

# Socialist Worker

# Stop the IMF/EU's plans of ECONOMIC MADNESS

### Risk of an Irish Default Increases

THERE IS a growing chorus that Ireland's debt is unsustainable.

After lying to people during the election, Fine Gael and Labour are repeating the Fianna Fail line that we must do what we are told by the IMF-EU and just 'grin and bear it'.

But the UCD economist Morgan Kelly has produced alarming figures to show that Ireland's national debt will amount to €250 billion. He says 'we are talking of a Government debt of €120,000 per worker or 60 percent of GNP'.

The government's sole strategy for dealing with the debt is to attack PAYE workers and cut public services. The last government introduced a Universal Social Charge and cut tax bands so that €1.5 billion was robbed from PAYE workers to pay the toxic debts of the banks.

Now the Fine Gael-Labour government has told the IMF-EU that they are going to further reduce tax bands and credit in the next budget. This is despite their promise that they 'will maintain the current rates of income tax together with bands and credit'.

### Pensions

Their latest target has been the pensions of private sector workers. They are imposing a 0.5% levy on these pension savings to raise €440 million for the next four years.

But instead of attacking workers they could have targeted those who have benefited from Approved Retirement Funds (ARFs). These were a tax dodging scam that allowed bank directors and company directors to sail away millions in pension funds - without paying proper taxes.

If the state had imposed a special levy on all ARF pensions - or those which gave benefits of over €80,000 a year - there would be no need for this levy.

But each and every time the government decides to attack PAYE workers. They bow to the rich in the hope that they will start investing in Ireland - but think we are a soft touch who will fund their crazy plans to pay off bank debts.

This economic strategy is simply driving the Irish economy deeper into recession. And this explains why there is an even greater shortfall in state revenues.

In 2008, the shortfall in government spending was €11.5 billion. But after three years of 'deficit reduction' it has actually increased to more than €18 billion.

The strategy of following orders from



the IMF-EU has begun to fall apart after it was revealed that Greece is on the brink of a default. If Greece does this, money will fly out of Ireland and a default will become inevitable.

### But the question is: what type of default?

Here there is a sharp distinction between the left and right-wing economists such as Morgan Kelly or David McWilliams. These celebrity economists are true believers in capitalism who want to let the market mechanisms rip through society, producing shock doctrine effects that will lead to massive wage cuts and privatisation.

Kelly's answer to the crisis, for example, is to cut wages in the public sector and take other measures to immediately squeeze €18 billion out of the economy. Only then will we send a signal that 'Ireland is back in business'.

But if such a prescription were followed,

it would drive the country even deeper into an economic depression.

### The Left Alternative

The only real alternative can come from the policies advocated by the United Left Alliance (ULA) because it focuses on the real cause of the crisis - the failure of Irish capitalism.

The left advocates three main principles for dealing with the crisis:

- Stop re-capitalising banks and write off the debts run up by the private banking system.
- Throw out the IMF and stop them the EU Commission controlling the economy in the interests of the EU banking system.
- Take serious action against the local rich to fund the government deficit and start a proper jobs programme.

The Irish rich have salted away at least

€130 billion in assets in both Ireland and abroad.

Last year, 'savings' in the Irish economy - which is mainly money held by rich people - increased by €39 billion. This is clearly where the money must be found to rectify the economic mess.

We need a mass social revolt that starts by resisting the cutbacks but then goes on to advance a wider programme to tackle the crisis.

Such a programme will include: the public ownership of natural resources; a wealth levy on the global assets of the rich; a Robin Hood tax on the €1,800 billion in speculative assets in the Irish Financial Services Centre (IFSC); capital controls to prevent the flight of money, and nationalisation of all companies that refuse to cooperate with a programme to save Irish society from the ravages of the speculators.

### Inside:

**THE HORRIBLE HISTORY OF THE HOUSE OF WINDSOR**

**OPPOSE QUEEN'S VISIT & join the Speaking Tour**

with Prof John Newsinger

*Author: The Blood Royal*

**FRILING-KERRY 10th MAY**  
7.00pm-9.00pm  
Middle Abbey St. 01

**CONDONAT 11th MAY**  
7.00pm-9.00pm  
McMurtry St.

**GALWAY SAT 14th MAY**  
8pm-10.00pm  
St. Nicholas's

**WEXFORD SUNDAY 15th MAY**  
8pm-10.00pm  
Great Victoria St.

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# ACTIVISTS HELD DURING ROYAL WEDDING



By JAMES O'TOOLE

IN THE movie 'Minority Report' cops use psychics to arrest you before you commit a crime. Might sound far-fetched but not for the boys in blue in the UK. Squats were raided in the days leading up to the wedding—with doors smashed down and the people inside terrified.

Charlie Veitch, a peace activist from Cambridge, was arrested the day before the wedding. He was held locally for 16 hours before being transported to London. Officers accused him of conspiracy to cause public nuisance. His partner told reporters that Charlie intended to make ironic comments about the wedding through a megaphone.

## Why oppose Queen's visit?

By JAMES O'TOOLE

FINE GAEL is intent on painting all opposition to the visit of the Queen as living in the past. The opposition to monarchy consists of more than just dissident republicans however.

There are countless people in Britain itself who would love to dismantle a parasitic monarchy which costs the British taxpayer over £180 million a year. The cost of the Queen's short visit to Ireland will cost over 15 million - enough to build a cystic fibrosis unit or fifteen schools! It's outrageous that workers here or in the UK would carry these burdens when the rest of the ruling class is calling for cuts and more cuts.

