger rounds of struggle and for an alternative to the reactionary projects of the old ruling class and the fundamentalists. As one revolutionary likes to put it: "The spring of the Egyptian Revolution has just started."

# Socialists in Parliament

## To be or not to be?

By HUGH LEWIS

THE POLITICS and actions of revolutionary socialists focus on grass-roots campaigning and build the confidence of workers to fight-back. But we don't ignore elections.

And when the two combine we can be successful as has happened over the past couple of years in Ireland.

So as revolutionary socialists enter into public representation on a local and national level, how should we act in parliament?

How do we stop ourselves making compromises, becoming like the Labour party (or worse) and liquidating into these redundant legislative bodies?

And should we risk legitimising what is essentially a parliament for the bosses? These are questions of which we must be aware.

We can look to our political history for the experience of our comrades in the past to guide us through the bourgeois state and parliament.

Our central objective, at all times, has to be how best to advance the cause of the working class.

### Parliament - "a cowshed"

Call it the Dail, Duma or county council chamber the nature of parliament for revolutionary socialists stays the same.

We are in a minority outweighed in numbers by reformist social democrats (Labour Party) and bourgeois parties (Fine Gael/Fianna Fail) that see their idea of parliament as the highest level of democracy and as a politically responsible institution.

Crucially they do not accept that there can be any other forms of democracy such as popular assemblies or workers councils. Revolutionary socialists see it very differently.

The Russian revolutionary Lenin put it that parliament is nothing more than a "cowshed". But if you could further the cause of the working class by spending time in it, then socialists should do so.

The Russian Duma (parliament) was designed so that a wealthy landlord would have forty five times the voting power of an ordinary worker.

This was a fundamentally different place to the parliaments that we know today; and a fierce environment for any Bolshevik to attempt to articulate and further the self emancipation of the working class.

In his book *Bolsheviks in the Tsarist Duma* former Bolshevik deputy, Badayev speaks of the nervousness that they faced: "Each of us experienced great difficulty when making his first speech in the home of the Tsarist autocracy. It was a great strain to talk down the howling of the Black Hundreds, to fight against the continual interruption of the chairman, and having described the political and economic enslavement of the working class, to challenge its oppressors."

When reading his words, it is not difficult to replace the interruption of the chair with the constant interruption our council representatives face from the present day Cathoirleachs.

Or, to see the parallels between what the Bolsheviks faced and what our rep-



Our 5 United Left Alliance TDs marching to the Dail

resentatives face. The environment of the council chamber is such that our attempts to represent the working class are undermined by former leftwing firebrands now leading the Labour Party or the right-wing lapdogs of capitalism in Fine Gael and Fianna Fail.

### Big business interests

I was prepared to fight against the disingenuous horse trading of the council chamber, but the extent to which I found big business interests savoured by those that claim to represent ordinary people, is truly astonishing.

An example of which was to be witnessed at the April council meeting in Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown.

There were attempts made on the night by Fine Gael to have land parcels in parts of Sandyford rezoned, tripling their development potential.

And all because a speculator bought the land at the height of the inflated property boom. Impassioned speeches were made by Fine Gael councillors arguing that trebling the land potential for investment by property speculators would secure jobs.

They suggested that any argument against their motion would be economic lunacy, anti-jobs and somehow implicitly anti-worker.

Despite the fact that there are already 2,500 empty housing and office units across the county and over 4,500 in need of social housing did not seem to matter or enter their train of thought.

These mind boggling contradictions are borne out of decades of misrepresentation and a blind belief in free market ideology that can no longer be passed off as pragmatic democracy and economic common sense.

The People Before Profit Alliance (PBPA) and the United Left Alliance (ULA) have given a representative voice to those in our society that demand radical change. We must use the Dail and council chamber to continually further the demands and expectations of workers and the poor.

Our electoral success thus far has come from agitation on local and national issues in the context of a severe Irish recession and capitalism more broadly entering into a deeper period of crisis.

The system's needs are being facilitated by the Fine Gael/Labour Party coalition, which purported before the election that they would be different to the last government; that they would in some way regain our economic sovereignty.

This provides PBPA and ULATDs and councillors the opportunity to use the platform of parliament as a megaphone to give expression to the demands of ordinary working people.

### Parliament as a platform

We can see an example of this with the "Enough" referendum campaign. PBPA/ULA TDs in the technical group argued that the first motion put forward by the

group should be calling for a referendum on the EU/IMF deal.

