

Socialist Worker

Water Charges: Bring Down this Government now



Arised people! Ireland is witnessing one of the largest civil resistance movements in its history. Tens of thousands are mobilising against water charges – and many won't stop there. They want rid of the corrupt establishment who imposed austerity on the majority to protect the privileges of the few.

The Fine Gael-Labour government is in crisis. A few months ago, they voted for a Water Services Act that gave them power to turn down the water of non-payers to a trickle.

But within days of the massive November 1st mobilisation, the Labour Party Environment Minister, Alan Kelly, said he was sorry such a threat was ever made.

There is panic on the back-benches of Fine Gael and Labour and now is the time to deliver the hammer blow that will lead to their downfall.

We need mass civil disobedience to throw them out of office. Any concessions they make should be treated with contempt.

They will offer tax rebates, 'cheap water rates' – anything they can – to get the movement off the streets.

But once they introduce charges, they can increase them in future. We should not be fooled by their lies and our only demand must be: **SCRAP THE WATER CHARGES.**

December 10th

December 10th – human rights day – has been nominated as the day of mass, peaceful protest.

We should congregate at the Dail at 1pm and stay there for 24 hours to make them listen.

During the last general election, Labour Party candidates made explicit promises to oppose water charges. They were elected on false pretences and need to hear the people's anger now.

Wednesday December 10th will be a different type of protest to the earlier weekend protests.

It represents a significant escalation and should become a mass STAY AWAY day.

We should walk off work at lunch time; we should take holidays; we should do whatever it takes to have the largest presence outside the Dail.

We should even follow the example of the Gardai and stage a Blu Flu!

If December 10th is not enough, it should be followed by another day of mass peaceful civil disobedience all around the country where there are strikes and peaceful sit downs to block roads, ports and city centres.

Don't wait - Act now to drive them out of office

At the start of this struggle, some argued that there was nothing that could be done until a new government was elected to remove the legislation.

The leadership of Sinn Féin were even going to return their Irish Water application packs and pay the charges.

But the sheer scale of the anti-water charges move-

ment has now convinced Mary Lou McDonald and Gerry Adams to declare they will not pay the charges.

Their change of mind is to be welcomed but there should be no more wobbles.

No one in this movement should fall into a trap being prepared by Denis O'Brien's media to divide us between 'good' and 'sinister' protestors.

The reason for clashes in Dublin's Northside, is that the Gardai have been sent into working class areas to enforce water meters on people, who do not want them.

They should be immediately withdrawn.

Our movement should be organised democratically from the grassroots. We need local assemblies that take their own decisions on where when and how to protest.

Facebook has been a useful tool to spread communications but we need to make decisions collectively through open debate.

Instead of waiting for the bills to arrive in January, our aim should be to keep escalating the protests so that the country is not governed by a regime that relies on lies.

We should seek to break the Fine Gael-Labour coalition before they even get to issue the bills.

If we do not succeed, we can, of course, fall back to a non-payment campaign.

But now is the time for action – let's seize it and start to change this country for ever.

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ECB boot-boys and their Irish accomplices

Brian O'Boyle

A series of letters between Jean Claude Trichet and Brian Lenihan in late 2011 have finally been published.

They show that the European Central Bank acted as the boot-boy for bankers and corporations. However the idea that the Irish elites were *unwillingly bullied* misses the point.

In his opening letter, Trichet poses a veiled threat that the ECB will pull the Emergency Liquidity Assistance (ELA) if the Irish government doesn't continue with a 'multi-annual budgetary adjustment' (code for austerity).

Directing the policies of an elected government obviously goes way beyond the remit of European bankers.



Any decent politician would have told the ECB where to go, but Lenihan actually agreed that Irish taxpayers should pay for the crisis.

In his official reply, Lenihan explicitly states that "the Irish Authorities are embarking on a significant continuation and intensification of our

policy actions to achieve budgetary sustainability". In other words, we are already ramping up the austerity so you have nothing to worry about.

Unsatisfied with these assurances Trichet came back for more.

As the European crisis deepened the ECB made four key demands on the Irish Authorities.

- (1) Take an IMF/ECB bailout,
- (2) Guarantee all of the debts of the banks with tax payers' money,
- (3) Sort out the banking sector and
- (4) Impose drastic austerity to pay for it all.

Without full agreement to these terms and conditions the ECB would turn off the ELA, crashing the economy.

This gun to the head moment shows the true nature of the European Union. The idea that

people without any mandate can bully and cajole political representatives is entirely reprehensible, but this doesn't take away from the role of Lenihan and the Irish establishment.

Instead of finding the money by taxing wealth inside Ireland, Lenihan agreed to the ECB terms wholeheartedly. In his reply, he even boasts about an 'aggressive strategy' to take €30 billion out of public spending before pumping €32 billion into Anglo.

This transfer from working people to some of the world's richest bondholders was done to protect Ireland's image as a global tax haven. Lenihan sacrificed his own taxpayers to save the skins of Irish capital, but you won't find a word of this in the mainstream media.

Jail for helping homeless

A 90-year-old activist in the US state of Florida faces a jail term of up to 60 days for violating a new law that bans serving meals to the homeless in public places.

Arnold Abbott was detained on two separate occasions this week along with two pastors from local churches in Fort Lauderdale for handing out food to the city's homeless. He vowed to continue his charitable work, even if it means going to jail.

Abbott, who is known in his community as "Chef Arnold", said on Thursday he would continue his practice, telling the NBC news channel in an interview: "I'm awfully hard to intimidate."

He could be jailed for up to two months and fined \$500 if he is found in breach of the law. The ordinance requires feeding sites to be more than 152 metres away from each other and 500 feet from residential properties.

Oil baron to tackle climate change

The EU Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy is an oil baron. Miguel Arias Canete was the president of two companies handling petroleum supply in Spain. He held shares in both companies until this September and his son was also a board member until recently. His brother in law is now the president of both.

When he was the Spanish Minister for Agriculture and Environment Canete liberalised laws to allow for greater construction in Spain's already crowded coastal resorts.

At the time he had links with companies that would benefit from such changes. He was the former board member of one; his wife was the sole representative of another and his brother in law was president of the national cement manufacturers association.

The 'Double Luxembourg'

Brian O'Boyle

Since Barack Obama famously referred to Ireland as a global tax haven, we have been inundated with stories about the so-called *Double Irish*.