There are more than just the economic arguments at stake here though: The Queen is the head of the UK's armed forces. An army which has left a trail of blood from one end of the earth to the other, most recently in Iraq and Afghanistan, you don't get an empire by being nice to people! That's why Socialist Worker will be building protests against the visit by this parasite.

Join the anti-war demo 6pm May 17<sup>th</sup> at the GPO.

For more information: <http://irishantiwar.org/>

# Reconciliation - Prelude to a Palestinian state? Justice for Rachel Peavoy

By AINE DILLON

ON 4 May in Cairo, Hamas and Fatah signed an accord which is being greeted somewhat euphorically as a breakthrough in the moribund peace process.

The two organisations have agreed to form an interim government ahead of elections at the end of the year. Hamas won the last elections in 2006 but were prevented from governing by an international boycott and a Fatah coup. Despite repeated offers to recognise a state of Israel based on the 1967 borders, the Quartet of the infamous Roadmap (the UN, EU, US and Russia) have refused to deal with Hamas.

Not surprisingly, Israel has reacted negatively to the news and it is unclear exactly how Hamas will be able to organise an election campaign when its members are vulnerable to assassination by Israel.

The detail of the agreement has yet to emerge but the agreement appears to be a major compromise for Hamas - one that will lead to their cooperating with the Israeli occupation as Fatah do.

The agreement is another step towards an expected unilateral declaration of independence by the Palestinians at the UN in September.

The drive for recognition is being led by the Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority, Salam Fayyad,



Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, Hamas Leader Khaled Meshal

and will be based on a Palestine comprising the West Bank and Gaza Strip with East Jerusalem as capital. Palestinians living in refugee camps in Lebanon and Jordan would be able to 'return' to live in the new state but not to the homes in Israel from which they and their families were expelled.

The idea, which no doubt has its roots in sheer desperation, also ignores the Palestinians living within what is now the state of Israel, and the existence of almost 600 permanent Israeli barriers within and around the West Bank.

The declaration will come fresh on the heels of

the world's newest state of South Sudan which will come into being on 9 July and the Palestinians will no doubt be curious to see the response of world leaders - many of whom rushed to recognise Kosovo under intense US pressure.

The desperation of the Palestinians is understandable but a Bantustan state is not justice.

Instead of looking to the international community to provide recognition, the Palestinians should take inspiration from the Arab Spring and also from the Rud Jedida letter penned by young Mizrahi Jews, living in Israel, who called for dialogue and solidarity

with the Palestinians living under Israeli military occupation and also with the struggles of Palestinian citizens of Israel who are denied equal political and economic rights.

Their letter welcomed the civil resistance of Tunisia and Al-Tahrir square and stated that the struggle of Mizrahi Jews in Israel rests on the understanding that political change cannot depend on the Western powers who have exploited the Middle East region and its residents for many generations.

It is to these individuals and the people of the wider region that the Palestinians must look for freedom.

SYRIA:

## Demonstrations continue despite crackdown

By JAMES O'TOOLE

THE ARMY raided a mosque in the town of Deraa while tanks shelled the city's old quarter. President Bashar Al-Assad has ruled over the country since his father Hafiz's death in 2000. Hafiz was Syria's dictator for 30 years, after he launched a coup in the ruling Ba'ath party.

Most of the country's 17 million people—half of whom are aged under 19—are poor and becoming poorer. Unemployment stands between 25 and 30 percent. GDP is falling and the oil is running out.



The vast bureaucracy and military and security machine that has kept the ruling Ba'ath party in power can no longer be sustained.

As Robert Fisk puts it, "Torture does continue, the iniquities of the mukhabarat security services continue, freedom in Syria is as hard to find

as an oasis in the desert, and the Syrian parliament remains a circus of support."

Syrian troops arrested over 300 people in a Damascus suburb on Thursday last. They pulled back from the protest hub of Deraa though after a military lockdown of more than a week.

Activists, defiant and inspired, vowed a "Day of Defiance" on Friday to press a seven-week-old anti-regime campaign in which 607 people have died, according to human rights groups, while 8,000 people have been jailed or gone missing.

THE FAMILY and friends of Rachel Peavoy, the thirty-year old mother of two who died of hypothermia in her Ballymun flat in January 2010, held the first public meeting of their campaign 'Justice for Rachel' in the Axis Centre on Tuesday 3 May.

The meeting, chaired by local activist and close family friend of the Peavoy's Tony Greene, was attended by over one hundred and twenty people, the majority of whom were from the Ballymun area.

Rachel Peavoy's death in 2010 was caused by hypothermia - she froze to death in her flat in what was the coldest winter in Ireland in over forty years.

The family and friends want justice, for they know that Dublin City Council (DCC) had turned off the heating to the block of flats in which Rachel lived with her two young boys so as to save money - there were just three tenants left in that one block as a result of incomplete de-tenancing.

The Coroner's verdict, however, declared that it was death by misadventure which in effect leaves those in authority with responsibility for Rachel's accommodation, DCC and Ballymun Regeneration Limited (BRL), off the hook.

Left in limbo for so long, Rachel's numerous pleas to Dublin City Council to be re-housed were consistently ignored. The family and friends are clear: they want justice; they want someone to be held accountable for such a tragic but avoidable death.