In the Dail chamber the motion was heavily defeated with Fianna Fail joining Fine Gael and Labour in voting against it.

But this is not really the point. Because outside the Dail, the motion became a focus to kick-off a campaign that saw meetings across the country including over 300 at the Gresham in Dublin.

And since then thousands have signed a petition calling on the government to hold a referendum.

Furthermore, our representatives can seek to expose the falsity that the Labour Party is a party of the people and not that of their economic masters in the European Central Bank (ECB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF).

In Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown county council, our intervention so far has been mainly at a local level, demanding expenses be slashed, public land be used for the community, fighting against privatisation and for local amenities.

It has gained us the credibility among the working class that allows us to make the arguments we need to mobilise people power.

This will continue to be needed as the crisis deepens and as the misery of austerity is unleashed by the current Fine Gael and Labour government.

As elected representatives we cannot ever consider ourselves to be superior to those who voted for us. Most TDs and councillors from bourgeois parties

see themselves as an elite separate from ordinary people.

Our representatives are servants of the people that elected them and we abide by the democracy of our party. We, as working people, do not take nor will ever take more than the wage of the average worker. It is our imperative always to further the struggle for socialism.

At the same time we respect those who work with us that may not have the same revolutionary thirst but demand an alternative society that places public need before private speculation.

There is, however, for any public representative that demands radical change (be they revolutionary or reformist), the realisation that after days in parliament or the council chamber and the briefest exploration of the trappings and limitations of bureaucracy, fundamental change cannot come through such institutions.

You can either attempt to horse trade or haggle with the demands of the people.

Or you can use the council or the Dail to expose its institutional limitations and those that cherish it, to empower the working class to take on their own demands.

And to realise our limitless ability to change society in ways that parliaments alone can never do.

The latter is the job of a revolutionary as an elected public representative.

Hugh Lewis is a People Before Profit councillor in Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council.

## BOOK REVIEW

# The Letters of Rosa Luxemburg

Verso £32.

Reviewed by Paul O'Brien

ROSA LUXEMBURG (1871-1919) was born in Poland and was one of the great theorists of the European socialist movement.

A writer and activist in Poland and Germany; she was a founder member of the German Communist Party and took part in the Spartacist insurrection in Berlin in 1919.

She was murdered by the

proto-fascists in the immediate aftermath of the failed revolution.

Her letters are full of love and tenderness for her friends and comrades, allied to an unshakable commitment to revolutionary socialism that never toppled over into sectarianism.

They are beautifully written and anyone with aspirations to write about politics needs to read this book.

Her writings on politics, economics, and women's rights

made a distinctive contribution to Marxist thought: "I want to affect people like a clap of thunder, to inflame their minds not by speechifying, but with the breath of my vision, the strength of my conviction, and the power of my expression".

There is nothing forced or artificial in her letters. She presents herself as she is; her moments of dejection as well as her serene heroism, her love of nature and love of literature.

Imprisoned for her politics during World War One she wrote

to her friend and collaborator Clara Zetkin: "I don't see the slightest indication of when and how all this ought to end, but history does not stand still, and it will surely know how soon what path to take next".

History cut her life short, but her legacy, her example, her voice in these wonderful letters lights up the path ahead for us. Her ideas have currency, few writers in the Marxist tradition thought more deeply about the globalisation of capital.

Her letters are a cloudburst



of ideas that introduce us to a wonderful revolutionary.

## LETTER

## To the Editor

I'M SURE everyone in the country is well aware of the tragic death of Rachel Peavoy.

As a concerned member of the public I have watched this case over the last few months and I find it very disturbing and troubling to see how this family has been treated in the events that led up to and followed on from the untimely death of Rachel.

That a young, healthy woman died from hypothermia in Ireland, in the year 2010, is an absolute disgrace.

The conditions that Rachel lived in are quiet clear; she had written to numerous Ministers and TD's on the matter, seeking help, again and again, and yet it would appear that the blind eye was turned towards her reasonable requests for assistance.

Had she been a member of the blue collar Society it would most likely have been a different story. Rachel had no support because of her class. This is totally unacceptable.

The very fact that Rachel's medical history was used in that court on Wednesday, in ways that diminished responsibility for those actions - or inactions - that led to her untimely death, and laid the bulk of the blame on Rachel, speaks volumes.

I question the fact that there were no professionals, be they doctors, health workers or others who were called to give evidence about Rachel's situation. Why this serious omission?

Rachel Peavoy died from hypothermia. Rachel's post mortem results proves this to be the case.