This is a tax arrangement dreamed up by corporate accountants to move money through Ireland on the way to places like the Cayman Islands.

The details of the scheme are extremely technical. However the essence of the arrangement is relatively simple. Transnational corporations make payments between various parts of their international structure so that all of the profits seem to accrue in low tax economies. This scheme known as 'transfer pricing' allows companies to minimize their tax liabilities by moving money across international borders.

In the latest scheme to hit the headlines, transnational cor-

porations did a secret deal with Luxembourg's tax authorities with the help of Pricewaterhousecoopers (PwC).

This scheme was taken advantage of by around 340 corporations funneling almost €2 trillion (€2,000 billion) through the tiny country.

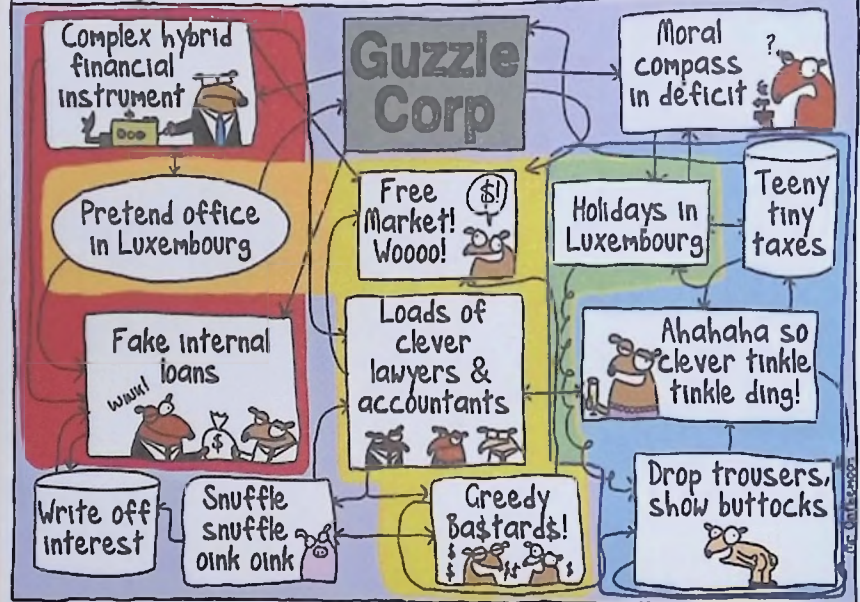
In the case of Irish food giant Glanbia, around €1 billion was moved through Luxembourg into a so-called special purpose vehicle.

This was then lent back to the parent company in the form of an international loan.

The interest paid on the loan was written off for tax purposes by the Irish authorities even though the interest was being paid to Glanbia itself.

Jean Claude Juncker, the current head of the EU commission, has regularly attacked the Irish authorities for their role in facilitating the *Double Irish* even as he helped to concoct his own version of the *Double Luxembourg*.

Luxembourg Tax Avoidance Disgrace Explainer: How It Works Flow Chart!



Damming report into child poverty in Ireland

Ireland ranks 37th out of 41 developed countries in UNICEF's latest report into child poverty. Since the recession began 2.6 million children have been pushed below the poverty line, taking the total to 76.5 million across the countries surveyed.

In Ireland, the increase is truly staggering as a further 139,000 children have been forced into poverty by the government's six year austerity drive.

From 18% in 2008 the number of Irish children below the threshold now stands at

28.6%.

This constitutes a 58% increase on the pre-recession figure, making a mockery of government claims that they have gone out of their way to protect the most vulnerable.

UNICEF also highlighted the fact that the increase in child poverty was not inevitable as a handful of countries surveyed managed to reduce their child poverty in the midst of recession.

Meanwhile, Ireland's results have been lambasted by UNICEF as a 'big leap backwards'.

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WHAT THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY STANDS FOR

Capitalism is wrecking the lives of millions and endangering the planet.

A new society can only be constructed when the workers take control of the wealth and plan its production and distribution for human need and not profit.

REVOLUTION
The present system cannot be patched up or reformed. The courts, the army and police exist to defend the interests of the wealthy.

To destroy capitalism, we need to remove the present state structures and create a workers' state based on much

greater political and economic democracy.

AGAINST IMPERIALISM AND WAR

War is a constant feature of capitalism today as the imperialist powers try to dominate the earth.

The "War on Terrorism" is a crude device to attack any country which threatens US military, strategic or economic dominance.

END RACISM AND OPPRESSION
We oppose all forms of oppression and racism. This divides and weakens the

working class.
We are for full social, economic and political equality for women.

We oppose immigration controls which are always racist.

FOR WORKERS' UNITY IN THE NORTH
We stand for workers unity against the Assembly politicians and Cameron government.

Like great socialist James Connolly, we believe that partition has brought about a 'carnival of reaction'

We want to see an Irish workers republic where all

workers gain.

Our flag is neither green nor orange but red!

FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY
To win socialism socialists need to organise in a revolutionary party.

This party needs to argue against right-wing ideas and for overthrowing the system.

We call for co-operation between left-wing parties and the formation of a strong socialist bloc.

We stand for fighting trade unions and for independent rank and file action.