Protest Thurs 12 May 11.30am at Dublin City Council Offices, Civic Centre, Ballymun Rd.

## Dublin Legalise Cannabis Demonstration

By VANESSA O'SULLIVAN

HUNDREDS OF people took to the streets of Dublin on Saturday 7 May to demand the legalisation of Cannabis. Chants of "We are not criminals!" and "Legalise!" echoed through the capital from a mainly young crowd.

A young demonstrator told SW "The facts are still unavailable to society. Prohibition doesn't work! "All it does is push people underground and victimizes growers.

"For those of us who have a genuine interest in the plant, we get raided and even face criminal charges. Its not right".

In a spectacular act the crowd, which was preceded by a band, all sat down on O'Connell Bridge.

The crowd was addressed by the organisers, Legalise Cannabis Ireland (LCI), and then opened up to anyone who wanted to speak.

LCI insisted that legalising the plant would

be making cannabis safer as instead of being sprayed with plastic and other harmful substances it could be grown in a controlled environment, It would put drug lords out of business and could even generate revenue "if you're for taxing us".

The fact also remains that more people are killed through alcohol consumption, a legal drug, then by smoking cannabis.

The LCI called on the crowd to keep up the pressure on the

government all year round and are committed to doing so.

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# The House of Windsor

By JOHN NEWSINGER

**WHY DOES** the British ruling class keep the House of Windsor around? It is not a matter of sentiment, some sort of starry-eyed attachment to royalty, but rather a hard-nosed calculation.

The monarchy is a feudal remnant that nevertheless still serves a useful ideological function in the capitalist world.

It is a symbol of privilege and hierarchy, of conservative values, of the hereditary principle, and a reminder of the glories of Empire.

The monarchy sanctifies deference, so that the more backward sections of the working class and of the middle class can proudly step forward and proclaim: 'We know our place'.

This is not to say that everyone who watched the Royal Wedding on television bought into the celebration of conservatism and privilege. Far from it.

But it gave the champions of subservience centre stage with more or less the whole of the media rallying behind them. The BBC, in particular, in the words of one commentator, 'spooned its audience deference'.

Of course, in the wake of the Royal Wedding, it is easy to overestimate the extent of the Windsors' popularity.

Even with an unprecedented media celebration of the event, the TV viewing figures in Britain still failed to match the famous *Eastenders* episode when Dirty Den told Angie he was getting a divorce!

And it is worth noticing that as far as tourist destinations go, Windsor Castle, the most popular royal attraction, still comes a long way behind Legoland!

While this puts the Royalist celebrations in some sort of perspective, the fact remains that the conservative establishment in Britain still pulled off a remarkable propaganda success for wealth and privilege.

The Age of Austerity clearly does not apply to everyone.

As well as a symbol of privilege, the British monarchy is also a symbol of Empire.

When Elizabeth Windsor became Queen in 1952, Britain still had an Empire.

Indeed, within months of her coronation, the British state was engaged in one of the most brutal colonial wars in a long history of brutal colonial wars: crushing rebellion in Kenya.

Under Elizabeth, over a thousand rebels and suspected rebels were hanged, including 45 for administering illegal oaths.

Torture was routine, with prisoners beaten, castrated, blinded and summarily executed. Over 80,000 suspects were interned without trial, starved and

brutalised.

Unfortunately, one of the internees, flogged by his British guards just happened to be a certain Hussein Obyango Obama, the grandfather of the current US President. This is a bit of bad luck because British troops haven't tortured the relatives of American politicians since the 1780s. It does explain why Obama wasn't at the Royal Wedding though.

And, of course, in the best Imperial tradition, British troops are at this very moment fighting in Afghanistan, the fourth British invasion of that country, and British jets are bombing Libya.

This close association between the monarchy and the Empire was cemented under Queen Victoria.

Right the way through her reign, the British waged wars of conquest, using their overwhelming technological advantage to slaughter poorly armed 'natives' and take over their countries.

Under Victoria, the British Empire was the biggest drug pusher the world has ever seen, waging three wars of massacre and slaughter to bring the Chinese to heel, forcing them to open their country to the importation of opium.

Victoria was the Mrs Big of the international drugs trade for most of the nineteenth century, although this is not how it is usually presented in British history books.

But the British monarchy is not just for the British. It is more than willing to help bolster conservative values throughout the world.

In 1849, Victoria visited Ireland to put on a display of royal extravagance in the middle of the Great Famine: balls and banquets in the midst of mass starvation. It is difficult to imagine anything more obscene.

And while the situation is very different today, there is no doubt that the royal visit to Ireland is intended to provide a welcome distraction from the sacrifices that the working class are having to make to save the capitalist system.

John Newsinger will give a

THE HORRIBLE HISTORY OF THE HOUSE OF WINDSOR  
OPPOSE QUEEN'S VISIT  
with John Newsinger  
Speaking Tour  
DUBLIN Friday 10th May  
CORK Saturday 11th May  
LONDON Sunday 12th May  
Belfast Sunday 13th May

talk on "The Horrible History of the House of Windsor" on Fri 13<sup>th</sup> May, Unite Hall, Middle Abbey Street, 7.30pm.

Check [www.irishantiwar.org](http://www.irishantiwar.org) for protest information on the Queen's visit to Ireland.

# West's lea bloody hy

AROUND THE world newspaper front pages screamed with celebration at the announcement that US forces had killed Osama Bin Laden in his compound in Pakistan.