I want to know how a 'death by misadventure' was found?

Let's not forget that Rachel has two sons who have lost their mother, under circumstances that the inquest has not clarified. Rachel's children need to know the truth, as do her family. They need closure, to be able to move on with their lives, and to be able to complete their grieving. They need the support that Rachel was denied.

I'm so upset and angry that this could happen to anyone; in a decent society this ought not occur.

We the people need to use our voices and we must speak out about this matter and we need to make every instance of injustice a personal matter, because as a member of the public, as a taxpayer and as a good human being, I say that this manner of injustice is totally avoidable and as such 100% unacceptable.

A PUBLIC INQUIRY IS NEEDED TO FIND OUT WHAT REALLY HAPPENED TO RACHEL

Sharon Barry  
Carruergagh  
Kilmorna Listowel  
Co Kerry

## ART EXHIBITION



Masterpieces of the Jacques & Natasha Gelman Collection  
Irish Museum of Modern Art, 6 April - 26 June

Reviewed by John Molyneux

FRIDA KAHLO and Diego Rivera are two artists who cannot fail to be of interest to progressives, radicals and

especially socialists, as well as to the general public. This is because of both their art and their lives.

## Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera

Diego Rivera was the greatest muralist of the twentieth century. His vast frescos at the National Palace in Mexico City depict the whole history of the Mexican people from the pre-Columbian Aztec civilisations onwards.

His murals in Detroit and the Rockefeller Centre in New York captured the awesome power of modern science and industry with their immense potential for construction or destruction. He also managed to wind up his Rockefeller Family patrons by including a portrait of Lenin (which led to the work being destroyed and recreated in Mexico).

Frida Kahlo was possibly the greatest twentieth century female artist. Just as political as Rivera (who she married in 1929), her art took a

different form: personal and private rather than historical and public. In contrast to the innumerable objectifications of the female body in the history of art Kahlo painted herself from the inside out as it were, showing what it felt like to be in constant pain from a back injury, to experience a miscarriage and so on.

Diego and Frida were both dissident communists.

When Trotsky, in exile from Stalinist Russia and kicked out of Europe, came to Mexico he found refuge with them.

With Diego Rivera and the surrealist, Andre Breton, Trotsky wrote his *Manifesto for Free Revolutionary Art*. With Frida he had a short affair.

After Trotsky's

assassination in 1940 both Frida and Diego returned to the Mexican Communist Party (i.e. to Stalinism), but they retained their commitment to the workers' movement.

Unfortunately only a small amount of this art and politics is to be found in the current show at IMMA.

Taken from the collection of wealthy European émigrés, it contains none of Rivera's major work. Kahlo fares better, but the exhibition doesn't do her justice.

Of course just one great painting like the wonderful Self Portrait with Monkeys is worth the trip to Kilmainham.

But overall it tends to be the books and photographs which give you the Frida and Diego story rather than the art itself, which is disappointing.

## Assembly Elections: Canvassing the Shankill Road

By SEAN MCVEIGH

"WE ONLY see the politicians at election time. They come round asking for votes and then disappear. The politicians don't care and we get nothing from them."

That was a common response heard on the doorsteps of a Shankill Road housing estate while campaigning for People Before Profit candidate Gerry Carroll.

The truth is that the people of the Shankill have been abandoned by Stormont.

A report by the Housing Executive found that half the population of the lower Shankill is living on benefits, with two thirds of households having a total weekly income of £200 or less.

### Anger

It's no surprise then to meet anger on the doorsteps, and a very positive response to the People Before Profit message of resistance to the cuts.

But there was also a sense of abandonment and alienation from politics with many people stating they were not going to vote.

Gerry Adams recently called on these "abandoned unionists" to vote Sinn Fein on the basis of its economic policies.

There is some anecdotal evidence that Sinn Fein may pick up votes in places like the Shankill. But Sinn Fein has no solutions for ending deprivation there or anywhere else.

The Sinn Fein and DUP policies of budget cuts and privatisation have contributed to the poverty of the Shankill Road.

And the Sinn Fein demand for lower corporation tax helps the rich not the poor.



People Before Profit canvassing team on Belfast's Shankill Road last week

Why should Protestant workers vote for Sinn Fein when the party offers nothing different to the DUP?

Martin McGuinness recently admitted this in a speech to the North's corporate elite when he said: "The next big battle is around the economy and Peter Robinson and I are on the same side."