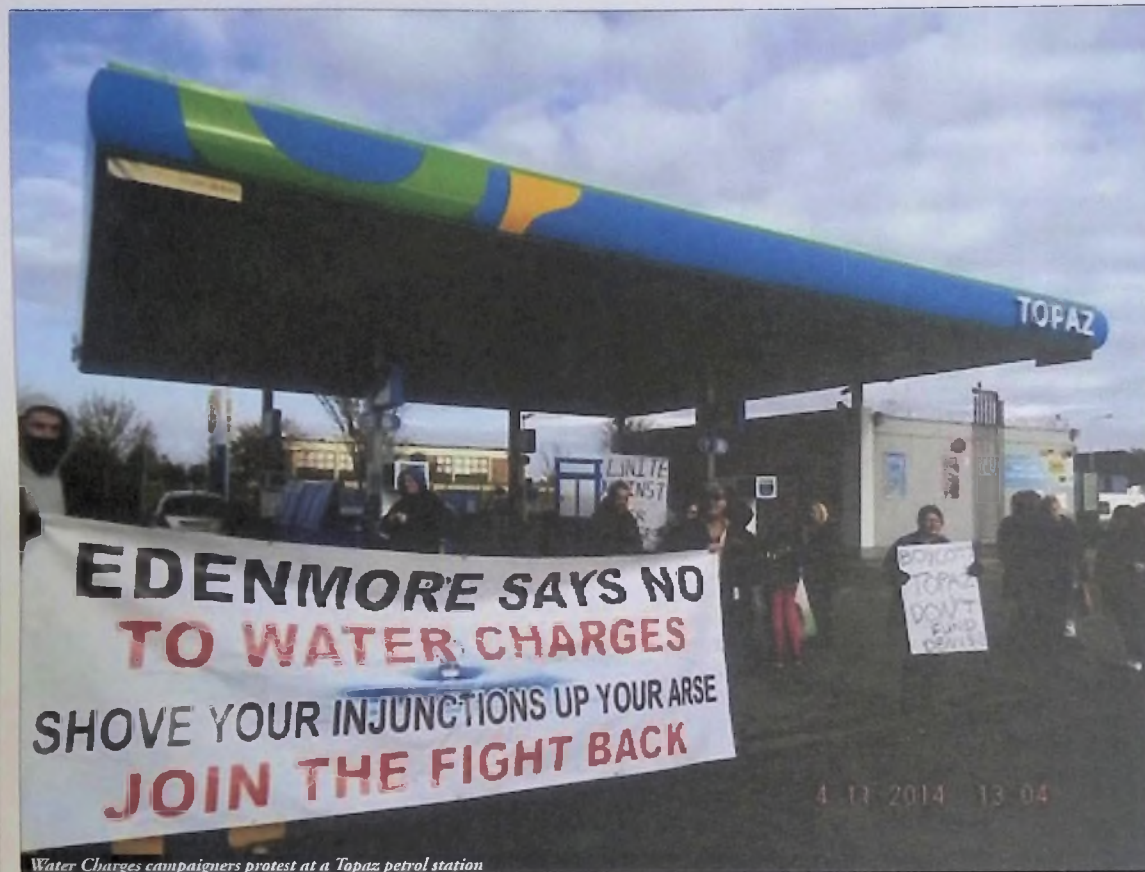
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O'Brien's media attacks water charges protestors



Water Charges campaigners protest at a Topaz petrol station

SECTIONS of the Irish media are trying to scare people away from the anti-water charges movement by frequent reference to 'sinister elements' who are, supposedly, controlling events.

Their focus has been opposition to the installation of meters in Dublin's Northside where clashes with the Gardai have grown.

But the company involved in the installation is owned by the Siteserv Group, owned by the media mogul, Denis O'Brien. The contract is reputedly worth €60 million.

Siteserv originally owed €150 million to the state-owned Anglo-Irish Bank – later re-named as the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation. But €110 of this debt was written off in order to allow an O'Brien controlled company to purchase Siteserv.

A French company, Altrad claims that it offered €60 million more for Siteserv but their bid was discarded in favour of O'Brien's.

The media attacks on anti-water charges protestors have a familiar ring. During the protests against the Corrib gas pipeline, a similar campaign was mounted.

The *Sunday World* crime correspondent, Paul Williams, ran a story under the headline 'How The Shinners Hijacker Rosspoint – IRA Take Control Of Protests'.

He claimed that a 'gang of thugs associated with the Shell to Sea campaign' had been 'intimidating' local people. It was a tissue of lies.

The targeting of anti-water meter protestors should cast a light on the wider role that Denis O'Brien has in the Irish media.

What O'Brien Owns

Denis O'Brien's domination of the Irish media is even greater than Berlusconi's control over the Italian media.

According to one academic, the Irish media market is among the most concentrated in the OECD.

The main reason is the role of the Independent News and Media

(INM) and the Communicorp group, both of which are strongly influenced by O'Brien's share ownership.

INM titles account for over 40 percent of all daily and Sunday national newspaper sales in Ireland. It owns the *Herald*, *Irish Independent*, *Sunday Independent*, *Sunday World*, co-owns the *Irish Daily Star*, 14 regional titles and two free newspapers.

Denis O'Brien owns a 29.9% stake in INM which gives him a substantial influence.

Communicorp is owned outright by O'Brien. Its media outlets include *98FM*, *Today FM*, *Highland Radio*, *Spin 103.8*, *Spin South West* and *Newstalk*.

Despite this huge influence the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland decided that this concentration of ownership was legitimate.

Can I Sue?

Besides his huge level of ownership, O'Brien uses the threat of libel to intimidate critical voices.

After the academic Elaine Bryne, wrote an article in the *Sunday*

Independent on 'So Who's Afraid of Denis O'Brien? Enda Kenny' she received a letter from O'Brien's lawyers.

She refused to print a retraction and migrated to Australia as a consequence. She told the *Village* magazine, 'the Sword of Damocles has a marginalising effect on your career'

The former editor of the *Sunday Independent* Anne Harris, has claimed that 17 journalists have received legal letters from Dennis O'Brien.

These include Sam Smyth and Vincent Browne.

O'Brien's View of the Irish

In an outburst in 2003, O'Brien gave vent to his right wing views.

'There is too much shite going on inside Ireland at the moment. I think that people are too negative towards politicians, Government and entrepreneurs.

'We are fast turning into a communist state. We are fast moving toward communist doctrine. People in this country should be thankful for what they achieved in the last

ten years.

'Instead I come back to Ireland and people are screaming like spoiled children'.

Protests at Topaz

Anti-water charges protestors have not taken media attacks lying down. All around the country, they have focussed on another O'Brien's outlet, Topaz.

O'Brien has recently taken control of this petrol retailing chain following yet another write down of debt from the former Anglo Irish Bank.

It wrote off half of the €304 million it was owed.

After taking control, one of O'Brien's first moves was to appoint the former disgraced Fianna Fail Taoiseach, Brian Cowen to the Board.

Topaz subsequently won a €20m agreement to supply fuel charge cards to the Gardai, the Irish Prison Service and the Office of Public Works.

It is a valuable contract won after a public tender and means these State organisations and several local authorities will buy fuel at Topaz.

Water Charges: Where is SIPTU?

There was one banner missing from the massive protests on the water charges- that of SIPTU, Ireland's largest trade union.

SIPTU organises Ireland's water workers who keep the reservoirs and supply systems going.