Barack Obama, David Cameron and their Western allies are cheering the death of the man they claim was the source of terror attacks worldwide.

But they are hypocrites. Look at the death toll, the suffering and the destruction caused by Western warmongering over the last decade.

Hundreds of thousands have died and millions have been made homeless and forced to flee the devastating wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

And more are dying in Libya—this week's attempted assassination of Colonel Gaddafi resulted in the death of three of his grandchildren, all under 12 years of age.

The US has no right to be in Afghanistan or to set up military bases across the globe. Yet it believes no one should question its right to invade and bomb anywhere it pleases.

In what amounts to kidnap, the US captures people and sends them from one secret prison to another using rendition flights.

Many prisoners suffer horrific torture at the hands of US agents.

There are still 172 such prisoners at the Guantanamo Bay prison camp who have never faced any trial.

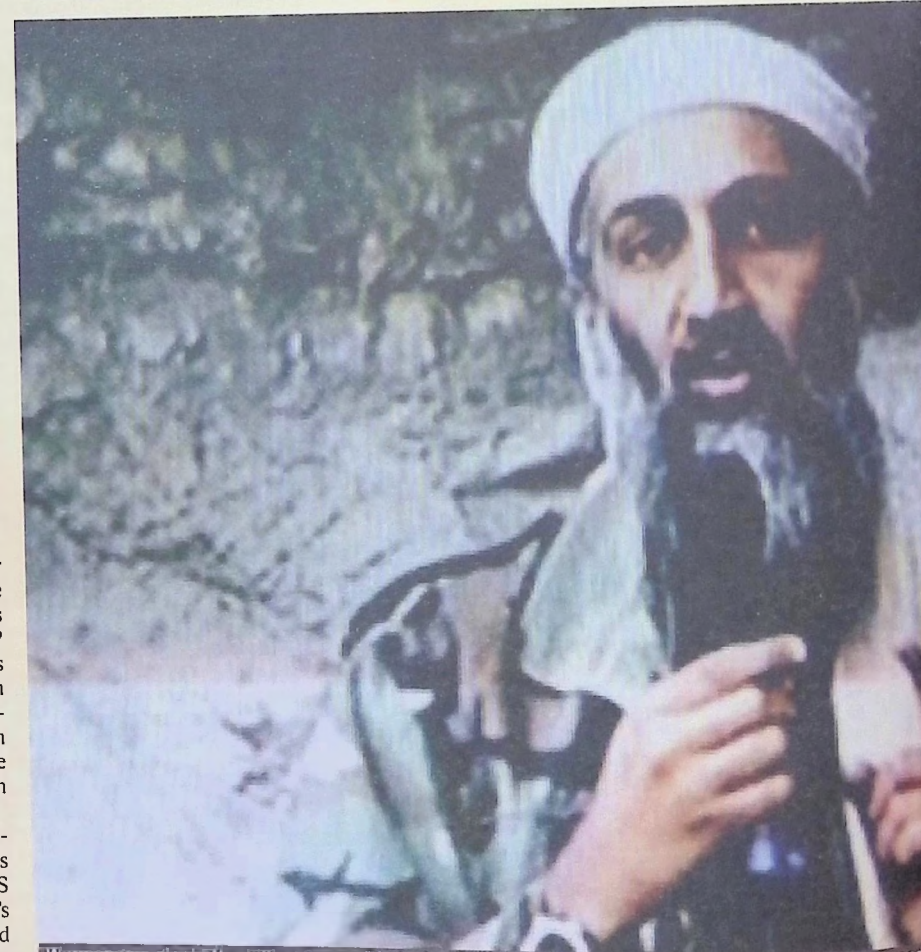
The killing of Bin Laden involved flying into a foreign airspace with no permission or warning to carry out the assassination.

Imagine the response if another country flew helicopters into the US and landed in George Bush's Texas ranch on a murder mission? We are told that the US's actions are justified because they are in response to the "evil" of terrorism and attacks like 9/11. But in reality these acts are a response to oppression, not an expression of "evil".

Bin Laden and his followers talked about the bitterness people feel at the impact of US imperialism—the anger at Israel's oppression of the Palestinians and the role of the US military in holy sites in Saudi Arabia.

George Bush claimed after the 9/11 attacks that he was going to prosecute a "war on terror". But this was always a smokescreen for the US ruling class to extend its global power.

George Bush named the countries he claimed were a threat to democracy "the axis of evil"—Iran, Iraq and North Korea.



Warmongers gloat after killing Osama Bin Laden, but they killed hundreds of thousands, their wars spread

He made no mention of the brutal tyrants of Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Egypt or Bahrain because those men were valuable US allies.

When Barack Obama was elected he stopped using the term "war on terror"—but he carried on the war.

He will want to use Bin Laden's

death to send a message to the rest of the world—that only the US can guarantee global security.

But Bin Laden's death will not make the world a safer place. Instead, a newly confident US may feel emboldened to wage more wars and reassert its power on the international stage.

The world's greatest super-

power has been shaken by the global economic crisis. But it has also been terrified by the revolutions sweeping across North Africa and the Middle East.

Millions have taken to the streets in protests and mass strikes, and soldiers have mutinied—in the face of extraordinary state repression.

# Leaders are hypocrites



terror and they destroyed Iraq and Afghanistan

In Tunisia and Egypt such struggles brought down the Ben Ali and Mubarak dictatorships. The process of these revolutions is ongoing and deepening. They have shown what can happen when people take their lives into their own hands.

