

Socialist Worker



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Water charges: Beat the Bullies Sink Irish Water with Mass Non-Payment!

As a direct result of the mass water charges revolt in the autumn of last year with hundreds of thousands on the streets the Government found itself left with no sanctions to make people pay the hated charges.

Now they are trying to deal with this by bringing emergency legislation to the Dáil. A sign of their serious weakness is that they have tried to smuggle this legislation in undercover by attaching it to other bills.

They want to use landlords to make tenants pay and get courts to grant attachment orders to welfare payments and wages. We should protest in the strongest

possible terms against this anti-democratic and dictatorial behaviour by this rotten government of the rich.

At the same time we need to understand that we are in a strong position. If most people were paying the charges the government and their media cronies would be shouting it from the rooftops. The fact that they are silent and won't give the figures means that hundreds of thousands are not paying.

If this level of non-payment holds firm or grows it will sink Irish Water. The water charges will be unsustainable.

And even if this underhand legislation

is passed by a compliant Dáil in which the Government has a guaranteed majority they will still not really be able to touch people before the next election.

Therefore, four main tasks stand out:

- Protest strongly against this attempt to attack the non-payment movement
- Build and strengthen the boycott of water charges.
- Keep up the mass demonstrations to reinforce the boycott. In particular prepare for a big demo in the autumn.
- Build a political challenge to the Government to be the voice of people power at the coming election.



Greek referendum: OXI/No Solidarity with the Greek People

As Socialist Worker went to press Greece was heading for a referendum on the proposals made by the Troika as a condition for extending the so-called 'bail-out'.

The Tsipras government was forced into calling this referendum. It had done its very best to reach agreement with what it called its 'European partners', even to the point of agreeing to cuts of €8 billion and the continuation of austerity but this did not satisfy the Troika.

Instead they presented to Greece a series of demands that were so extreme that they resembled the conditions imposed on a country that had been comprehensively defeated in war and had surrendered unconditionally. These terms have not been much publicised in the media which has tried to focus on Greece's supposed unreasonableness.

But they were both utterly draconian and extraordinarily detailed including demands that specified large increases in VAT, cuts in pensions, cuts in wages, privatisation of key utilities, limits on the right to strike, rejection of collective bargaining all the way down to the level of TV licenses.

This blatant blackmail has been backed by financial terrorism cutting off funds and forcing the closure of the banks. The EU institutions and the IMF are trying to crush any idea of a democratic alternative to austerity.

It is clearly of the utmost importance that there is a resounding NO vote (the Greeks say OXI and the term evokes wartime resistance to fascism) but a simple No vote is not enough. It will strengthen



the hand of Tsipras but it will not resolve the underlying crisis.

There needs to be a mass social movement from below - for a NO vote, but for more than that:

- For Nationalisation of the Banks to stop the ECB and the rich crashing the economy.
- For Cancellation of the Debt to stop the Greek people paying for crisis of the system.
- For a clear break with the Troika and the

EU to end their neoliberal dictatorship to the Greek people.

For moving towards workers control of industry to stop sabotage by the rich.

In the last weeks there have been increasing protests and strikes by Greek workers and there was even serious talk in the trade unions of a general strike. It was this growing mood of resistance that pushed Tsipras away from further surrender.

This needs to intensify. This is what will

ensure a massive NO in the referendum and really force the Troika to back off. It will also point the way towards a better society and better future for the Greek people breaking with the tyranny of capitalism.

At every stage in this struggle the Greek working class are entitled to ask for and receive the solidarity of all working people in Ireland and everywhere. The EU 'institutions' are not the friends of the Greek people and they are not our friends

Atrocity in Tunisia - 38 slaughtered

The appalling massacre on the beach in Tunisia in which 38 people were killed, including Lorna Carty and Laurence and Martina Hayes from Ireland, was a hideous atrocity. Everyone will sympathise with the families and friends of all those who lost their lives.

However, in this situation as in all such terrorist atrocities socialists have a duty to

say certain things - things which may not be said in much of the media coverage.

First that those who perpetrated this act are no more representative of the overwhelming majority of Muslims than the white supremacist who massacred black people in Charleston represents all white people, so we should resist any attempt to exploit this tragedy for racist purposes.