They have formed their own National Water Workers Committee in the union and, ever since 2005, have been campaigning to keep the water system in public ownership.

They have marched, lobbied and produced reports warning about the global corporations who want to take hold of our water system.

A pity, therefore, that they were not part of the biggest movement of civil resistance that Ireland has seen since its war of independence.

Extra Taxes

Instead the leaders of SIPTU have made a deliberate attempt to undermine the movement.

On the eve of the massive protest on November 1st, the union's president, Jack O'Connor, claimed that if there were no water charges, extra taxes would be needed.

He stated, 'If Irish Water is unable to collect its revenues it will become insolvent. Then the government of the day will be faced with tax increases and public spending cuts associated with putting the costs of water supply back on the State's balance sheet.'

SIPTU is effectively a Labour Party controlled union. The three main officers of SIPTU - Jack O'Connor, Joe Flynn and Patricia King - are members of the Labour Party.

Most of its paid officials are members and the union is formally affiliated to this party.

Donations are made to Labour Party candidates at election time, with €1,000 given to Emer Costello, for example, for the recent Dublin euro election.

Labour's control over the union is bolstered by an extremely bureaucratic structure. The general membership is not allowed to vote on who their national officers should be.

There are no open branch meetings where members can attend to voice opinion.

Sectors

Instead the union is organised into extremely large 'sectors' which function on a national basis. Only delegates from workplaces can attend general meetings on these 'sectors'.

But these delegates rarely discuss issues beyond their own workplace and so are more open to influence by the full time apparatus.

The leadership uses this bureaucratic structure to promote views that dovetail with Labour Party policy. Two arguments, in particular, are made.

One is a scurrilous claim that those who fought bin charges in the past caused the privatisation of the service, leading to the emergence of vicious anti-union companies like Greyhound.

But the campaign against bin charges was defeated and



SIPTU president, Jack O'Connor

therefore it makes little sense to claim that it caused any change in council policy.

Privatisation can only occur when a user fee is imposed and a public service is turned into a commodity. It was those who voted for the 'service charges' who should shoulder responsibility for the privatisation that followed.

The second argument of the SIPTU leadership is that if there are no charges, Irish Water will not be able to invest in infrastructure.

But this makes little sense. The water system currently receives €1 billion from our central taxes.

But the government is proposing to cut off most of this and turn Irish Water into a 'self-funding' entity by 2017. If they simply continued using taxes to pay for water - rather than diverting them to bondholders - there would be no need for charges or borrowings.

SIPTU is facing a crisis because of its leadership's attitude to the water charges. Its membership has declined by 30,000 since the crash and most existing members have lost confidence in their leadership.

The spirit of the anti-water charges movement needs to be brought into SIPTU to re-take our union from the grasp of Labour Party hacks.



Liberty Hall, Dublin: SIPTU HQ



Denis O'Brien

The rise of Podemos



By Andy Durgan

A political earthquake is underway in the Spanish state. In the European elections last May a new radical left party, Podemos (literally 'we can'), caused a sensation winning 1.2 million votes and five MPs.

In recent weeks new cases of political corruption have led to a further growth in the party's support.

Most polls now have Podemos challenging the two main parties, the conservative PP and the Socialist Party (PSOE).

With over a thousand local 'circles' (branches) and over 200,000 'members' registered on-line, its leaders are now talking of 'taking power'.

Podemos has its roots in the Indignados (15M) movement that filled the country's squares in 2011 demanding radical democratic reform and an end to austerity.

Six million unemployed and massive cuts in public spending provided the backdrop to this explosion of anger.

Resistance continued into 2012 with two general strikes and rank and file movements in defence of public services.

On 22 March this year an astounding one million people, organised by the smaller left unions, demonstrated in Madrid against the government.

Against this background, Podemos was founded by activists from the anti-capitalist left and, in particular, a group of young Madrid university lecturers strongly influenced by the experiences of radical reform movements in Latin America.

Caste versus people

Headed by the charismatic Pablo Iglesias, this group has gained widespread popularity waging war on corruption and social injustice through an on-line TV show, *La Tuerka*.

As a result, Iglesias regularly appears on mainline TV chat shows and debates.

Iglesias and his supporters argue that the key division in Spanish society is not between left and right, but between the 'caste' and the 'people'.

The caste, represented politically by the PP and PSOE, emerged with the end of the Franco

dictatorship in the late seventies and has served the interests of the rich ever since.

Podemos' basic programme includes the restoration of cuts, taxing the rich, and the end of politics as a sphere of private gain.

It aims to introduce a series of radical democratic reforms that would put the control of institutions in the hands of the electorate.

This has led to Podemos being frequently described as 'populist' but this cannot obscure the fact that this is a mass political movement whose politics and supporters are firmly on the left.

Support for Podemos comes mainly from disillusioned PSOE voters, sympathisers of Communist Party-led United Left and younger people radicalised by the 15M.

Local circles, where anti-capitalist arguments are widely accepted, find experienced activists alongside others new to politics.

Minimal programme

In October a national assembly of 7,000 supporters laid the basis for the new party.

In a subsequent vote on-line over 90,000 members voted to support Iglesias and his collaborators' proposals to centralise Podemos and establish a minimal programme.

Iglesias will certainly be elected General Secretary later this month.

Another 14,000 voted for an alternative proposal, backed by three of Podemos' five Euro MPs and many local activists, for a less centralised and explicitly plural organisation which would give the central role to the circles rather than on-line voting.

Opposition has also come to changes in the party's political line.

Influenced by the Greek left party Syriza, Podemos has dropped its demand for cancelling the debt in favour of 'renegotiation': thus seriously weakening attempts to undo the damage done by the bank bailouts.

But Podemos has not ceased to represent a major threat to the existing political system.

Even its more moderate proposals challenge political corruption and austerity.

Podemos remains a melting pot of radical democracy and calls for mobilisation.

The 'caste' has good reason to be afraid.

Can Ireland have

By Kieran Allen

The most recent voting trends in Europe reflected a shift to the right, as parties like UKIP in Britain and the fascist National Front in France made significant gains.

But in three countries, there is a strong swing to the left. In Greece, the radical left party Syriza could lead the next government.

In Spain, Podemos is the most popular party. And in Ireland, opinion polls show that a political earthquake is underway.

From 1932 to 2002, Fianna Fail and Fine Gael scored 75 percent of the popular vote.