This is the force that can really challenge US imperialism in the

region. Generations have suffered war, poverty and oppression at the hands of local despots backed by successive US presidents.

But times are changing. People are rising up, and they offer hope of a very different future, shaped by the needs of those who have been at the bottom of the pile for too long.

## A bloody war in Afghanistan, thousands of lives lost, what has been gained?

**THE WAR** in Afghanistan is in its tenth year. Tens of thousands of Afghan civilians have died, and 2,375 foreign troops have been killed, including 1,509 US and 360 British soldiers.

Last year was the bloodiest of this long war and saw the highest number of military deaths—711.

After 9/11, US president George Bush, Tony Blair, and other Western leaders, claimed the Taliban in Afghanistan were giving Al Qaida a safe haven and so must be attacked.

The Taliban, previously US allies, became the enemy.

The Taliban's treatment of women was spun as another reason we were at war. Laura Bush, George Bush's wife, and Cherie Blair took to wearing a piece of fabric torn from a burka to symbolise the fight for women's freedom in Afghanistan.

But the liberation of women was never the aim of this war.

After ten years, 140,000 Nato troops, the vast majority of them from the US, are still in occupation.

Different commanders-in-chief and imperialist strategies—from troops surge to counter-insurgency—have come and gone.

The puppet regime led by President Hamid Karzai is widely acknowledged to be deeply corrupt—and the Taliban now controls more of the country than it did five years ago.

The stability of neighbouring Pakistan has been undermined by the desperation of the US to dominate the region.

The much-vaunted aim of women's liberation is rarely mentioned today. Violence against women is rife—20 girls' schools were firebombed or destroyed in just six months last year.

Karzai attempted to push through laws in 2009 to legalise rape in marriage and would have meant women could not leave their homes without their husband's permission.

So many lives lost, billions of pounds spent on death and destruction, and for what?

The only achievement is the destruction of one of the poorest countries in the world because it has the misfortune to find itself on a strategic faultline of imperialism.

Today the US and its Western allies no longer pretend to care about democracy for the Afghan people. Most have made it clear that they want to get out.

Barack Obama has said US troops will start leaving this summer.

The US ruling class now has only one concern. After the fiasco of Iraq they do not want to appear to be defeated.

They hope that killing off Bin Laden will provide cover for the fact that people are still dying in a war that has reached a bloody stalemate and has long been unwinnable.

## Barack Obama:



## The mendacity of hope

By AINE DILLON

BARACK OBAMA, the first black president of the USA, visits Ireland this month.

Tens of thousands will probably turn out to greet him, happy that he has not invaded Iran; that he lifted the global gag on funding overseas family planning groups which provided information on abortion; signed the Hate Crimes Prevention Act; repealed the Don't Ask, Don't Tell Act; and at least acknowledges that urgent action is needed on global warming.

However, the tide of change that swept Obama to the Oval Office in November 2008 has ebbed away and activists have realised that his first term amounts to a long list of broken promises.

Guantanamo remains open and there is no sign that US troops will be leaving Iraq or Afghanistan anytime soon.

The extra-judicial execution of Osama bin Laden has made a mockery of Obama's pledge to due process and the rule of law.

Vetoing of UN resolutions which criticise Israel continues and Obama has even increased military aid to Israel by \$75 million, making a 2012 fiscal year total of \$3.075 billion.

His much lauded healthcare reform has been compromised to shreds and essentially amounts to more Americans paying for health insurance.

Why then do people continue to see him as a progressive force?

Part of the answer lies in an incredibly successful branding effort.

With a Kenyan father and an Indonesian step-father, Obama's background is not that of a typical US president.

Nor is his time as a community organiser in Chicago where he helped black neighbourhoods organise for better services.

But this is not the tale of a street-organising Martin Luther King or a placard-waving Jesse Jackson.

Obama's background as editor of the Harvard Law Review and his years working as a Law School Professor and civil rights litigator demonstrated to fellow Democrats that, far from being an angry black man, Obama was someone who could do business in the corridors of power.

From his 1996 election to the Illinois

State Senate, Obama's non-confrontational, pro-business, charismatic style impressed key figures in the party.

Despite losing the 2000 House of Representative primary to former Black Panther Bobby Rush, Obama rapidly made a name for himself and went on to take a Senate seat in 2005, then came 2008 and the call to restore trust and remake America.

As President, Obama has not done either of these.

He extended the Patriot Act, increased troops in Afghanistan, launched a drone war against Pakistan, increased the Pentagon budget to record levels, and extended tax cuts on the super-rich.

During the 2007 primaries campaign, Obama claimed that if American workers were denied their right to organise he would 'Put on a comfortable pair of shoes myself and I'll walk the picket line with you as President of the United States of America'.

However, public sector workers in Wisconsin, who spent many months battling lay-offs, have not seen Obama on their pickets.

The problem is not that Obama has been corrupted by the system; the problem is the system. Obama's 2012 campaign is expected to spend \$1 billion.

Corporate donors do not invest that sort of money unless they believe that a candidate will advance their domestic and foreign policy interests.

Obama is backed by the biggest firms on Wall Street.

He may not be Bush (and for this he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize) but he is a candidate of capital and an advocate of war.

Three years ago, the *Change We Can Believe In* campaign successfully diverted the anti-war and social justice moments in the States.