Second, these horrible murders, like those of Islamic State in Iraq are not just random acts of evil. They exist in a context. That context is the ravaging and destruction of almost the whole of the Middle East by wars, occupations and interventions driven, above all, by western powers and their corrupt allies trying to control the resources of the region. [For more on this see Eamonn McCann,

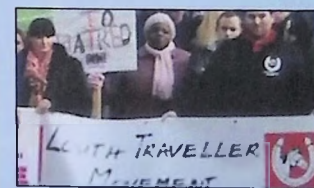
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Rogues Gallery: Irish Rich

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Travellers Face Racism

either. But the struggle of the Greek people is our struggle!

A NO vote and mass revolt in Greece will be a blow against Enda Kenny and Michael Noonan who have stood shoulder to shoulder with the Troika against the Greek people and against the Irish people.

Making Sense of the Middle East, on P5.

Just as some Europeans blame all Muslims for the terrorism of a few, so ISIS and others tend to blame all western people for the imperialism and crimes of our rulers. Both responses are wrong. Socialists call on ordinary people of all faiths and none, of all countries and regions, to unite and live in peace.

A Rogues Gallery

Michael Wallace

Here is Socialist Worker's sample of a few of the rogues who rule Irish society. It could easily have been much larger. Just think of who we left out – Bertie Aherne, Seanie Fitzpatrick, Michael O'Leary, James Reilly and lots more!

Michael Buckley: Tony Soprano wannabe



Ruthless boss of Greyhound Recycling who locked his workers out for nearly three months last year after they refused to sign new contracts demanding 35% pay cuts.

Buckley failed to break the striking workers resolve with scab labour, starvation and threats of jail after getting an injunction against the basic democratic right to protest and picket.

Bin privatisation enabled Buckley to 'win' the lucrative contract in 2012 to collect Dublin City's household refuse and immediately hiked bin charges by 16.5% and cancelled 40,000 waivers to the poorest households.

He escaped conviction after being found guilty of emissions and odour pollution at his Clondalkin plant and was fined instead.

John Tierney: From Poolbeg to Irish Water



Tierney became chief of Irish Water in 2013 after six years as County Manager of Dublin City Council.

While demanding people pay hundreds a year for water, he defended his €200,000 salary, huge bonuses for IW staff (29 of whom are on €100,000 plus) and splashed out €85 million on consultants.

As DCC chief, he wasted a staggering €108

million on the Poolbeg Incinerator fiasco and invoked a veto to overturn a 52-2 vote by City councillors so he could flog the bin service to Buckley and Greyhound.

He recently proposed that criminal prosecutions should be brought against anyone who obstructed the installation of water meters.

The Two Bankers: Boucher & Duffy



Richie Boucher is boss of €4.5 billion bailed-out Bank of Ireland whose outrageous salary of €843,000 is backed by the government.

Arrogant and dismissive of Oireachtas Finance Committees, he said debt forgiveness for 11,700 families in arrears was "not the policy of the bank."

Chairman of AIB, David Duffy, claimed there was "no credible risk of losing your home." AIB, the €21 billion bailed-out bank, and now 99% government-owned, has threatened to repossess 5,700 homes by the end of last year, with Duffy saying struggling families could pay their mortgage but have "decided not to."

Enda Kenny: is this guy worth €3,500 a week?



The Taoiseach hides away from serious TV interviews, debates and intelligent discussion. Confronted with serious questions of any kind, he often dismisses them with bizarre and arrogant remarks.

Asked how poor people were expected to pay €500 euro water bills, Enda's insulting advice was "turn off your tap."

Launching a commission on low pay, he claimed he was "very much worth" his €3,500 a week salary.

Lately Kenny has claimed to "have no deal-

ings with Denis O'Brien at all" yet has appeared alongside the tax-shy tycoon at several high-profile public gatherings when not groveling at the feet of his EU/IMF masters.

Margaret Heffernan: Dunnes Union Buster



Heffernan is boss of Dunnes Stores, one of the largest retail chains in the country with annual profits of €300 million.

She has a personal fortune of €389 million, enjoys a reputation as a union-buster and has been aggressive in opposing basic demands from her workers for job security, decent hours and earnings and the right to trade union representation.