The Labour Party made up the 'half' of the two and a half party system, scoring just 11 percent.

Between them all, the 'political establishment' commanded an average of 86 percent of the vote over this seventy year period.

Today, however, the combined support for the three main stream parties stands at just left than 50 percent of the electorate.

The most popular party in the state is Sinn Fein and there is also considerable support for the category of Independents, which includes People Before Profit and the Anti-Austerity Alliance.

These polls, however, have been taken before the full effect of the massive anti-water charge movement becomes evident.

Great movements of civil resistance tend to alter political allegiances because they challenge the defeatism and fatalism that the elite batten off to claim 'there is nothing can be done'.

They give lie to the arguments that 'accepting reality' means complying with the constant demands for more tax breaks for the wealthy, austerity and wage cuts.

The future may, therefore, bring even bigger swings to the left, creating the distinct possibility of a left government for the first time in Irish history.

Don't wait

Yet, ironically, the last thing we need is any suggestion that we should wait for a left or progressive government.

This is what Sinn Fein suggested at the start of the anti-water charge movement.

'The government doesn't listen and the only way to get legislative change is by voting us into office' was the familiar refrain of most of their speakers.

They had little sympathy with the idea that the self-activity of masses of people could break a government and defeat the charges. And it was no wonder.

For decades they claimed that the IRA was the 'cutting edge' that would bring change to the North.

Today the historic agency has changed and it is now TDs in the Dail that supply the essential ingredient.

Ironically, this led them initially



into complying with the law and returning Irish Water forms.

The sheer strength of the anti-water charges movement has forced Sinn Fein to shift but many within the movement continue to distrust them.

Nevertheless we have arrived at the situation where the FG and Labour government is looking very shaky and so questions will arise about whether an alternative left led government is possible.

Clearly it is in the sense of a government led by Sinn Fein with the support or participation of the radical left.

But the more important issue is what would such a government seek to achieve and what measures it would take to carry them through.

What would a left government do?

The context is important. Ireland's level of sovereign debt is currently running at 150 percent of GDP.

It is paying out €8 billion a year in interest charges alone.

Although the Troika have left,

the country is still subject to an 'excessive deficit procedure' whereby its budget is monitored by the EU bureaucracy and is forced to comply with 'scorecards' that force it to adopt neoliberal measures.

Any left government would have to repudiate some or all of these restrictions.

At a minimum, it would have to declare openly that it will not pay off bankers' debt and be prepared to take unilateral action to force bondholders to the negotiating table.

It would also have to assert its sovereignty against EU rules on deficit spending.

These measures would provoke considerable opposition from the wealthy elements of Irish society itself.

They know that the abolition of water charges, USC and property charges means that the tax burden would be shifted to their shoulders. And as tax dodging has become part of their entitlement culture, they would strongly resist.

We must, therefore, assume that a left government would face huge

a left government?



local and global pressure to carry through even modest measures. But would it be willing to face them down?

Here a number of legal and extra-legal measures would be required.

Faced with a flight of investment, a left government would have to impose capital controls. In other words, it would have to suspend the 'right' of the wealthy to move money out of the country.

It would also have to 'open the books' on the myriad of tax dodging scams and fake accounts that larger companies use.

It would have to remove those sections of the Revenue Commissioners who have had a cosy relationship with 'tax planners' and replace them with people determined to squeeze the wealthy.

And it would have to answer attempts at economic blackmail by a forceful policy of nationalisation.

Mobilisation

Even such legal measures, however, would be inadequate when faced with an onslaught of propa-

ganda and financial pressure from the elite.

While the radical left may consider Sinn Fein to be weak, it is still the case that the 'deep state' would see their leadership of a government as a direct threat to their interests. By the 'deep state' we mean that network of repressive agents and top bureaucrats who manage the day to day running of the state.

These agents and the state organs generally could not be relied on to reverse austerity and shift the burden of pain onto the wealthy. Considerable active mobilisation by the broad mass of people would also be required.

Workplace and community assemblies would be required to draw people into active support for this fundamental shift. The knowledge that countless white collar workers have on how cash is hidden or kept 'off balance' would be needed to track down the tax dodgers.

A left government that relied on these structures as well as its command of office could make

some significant gains. But there is also no doubt that such a strategy would raise the stakes in the class conflict that is rapidly developing. And in such a conflict the very structures of the state machinery and how it is effectively designed to uphold privilege would be shaken.

Who is up for it?

Of course, none of this may come to pass because the declared objective of Sinn Fein is to work within the existing framework.

They make no mention of repudiating debt or of taking decisive measures against the wealthy. But if they do not move in this direction, they will become yet another 'sell out party'.

It is crucial, therefore, that revolutionaries engage with debates on a left government and adopt a positive attitude towards it.

But it is even more important to interrogate its potential programme and strategies before giving a definitive answer on its degree of support for such a project.

Old Stereotypes and anti-Roma pogroms

By Ismael Cortés

Recently, there were commemorations to mark the 76th anniversary of the Night of Broken Glass (*Kristallnacht* or *Novemberpogrom*).

In different cities across Germany and Austria, on the night of the 9th and 10th of November a series of pogroms were perpetrated against Jewish civilian, stores and synagogues, while the German authorities did nothing to prevent it.

Those attacks were the prelude to a criminal racial policy that led to the Holocaust, where six million Jews and five hundred thousand Roma were murdered.

How does the remembrance of this dramatic night challenge today's Europe? Since January 2007, when Romania and Bulgaria joined the European Union, we have witnessed an increasing political alarm about the "Gypsy threat", with respect to Roma immigrants who migrate from these two countries into Western Europe.

They should, it is claimed, try to integrate into the labor market, without any real provisions being made for the members of the community to gain dignified jobs, or to be shielded against discrimination on the existing job market.

The projection of an image of the 'criminal lumpen' on the Roma people has been prevalent across Europe.

One of the most representative cases took place on October 2013, in Dublin, Ireland: when the state took custody of a seven year old girl, who belongs to a gypsy family, based on the suspicion that she was a stolen child, because she has blue eyes, blond hair and white skin that contradicted the physical appearance of her parents, in the view of the authorities.

After spending four days in an orphanage, she was returned to the parents, after DNA testing proved that the couple were indeed her parents.