US workers and activists may have lost hope in their candidate but they have not lost hope in their ability to change the system.

When Obama arrives in Dublin, we should make sure that there are thousands of protestors standing in solidarity with workers in Wisconsin and Chicago, as well as with the people of Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Palestine.

Check [www.irishantivar.org](http://www.irishantivar.org) for protest information.

# Socialism and human nature

## — are we all too greedy?

By WILL SHANNON

ONE OF the main arguments put to those who want to get rid of capitalism is that people on the whole are too self-ish for a system based on cooperation and mutual respect—socialism.

The idea that all people are guided by self interest alone is a staple of the ruling class' justification for their profit driven system—capitalism.

We can see this in the sophisticated argument presented by scientist Richard Dawkins, who has popularised the idea of the 'selfish gene'.

On the other hand we see the huge out-pouring of sympathy from ordinary people after natural disasters such as the earthquakes in Haiti and New Zealand, and the tsunami in Japan.

Since January this year there has been the mass sympathy and solidarity for the ongoing popular revolutions in the Middle-East ending decades of dictatorship.

Furthermore, socialists argue that the whole system of capitalism no longer serves the interests of the majority of people, it benefits just a few.

Yet the system still remains intact with people in the most monstrous of conditions simply 'getting on with it'.

### Abundance and shortage

Life under capitalism contains several contradictions, one of which concerns abundance and shortages.

On one hand humanity as a whole under capitalism has rapidly produced more wealth in two hundred years than could ever be conceived by previous systems in thousands of years.

We have material abundance. On the other hand like every other system, we have shortages. But unlike under previous systems, this is an *artificial shortage*.

Capitalism as a system has given rise to immense human productivity but is terrible at providing for the need of the producers within the system.

Capitalism is a system in which construction workers can find themselves homeless because they were let go after the company that employed them built too many houses.

Billions across the globe go hungry while food is dumped in the ocean. This happens because production is geared towards profit and not human need.

For Marx, it is society's social and economic relations in totality that determined people's 'nature' for the most part; not a hard-wired basic instinct acquired tens of thousands of years ago.

In fact humanity's 'nature' had to change dramatically over the course of pre-history and our adaptation to the world around us is the reason that Homo Sapiens (us) survived through the Ice Age unlike our Neanderthal cousins.

This is not to say that everything human is learned but rather that the human mind has such vast capabilities to allow for any response most suited to a particular situation. And so our 'nature' varies as quickly as the situation in which we find ourselves.

There are constants in human history — fixed needs for our survival. Like other animals we have the need to provide food, water and shelter for ourselves as a means of self-preservation.

Importantly, a constant in our nature is our ability to work collectively and form complex social relations.



### Class Society

So why is it, that society is divided into classes?

Classes are not a fixed component of human society but rather a result of a historical process of human work.

The development of agriculture by humans 7,000 to 10,000 years ago meant that for the first time in history our ancestors had a surplus.

People could hoard food to be eaten at a later date, to free up members of their community to protect the surplus or even to pursue cultural goals.

The greater the surplus the more advanced the society would become.

In a time of material scarcity, those freed up to guarding the surplus with control of its distribution would grow disconnected from the wider population and so the minority group grew into a ruling class over a period of several centuries.

Throughout history the nature of class society has changed from the slave systems of the ancient world through to feudalism in the middle ages and ultimately to capitalism.

From these societies to the one we live in today, the ruling order has either been overthrown from below, replaced

from outside by means of war or has decayed away when faced with great pressures.

### Grave-digger

Capitalism, Marx said, creates its own grave-digger. Life under feudalism usually ended in the same place it started.

Agricultural and cottage production for the most part was based on the family unit with little contact with the world outside your immediate surroundings.

The emergence and development of capitalism brought with it a concentration of humanity in large towns and cities like never seen before.

Individual work became collective work. Within the city and importantly within the workplace cooperation on a large scale became key to survival.

For example when you look at the occurrences throughout your day, you will be hard stretched to find an example of competition.

Looking for cooperation, you will find countless examples such as stopping at a red light, agreeing to pay for goods at the supermarket or cooperating with your co-workers.

Furthermore workers have to cooperate together to defend their pay and jobs.

We see this when workers take strike action. We organise collectively to challenge the bosses' power and the lies their media tells.

A strike day contains the very first seeds of a different type of society, one based on cooperation. But this is not inevitable.

Capitalism creates the conditions for this cooperation and its overthrow, but in normal times forces workers to compete with each other.

### Competition at the bottom

In Ireland today, the main competition in society is not as the free market ideologues claim, between capitalists for market share.

The main form of competition is between workers competing for the crumbs from the ruling class table.

We have today a real unemployment rate of nearly 15 percent; youth unemployment is at 29 percent. This has led to fierce competition in the job market. In this situation, a person can often be cut-throat or selfish in providing for their own needs.

None of us knows of life outside of capitalism. We can sometimes see its workings as natural, sometimes see through them.

Although we are products of the society that we live in, we are not just mechanically anchored to it. If this was the case society would never change.

As Marx put it "Great men [and women] make history but not in circumstances of their own choosing".

We can see from the current case in the Egyptian revolution that despite incredible repression from the state, people resist their current conditions and often during these great upheavals, people's attitudes change in a matter of days; attitudes that in any other circumstances would have taken years or decades to change.

In this process of realising our collective power we can shed the distorted ideas that capitalism gives us.