### Tribal politics

Both the DUP and Sinn Fein have attempted to turn the election into a sectarian headcount by saying that the main issue is whether there will be a nationalist or unionist First Minister.

This is not what people are really concerned about. Its purpose is to

build tribal momentum behind the two big parties.

People Before Profit has been canvassing throughout the West Belfast constituency and the issues that people face on the Shankill are the same as on the Falls - public sector cuts, job insecurity and unemployment.

The solution to these problems is the unity of Catholic and

Protestant workers in a resistance movement against Stormont and the Tories in London.

For those in the Shankill and elsewhere who are in despair and feel abandoned, such a movement would give new hope and a sense of their own power.

**VOTE PEOPLE BEFORE PROFIT ON 5<sup>TH</sup> MAY.**

# Socialist Worker

## PUT PEOPLE POWER IN THE ASSEMBLY—

# VOTE PEOPLE BEFORE PROFIT



### RISING ANGER in working-class areas is boosting support for People Before Profit Alliance candidates in the Stormont election set for May 5th.

Canvassers in Derry, Belfast and Mid Ulster report a more positive response than in any previous election. “You don’t have to bring up the cuts,” says West Belfast candidate Gerry Carroll.

“It’s the first topic people mention. In many cases, the second is the failure of the main parties to offer any positive alternative.”

### Real Alternative

The PBPA believes it is in with a chance of winning the first seat for

the Left in a generation. “That would reverberate far beyond one constituency”, says Eamonn McCann, candidate in Foyle. “Once it’s realised that a vote for the Left won’t be wasted, the real level of support for our ideas will come through.”

The reasons for disillusionment are easy to see.

Anybody living on benefits or working in one of the low-paid jobs which dominate the North’s economy will be hit hard.

Cuts in child tax credits, the freeze on child benefit and changes in Housing Benefit will plunge thousands of families into crisis.

Since last October, the help people get with mortgage interest has

virtually halved and many now face losing their homes.

### Cuts

This month, other Housing Benefit cuts will start to hit private rented tenants. As well, anyone on Incapacity Benefit will be receiving letters to tell them they will have to undertake the Work Capability Assessment and transfer to Employment and Support Allowance.

For all but the severely ill and disabled, this will mean a loss of £30 a week – a huge sum for people already near the poverty line.

The main parties say the cuts are all Westminster’s work, there’s nothing they can do.

Of course, they could join the resistance at grass-roots level in the North

and link up with unions and working-class communities fighting the cuts across the water.

But that would be too radical for those who now fancy themselves as natural parties of government.

The Agreement was supposed to secure the future for the coming generation.

But the austerity measures mean that there’s less reason for optimism now than there was at the last Assembly election.

The People Before Profit candidates have pledged that they would put whatever clout and credibility comes with a seat in the Assembly at the service of grass-roots community organisations, trade union rank-and-file groups, campaigns to defend civil liberties and so on.

### People Power

“All the best things achieved in the North in the last 40 years have been achieved not by political manoeuvre or armed action but by the mass of the people asserting themselves,” says Gerry Carroll. “Amid the debris of shattered aspirations on all sides, that truth is becoming self-evident again.”

All four PBPA candidates emphasise that more spending on public provision is needed, not less, and point out that the money is there - £120 billion a year in tax is dodged by banks, big businesses and super-rich individuals. If they were made to pay their fair share, there would be no budget deficit - same as in the South.

“The Executive parties are less and less plausible when they relay the Treasury’s cuts and then complain about them when they come,” says Gerry Carroll. “We offer an alternative to those left behind in either community who are tempted to turn out of frustration to paramilitary groups.”

### Get involved

Other People Before Profit candidates are Harry Hutchinson in Mid Ulster and Brian Faloon in South Belfast.

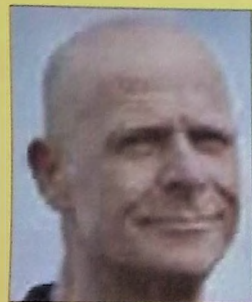
All four could use help, in terms of canvassers spending a day on the doorsteps, delivering leaflets etc.

### Contact Details

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[www.eamonnMcCann.com](http://www.eamonnMcCann.com)

## People Before Profit Alliance candidates for the Assembly:

**Foyle –  
EAMONN  
McCANN**



**North Belfast  
– DYMPNA  
McGLADE**



**West Belfast  
– GERRY  
CARROLL**



**South Belfast  
– BRIAN  
FALOON**



**Mid-Ulster –  
HARRY  
HUTCHINSON**