This tragic situation of social and institutional racism faced by



Huge police resources have been deployed by France and Italy to control Roma immigrants.

The anti-Gypsy measures included special surveillance systems and ultimately forced evictions.

Thanks to the media spectacle created around these cases, the Roma community in Europe has become much more visible, not only as migrants, but also as the largest and oldest minority in Europe nowadays.

According to data provided by the Council of Europe, 12 million Roma live in Europe, half of whom in member states of the European Union.

Since 2010 over 15 pogroms have occurred against Roma neighborhoods in countries such as France, Spain, UK, Ireland, Italy, Greece, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Hungary or Czech Republic.

Despite the fact that in many cases the pogroms are organized by neo-fascist gangs the political reaction to these events have not defined them as racist crimes, but as a spontaneous reaction of civilians against 'deviant behavior' or Roma individuals.

These accounts have often emphasized the need for a special effort of integration that should be done by the Roma people.

In some cases, political discourse is even more radical and suggests that Roma people should themselves make an effort to leave lifestyles associated with the informal economy and crime.

gypsies in Europe contrasts with the phantasm of the Gypsy universe, associated with passion, beauty and freedom, represented by the figure of Esmeralda in Victor Hugo's *Hunchback of Notre Dame*, and further instances of popular culture trying to Orientalize or reify "Roma culture".

One way to break with both the stigmatizing and the Orientalizing stereotypes is to project a different image of the Roma people that transcends the collective image which for centuries has shaped this dual perception of fascination and fear towards Roma and produced racism.

Linking Roma in an essentializing fashion to theft and crime without explaining the dire material conditions they live in, and the historical exclusion from labor, welfare, and human rights which many members of the community suffer, perpetuates racism.

Reducing the anti-Roma sentiment only to economic determinants, however, is also not a solution.

This approach evades the discussion of the other side of Orientalizing racism that associates Roma with magic, music, and dance.

Both approaches of both victimizing and romanticizing members of the Roma community deprive them from basic dignity, emancipative agency, and the rights to social as well as economic recognition which European citizens should ideally have.

Climate change more certain than ever

The IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) which is the world's most authoritative scientific body on the climate, published its fifth major report on 2 November.

Its main conclusions are:

- 1 Warming of the atmosphere and ocean system is *unequivocal*. Many of the associated impacts such as sea level change have occurred since 1950 at rates unprecedented in the historical record.
- 2 Human influence on the climate is clear. It is more certain than ever that climate change is humanly created through greenhouse gas emissions.
- 3 Concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere has increased to levels unprecedented on earth in 800,000 years.
- 4 Arctic ice cover and the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets have been losing mass for two decades
- 5 It is *likely* that 1983–2013 was the warmest 30-year period for 1400 years.

The report concludes that to avoid gigantic climate disaster the world has to reduce carbon emissions to zero by 2100 and that the longer this is postponed the more expensive and difficult it gets.

In one sense this report is very important because it represents the combined findings of thousands of scientists worldwide and for that very reason errs on the side of caution in its predictions.

In another way it is unimportant in that it is only restating what was known already and because for all these reports (and climate summits and government pledges and talk of wind farms) nothing serious is being done.

Despite all the evidence and all the warnings global carbon emissions – which are what count – far from being reduced, are continuing to rise by about 2% per year.

Understanding why this is the case is the key to the whole issue.

The problem, as Socialist Worker has always argued and as Naomi Klein says in her recent influential book 'This Changes Everything', can be summed



up in a word: **capitalism**.

Capitalism now has climate change built into it.

On the one hand the global capitalist economy is dominated by giant corporations which have an absolute vested interest in carbon emitting oil and gas production – companies like Royal Dutch Shell, ExxonMobile, China Petroleum, BP and Toyota.

On the other hand these companies and the states and governments to which they are linked, are completely com-

mitted to production for profit and to competitive economic growth – a lethal combination.

Even if they want to, the Boards of Directors of Shell and BP, Toyota and Volkswagen and the governments of the USA, China, Russia, Japan and Europe cannot extricate themselves from this logic of competitive capital accumulation for fear that any step backwards on their part would leave the way open to their rivals.

If Shell cuts back its oil production,

BP and Exxon would take advantage. If USA abandons oil and switches to green energy, China and Russia would forge ahead – and vice versa.

So the system careers onwards towards global catastrophe with 'natural disasters' – floods, storms, droughts and fires – increasing all the while and affecting the world's poor first and worst but threatening us all.

Only a challenge to production for profit, ie to capitalism, can stop this. Only a system based on the democratic

control of production for human need i.e. socialism, will be able to achieve the planned phasing out of oil and gas as the energy sources that drive the world and the necessary transition to an economy driven by renewables such as wind, solar and tidal power.

And if the tipping point to catastrophic climate change is passed only a collectively organised democratic socialist society will be able to cope with the consequences without descending into war and barbarism.

'Prison made me more determined to resist' -- Egyptian revolutionary

Mahienour el-Massry spoke to Socialist Worker about her time in jail and the Egyptian military's ongoing clampdown

I was the only political prisoner in the women's prison at first.

Most of the prisoners were poor women who were jailed simply because they had debts they couldn't pay.

My cell held 18 women. One had an eight-year sentence.

Another was serving six years for debt she ran up to get money for her husband to go to hospital.

At first many women were suspicious of me as a political prisoner, but over time they came to accept me.

I found that even in prison our ideas are not isolated.

Sometimes other prisoners would sneak me newspapers as I was stopped from getting them inside.

A television showed only the official channel—full of propaganda about how wonderful president Abdel Fattah el-Sisi is.

Prison exposes class society. The poorest prisoners have to work.

The official work in the laundry or cleaning bathrooms pays £13 a month. Unofficial work, such as sewing or laundry for other prisoners, pays cigarettes.

The few better off women use other prisoners as servants.

Over time the number of political prisoners rose. By the time I was released there were 11 political prisoners



Left: Mahienour El-Massry (Pic: Mohamed Hossny); Right: Free Mahienour badge



in the jail.

Six had been deported from a Cairo prison where they had been beaten. Two were put in my cell.

I'm still in contact with the women I shared my cell with. I'm not allowed to visit them but I have been to their court cases.

My experience in prison made me more determined that we have to

continue our fight.

There is no way to win other than class struggle.

I am lucky to be out and I want to say thank you to everyone who supported me. But I want to remind people about all the other political prisoners in Egypt.