If people make society and society shapes our consciousness, a socialist society in which humans democratically and consciously shape the world around them can unleash an incredible creative and intellectual capacity inconceivable under capitalism.

# NI Election – BNP Nazis fail but play the ‘race’ card

By SEAN MCVEIGH

ONE CAUSE for concern from the recent Assembly election is that the fascist British National Party (BNP) appears to have established a small foothold in some areas.

The party stood in three constituencies, gaining 500 votes in East Antrim, 400 in South Antrim and 340 votes in East Belfast.

While the BNP failed miserably to make an electoral breakthrough, it appears to have established small groups in a number of towns.

In East Antrim, the party campaigned against plans to build a new immigrant detention centre in the town of Larne.

The party claimed Larne

had been “earmarked as a dumping ground for illegal immigrants and bogus asylum seekers”.

## Racism

In an attempt to incite racism, the BNP distributed mock-up leaflets and posters showing two Muslim women walking along a well known street wearing the burqa.

Currently suspected “illegal” immigrants are held in cells in Larne police station.

The UK Border Agency plans a purpose-built immigrant detention centre at the station; while the BNP use the issue to try to spread racism and build their party.

Socialists argue that all immigrants and asylum seekers should be welcomed to this country.

The plans to build a deten-



tion centre in Larne should be scrapped and the disgraceful practice of holding asylum seekers in PSNI cells stopped

immediately.

These people have committed no crime and no human being is “illegal”.

## Islamophobia

Some establishment politicians have made statements that can only help the BNP.

The East Antrim DUP MP and outgoing finance minister, Sammy Wilson, supports the new detention centre saying that it is “important that we have centres like these across the country so that detainees can be held”.

The DUP MP has also called for “British jobs for British workers” and earlier this year he made a vicious attack on the Islamic faith. Wilson described Islam as “violent” and “intolerant”, and talked about the “terrible persecution faced by Christians across the Muslim

world”.

As Western bombs rain down on Afghanistan and Libya, talk of Muslims persecuting Christians is ludicrous and offensive, but it will have pleased the BNP.

## No scapegoating

With the election over we can expect the new Stormont Executive to intensify public sector cut backs, creating fertile ground for the racists.

There will also be more attempts by politicians like Wilson to deflect people’s anger at the cuts towards scapegoats like asylum seekers.

This is where a broad, radical organisation like People Before Profit comes in – to build a movement against the cuts, to point the finger at the real enemy and to make sure the BNP does not grow.

## Revolutionary Classics

In the first of a new series of columns, *Socialist Worker* reviewers revisit classic literary and revolutionary texts. Sinead Kennedy reviews *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Karl Marx’s assessment of the revolutions of 1848.



THESE REVOLUTIONS are an often forgotten episode in radical history but for Marxists they have an enormous significance. Indeed the ideas explored by Marx in *The Eighteenth Brumaire* continue to provide important lessons and insights for revolutionaries today, from South America to the Middle East.

First, these upheavals represented the first examples of independent working-class political action in European history—they marked the moment at which something resembling the modern socialist movement began to take shape. Secondly, the revolutions of 1848 gave Marx and Engels their first major opportunity to put their revolutionary theories into practice.

Finally, the revolution of 1848 in France gave Marx his first chance to analyse and write about the development of the revolutionary movement using the method of historical materialism.

This method allows Marx to go beneath the superficial appearance of things to find the social

forces at work. For him, it isn’t sufficient to explain the revolution by arguing it is simply one faction competing for power against another faction. Marx wants to know the social and economic interests that these different factions and individuals represent, and how the conflicts between them reflect the struggles taking place at the base of society. He concludes his analysis by arguing that a revolutionary transformation of society is only possible when the working class act independently of the bourgeoisie.

Marx’s ideas were confirmed by the events surrounding the Paris Commune in 1871. The workers of Paris rose up, banished the existing state power from the city and built the Commune to represent their interests. For Marx this demonstrated that the working class could not build socialism through the bureaucratic and administrative power of the bourgeois state. Instead they would need to smash that power and build a totally different kind of state. A lesson that still holds true today.

## ARTS REVIEWS

# Cat on a Hot Tin Roof Pygmalion



Richard Flood (Brick) and Owen Roe (Big Daddy)

By Tennessee Williams, Directed by Mark Brokaw, Gate Theatre, Dublin, until 11 June

Reviewed by Peadar O’Grady

‘CAT ON a hot tin roof’ is a Tennessee Williams play – his own personal favourite – first put on stage in New York in 1955.

This was at the height of the McCarthy witch-hunts which included scapegoating homosexuals as ‘perverts’ and traitors (‘they’ would sell their country to hide their secret).

In this context Williams’ move to write a play in which homosexuality was a

central theme was brave, especially given his own homosexuality.

The play opens with the central dilemma for the couple, Brick (Richard Flood) and Maggie (Fiona O’Shaughnessy), of Brick’s suspected homosexual love for his best friend Skipper who killed himself when Brick rejected him.

Feeling like ‘a cat on a hot tin roof’ is how Maggie describes her feelings of unfulfilled sexual desire for her husband.

The action centres around the family’s dealing with the issues of Brick’s marriage, his heavy drinking and the illness of his father ‘Big Daddy’ played by Owen Roe.

Many of the themes of

‘Brokeback Mountain’ of the desperate situation of being in love with a same-sex partner in 1950s America are explored.