There are about 41,000 political prisoners still in Egyptian jails—and

many are on hunger strike in protest at their treatment.

I am part of a campaign for justice for prisoners, called Freedom for the Brave.

Sometimes groups only campaign for their own people in prison—and most political prisoners support the Muslim Brotherhood.

Freedom for the Brave fights for

everyone regardless of their political affiliation. It even supports those who have been against us.

We put pictures of individual prisoners along the streets and add their biographies to build solidarity.

We want people to see they are not "terrorists", as the regime brands them. They are just like our brothers and sisters.

In Egypt today we are seeing the regime showing its most brutal side.

Omar Sherif, a student in Alexandria, was killed recently after being shot at a protest at the university. The regime says that students are the killers.

Protests are difficult under these conditions.

Many street protests get cancelled. This doesn't mean we have no protests, and there are some workers' strikes too.

But we are trying to think of imaginative ways to keep resistance going.

The regime is trying to break us. International powers are backing it.

The West's intervention in the region and the rise of Islamic State has made it even harder for us.

But we still have the power and have faith in the revolution. We have lost a round, but not the battle.

Mahienour el Massry is a revolutionary socialist and human rights lawyer in Egypt.

Culture Zone

Russell Brand's Cry for a Revolution

Thousands of people have packed cinemas around Britain, not to see the latest blockbuster, but to hear Russell Brand expound live on screen why we need to change society. One reason for the attendance is that Russell Brand has produced a new bestseller, *Revolution*.

Here Raymie Kiernan reports on a recent screening.

Brand echoed many people's disbelief at the way the world is. "Sometimes I feel like this is all a film and wonder, 'Are they just fucking with us?'"

Brand said, "The people that work at Pret a Manger should run Pret a Manger, or those who do the deliveries should run the deliveries." But for him class politics is just another way of dividing us.

Instead his philosophy is about making changes to ourselves as the starting point for bringing about wider change. "Be the change you want to see," as he puts it.

Tickets to watch in cinemas cost up to £16.50 a head. But anyone who has watched his YouTube videos, what he calls Trews—"true news, news you can trust"—will realise he is trying to do more than sell a few books.

Brand argued that "capitalism has provided us with the organisms for change" and said people need to be organised to achieve that change.

He said he is in favour of "killing" corporations and taking over their resources to benefit the majority.

Audiences included long time Brand fans, curious observers and many looking for change. Brand's recent call for revolution has won criticism and praise.

In the evening's discussion people

worried how to tackle the power of multinational entities, and about the use of nuclear energy instead of renewables.

People asked Brand about a range of issues and often he'd ramble off at a tangent or make a joke.

But he has never claimed to be some kind of strategist. "I'm not the guy to do the admin.

"Look at me!" he said, "But I'll talk about it."

He sees himself as "amplifying" the struggles and ideas of others, whether that is people demanding decent housing, firefighters fighting for their pension or the ideas of Naomi Klein.

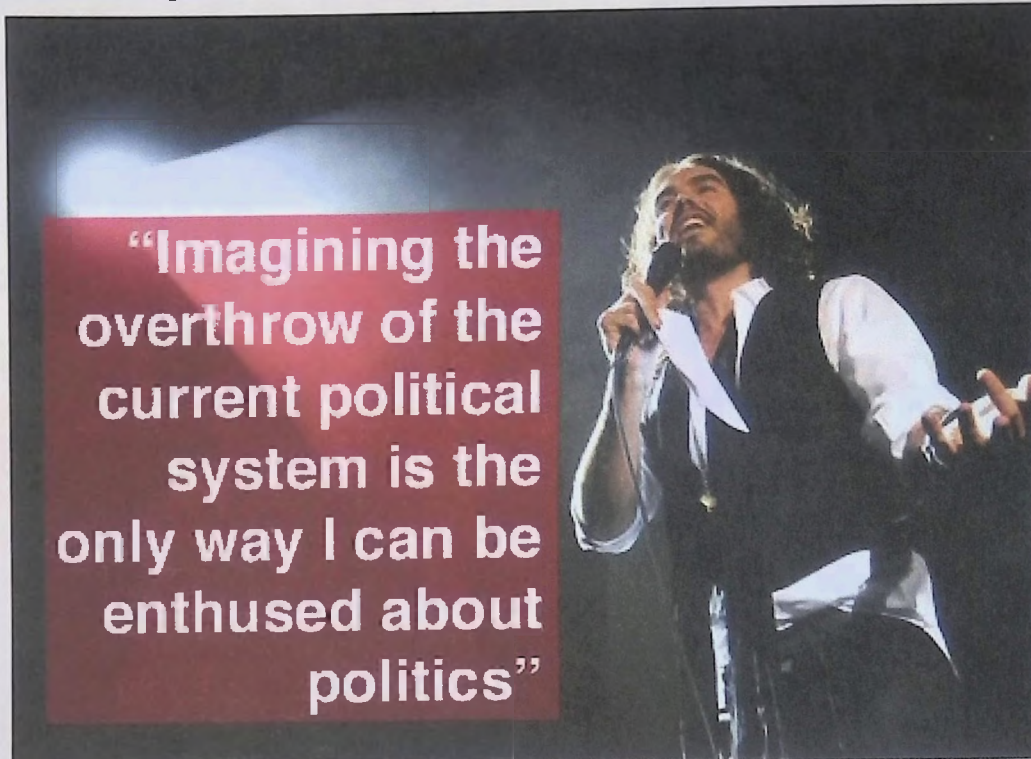
There is a refreshing honesty from him. He doesn't think he has the answers and is learning it for himself as he goes along.

Concrete

But the lack of any concrete call to action can be frustrating.

One contributor argued people should get behind three basic ideas—participatory democracy, tackling inequality and a people's environmental constitution.

He said we should all go on a big protest together to fight for these things. When asked about this, Brand said talk to the guy who spoke from the floor.



The discussion showed how open people are to alternatives to capitalism and even what they should be. But they aren't sure how to get there.

Brand has been denounced as a hypocrite multimillionaire and bogus revolutionary, but he seems sincere

in his criticism of the system.

As he says, "The people that tell us that change is impossible are the ones that benefit most from the status quo."

Someone with his profile attacking capitalism, advocating revolution

and encouraging direct action can bring those ideas to a wider audience.