Self-hatred, ambiguity, deceit and alcoholism are just some of the avenues available for dealing with life in the racist, conservative deep-south.

Despite some truly moving moments between Brick and his father, with a wonderful performance by Owen Roe, and some great acting from Donna Dent as Mae and Marion O’Dwyer as Big Mama, Flood and O’Sullivan lack the direction, choreography and chemistry required to bring home the tragedy of the forced accommodations their characters endure.

Reviewed by Paul O’Brien

GEORGE BERNARD Shaw practically invented modern twentieth-century drama. The theatre became a platform for his political views and he deliberately set out to provoke a response from his audience.

His plays are satires, witty and combative, that exposed capitalism with a passionate intensity that has never been equalled by any writer in the English language.

After years of neglect it’s good to see a Shaw play being performed by the Abbey Theatre in Dublin.

At least five or six of his plays are classics, such as *Widowers’ Houses*, *St. Joan*, and *Heartbreak House* and deserve a place on the modern stage.

The Abbey are presenting *Pygmalion*. Rarely produced, it is far better known as providing the text for the musical *My Fair Lady*. *Pygmalion* is certainly not one of Shaw’s more important plays though it has its moments.

The plot is simple enough. Under Professor Higgins’ tutelage the lowly flower girl Liza Doolittle is transformed into a lady.

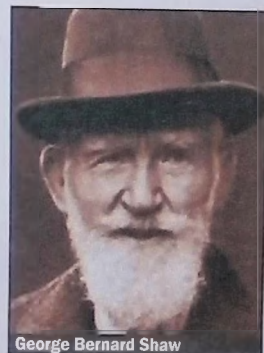
The Shavian twist is that in becoming a lady, Liza forgoes all that was decent and wonderful about her.

*Pygmalion* is an anti-romantic comedy, and the unspoken play contained within it shows the contradiction between the false morality of the ruling class and the reality of the world on which it is based.

In all his plays Shaw transformed the ideas of politics into the language of life. In his soul he was a socialist.

Shaw made no attempt to hide the fact that he wrote for a purpose. He was never afraid to take an unpopular stand and for this he earned the hatred of the authorities. He was a wonderful playwright, a humanist, and a great artist who put politics at the centre of his work.

*Pygmalion* runs at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin until 11<sup>th</sup> June.



George Bernard Shaw

# Socialist Worker

## ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS: ANALYSIS AND PROSPECTS

THE RESULTS from the Northern elections were both disappointing and inspiring – disappointing that Eamonn McCann in Foyle just missed out on the sixth seat, inspiring that he and Gerry Carroll in West Belfast polled so well. Gerry Carroll, in his first election, polled 1661 first preferences.

What the results for the Left across the North showed was that a radical, campaigning Left which is open to people who don't identify themselves as socialist but who want to campaign for change – and which consistently campaigns in communities and on the streets – can make an impact at election time.

By contrast, other socialists who stood for election – whether as part of People Before Profit, the Socialist Party or Workers Party – and who concentrated on slogans and “raising the red flag” rather than on concrete campaigns and local organisation did no better than before.

In both Foyle and West Belfast, the approach was similar: emphasising the common experience of both Protestant and Catholic working people and the need for a united fight back against the cuts.

In both constituencies, the election was used to start campaigns with groups of local people – whether campaigning for play facilities in Springfield's Sliabh Dubh, or housing on the Shankill, or proper funding for learning disability services across the Western Health Trust, to mention just a few.

There was huge disappointment in Derry when Eamonn McCann was pipped at the post.

As we go to print, counting in the Derry City Council election had just begun.

Colm Bryce polled well in



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Northland, getting 564 votes, or about 6% of the vote, while Davy McAuley got 222 votes in Waterside – more than the PUP or Alliance party.

The counting for Waterside Rural (Diane Greer) and Cityside (Connor Kelly) has not yet begun.

It was clear from the election results that there has been no shift from the old Orange/Green divide and “peace process” politics to a newer Left/Right divide.

Perhaps that will come as communities and groups of workers start to organise to resist the cuts.

There can be no better way to end this article than to quote from Gerry Carroll's message to supporters as the polls closed.

He wrote:

*“Of course it is highly unlikely we will be winning a seat in this election, our expectations are modest and our assessment is sober.*

*Traditions and loyalties run deep and will not be brushed away by a single election campaign.*

*But for anyone who was involved in this campaign you cannot help but feel that beneath the surface something is changing.*

*The creeping disillusionment with the main parties and the*



People Before Profit  
**VOTE**

EAMONN MCCANN

*palpable anger around social questions is creating a space for a new politics, this space will only get bigger.*

*For all the other parties, elections are their raison d'être, everything is subordinate to getting themselves elected.*

*For People Before Profit what is important is that our election campaigns help facilitate campaigns on the ground and raise the confidence of working people to fight on their own behalf. By this yardstick we have undoubtedly succeeded.*

*On the ground we have won an argument with thousands of people*

*against cuts and for an alternative to them.*

*We have met many people on the doors who want to set up anti-cuts groups in their area, and with the network that we have developed in this election we have laid the basis for an extremely strong grassroots campaign against cuts.*

*Tonight is not therefore the end but rather the end of the beginning, the fight against austerity in West Belfast has begun in earnest.*

*The contacts, networks and enthusiasm created during this campaign will now be used to build the biggest and broadest movement against cuts possible.”*