Russell Brand is not going to lead the revolution—but he wants to shout for it, and attack the injustice and inequality of capitalism. And that's no bad thing.

New Atheism, Old Oppression?

Freddie Trevaskis Hoskin

The New Atheism movement has been growing in the past decade. The figures in the spotlight are Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens and Sam Harris.

They advocate a purely scientific analysis of the world and suggest that religion is not only wrong but a dangerous system which causes many of the world's social ills.

The movement first came under fire for painting Islam as a religion of intolerance and hatred.

This coincided nicely with the 'war on terror', which Hitchens wrote many articles supporting.

This has been brought into the spotlight again with Ben Affleck facing down Bill Maher and Sam Harris, rightly, calling their views on Islam were 'gross and racist'.

Harris responded by claiming that "Islam at the moment is the mother load of bad ideas."

Yet another right wing tendency has arisen in New Atheism in the past number of years, namely misogyny.

Misogyny

Rebecca Watson, a prominent atheist blogger, had been receiving a number of emails from fellow female atheists who reported acts of sexism at atheist conferences they attended.

She also experienced a number of unwarranted sexual advances and explicit emails from conference



goers herself.

At a conference in Dublin she was propositioned by a man in a lift to come back to his room for "coffee".

She proceeded to use this as an example of how not to behave towards women if you want them to feel accepted and secure in atheist circles.

The backlash against Watson was extreme.

Not only did she receive thousands of hateful and abusive comments on her YouTube channel

but Dawkins himself decided to weigh in.

He crassly compared Watson to a fictional Muslim woman "Muslima", listing all of the oppressions he assumes all Muslim women face and belittling Watson's position compared to this fictional woman who needs saving.

After Dawkins response, the online reaction intensified and Watson received countless threats of rape, stalking and death.

Sam Harris has also said "There's something about that

critical posture that is to some degree intrinsically male and more attractive to guys than to women.

"The atheist variable just has this—it doesn't obviously have this nurturing, coherence-building extra oestrogen vibe that you would want by default if you wanted to attract as many women as men."

Pseudo-science

The movement is therefore attempting to root its sexism within science, a science which puts white western males on top of the food

chain.

The online racist and sexist comments are important as this is where New Atheism is mainly active.

One only has to look in certain parts of Reddit or Youtube to find that there are thousands of people who adhere to these views.

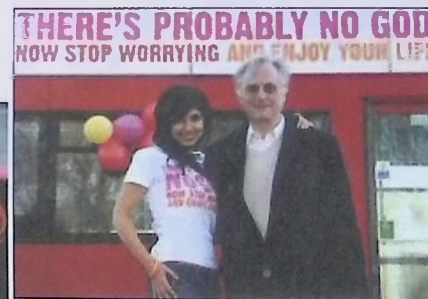
The interesting thing about these developments is that New Atheism has managed to replicate these oppressive mind-sets while still claiming it is religion which causes such mind-sets.

They have managed to become their own refutation.

This of course is not particularly surprising to Marxists who understand that it is the material conditions of a society which cause certain ideas and oppressive mind-sets to become dominant.

In other words, oppression does not arise simply from a belief system such as religion.

Religions can certainly reinforce and amplify conservative attitudes. But so too can 'new atheists' who use a cover the science to justify reactionary views.



Socialist Worker

Sinn Fein join with DUP to back cuts



Is it Yes or No to Tory Cuts? Actions speak louder than words.

The 2014-16 draft Budget agreed by the NI Executive at the end of October will see at least 6,000 public sector jobs cut.

This is on top of the 6,000 public sector jobs already lost since 2010.

The job losses are part of the £870 million in cuts that are to take place in the North *before next April*. They are then to be followed by a further £1.3 billion in cuts between 2016 and 2019.

The draft proposals received the backing of the Executive's two largest parties - Sinn Fein and the DUP - but were opposed by the SDLP, with the Alliance Party and Ulster Unionists abstaining from voting.

With immediate effect, there has been an 11% cut to the budgets of the Departments of Employment and Learning and the Department of the Environment and a ten percent

cut to the Department for Culture, Arts and Leisure, with cuts of 5% to the Departments of Agriculture and Education.

Although Health is supposed to be "ring fenced" from the cuts, one after the other, the Health and Social Care Trusts have been announcing a frightening number of cuts to services.

Beds are being closed in almost every local hospital, all minor injury units closed temporarily, at least until April.

Respite care is also being cut across the North, as well as Day Care services for people with learning disabilities.

Domiciliary services for the elderly are also being cut across every part of the North, with most visits now being only 15 minutes!

Age NI and other similar organisations have warned that many older

people will not be able to stay in their homes if this kind of cut happens.

So, it is a false economy and goes against all the rhetoric about choice and keeping people in their homes that we heard last year when they closed public sector residential homes for older people.

Although the Department of Education has been "ring-fenced" from the year on year cuts over the last four years, Sinn Fein Education Minister John O'Dowd has nonetheless presided over more than £200 million worth of cuts to teachers, classroom (Special Needs) assistants and schools.

Cuts to the Department for Employment and Learning has Further Education Colleges and Universities saying that further job losses will be needed and both Queen's and the University of Ulster

have said they will have to cut their student intake by 1,100 students each year for the foreseeable future.

In fact, it seems that the politicians have known since 2010 that there would be this level of cuts if they didn't do something to raise more tax revenue.

But, rather than hit better-off voters, they decided to do nothing and hope that "something would turn up".

Just as Fine Gael and Labour in the South blame Merkel, Trichet and the Troika for the cuts they are implementing, so in the North the DUP and Sinn Fein blame Cameron, Osborne and Westminster for the cuts they are bringing in.

But, just as FG and Labour could make different political choices, so could the DUP and SF.

For example, they could have

brought in some money from the wealthy by removing the cap on the regional rates and increasing the rates paid by those at the top end of the housing market.

They could stop the huge bonuses and pension pay-outs to top civil servants and the top bosses in QUANGOS, instead of cutting the jobs of low-paid public servants.

They could end the millions in hand-outs to the "consultants" that infest almost every government department.

Northern Ireland's biggest union Nipsa has called on other trade unions to join it in a combined major strike early next year.

This is exactly what is needed to fight the cuts.

Without a united working class fightback, there is the danger that sectarianism will fill the vacuum.