Following the recent one-day strike by 6,000 staff, Dunnes management bullied and intimidated workers who'd participated in the action.

Employers like Heffernan are encouraged by government policies that fuel a race to the bottom in wages and working conditions.

Michael Noonan: Bondholder and Speculator



Noonan is Minister for Finance in the FG/Labour government. He's also a speculator and bondholder who makes millions gambling on domestic and international stock markets.

He holds shares in AIB and Bank of Ireland, makes huge profits betting on US banks and sold Euro shares to invest in gold.

He recently purchased Portuguese government debt to become a bondholder. Noonan contemptuously remarked in 2012 that the only things linking Ireland with Greece are 'holidays' and 'feta cheese'.

He's now playing an aggressive role in helping the EU/IMF bully the Syriza government into imposing €8 billion more in austerity cuts on an already poverty-stricken Greek people.

Joan Burton: Thatcherite with 'nothing to apologise for.'



Social Protection Minister and Labour Party leader, Burton capped the rent allowance to low-income families in 2012 leading to rampant homelessness with over 500 families and 1,000 children now in emergency accommodation.

She's responsible for reducing the dole of young people by half and forcing them to work 39 hours a week for €1.50 an hour for exploitative bosses under the 'JobBridge' scheme. Joan is now savagely cutting lone parent payments to the poorest families in the country without providing the affordable childcare she promised.

She has complained that working class people had access to 'expensive' mobile phones on protests and compared anti-water charges demonstrators who trapped her in a car for one hour to 'fascists'. At a Party Conference in March, Burton declared Labour had "nothing to apologise for and much to be proud of."

Denis O'Brien: Republican with a Small 'r'



Last but by no means least: tax exile billionaire O'Brien has seen his fortune jump massively to €6 billion, helped by receiving 500 million in debt write-downs from the likes of IBRC to buy Topaz, the Beacon and Siteserv on the cheap.

His enormous wealth allows him to buy up large sections of the media which is often used to attack the Left, promote a pro-austerity agenda and demonise water protesters.

High court injunctions were used to silence RTE and try to suppress a Dail speech on O'Brien's banking details by Independent TD Catherine Murphy.

From his plush residence in Haiti, Denis recently wrote an article complaining of the "levels of hatred" directed at him, attacked his opponents and said, "I will always be proud to be Irish, optimistic and a Republican with a small 'r'." It's not unusual for rogues to pull on the green jersey to conceal their robbery of the people.

Beating the Rogues

These rogues are not just individuals but part of a class, the 1%, who together are very powerful and control Ireland's wealth, political system and media.

But they can be beaten because in the end, as the great poet Shelley said, "We are many, they are few!"

The revolt over water charges has given a glimpse of how that can be done: mass action on the streets and in the communities.

Add to that the power of workers in their workplaces and we would really have an unstoppable force.

■ Wikipedia says A rogues gallery (or rogues' gallery) is a police collection of pictures or photographs of criminals and suspects kept for identification purposes.[1] The term is also used figuratively for any group of shady characters or the line-up of "mugshot" photographs that might be displayed in the halls of a dormitory or workplace.

Britain: Anti-Tory resistance rises

Huw Williams reports from Bristol

From the moment David Cameron achieved his surprise election victory, based on only 36% of the vote, a fightback against the Tories and their austerity policies has been gaining momentum.

On the Saturday immediately following the 7 May election 2000 plus people turned up to protest at Downing Street.

This was followed on the next Wednesday by an amazing 4000 strong demonstration in Bristol.

What was particularly striking about this was that it was independently called, not by the left or the unions, but by 6th form school students and then took off on Facebook.

The mood on the largely youthful march was vibrant and

very political.

Next came a series of local

demonstrations in towns such as Manchester, Sheffield, Cardiff and Swansea, all of which mobilised significant numbers.

There were also large People's Assembly meetings of several hundred people in many different towns across the country.

All of this culminated in a massive 250,000 strong national anti-austerity demonstration called by the People's Assembly on 20 June.

This march, it is universally

agreed, was magnificent - broad, angry, militant, young and


a breath of fresh air in what has been the somewhat stagnant pool of British politics lately.

Also the movement is continuing.

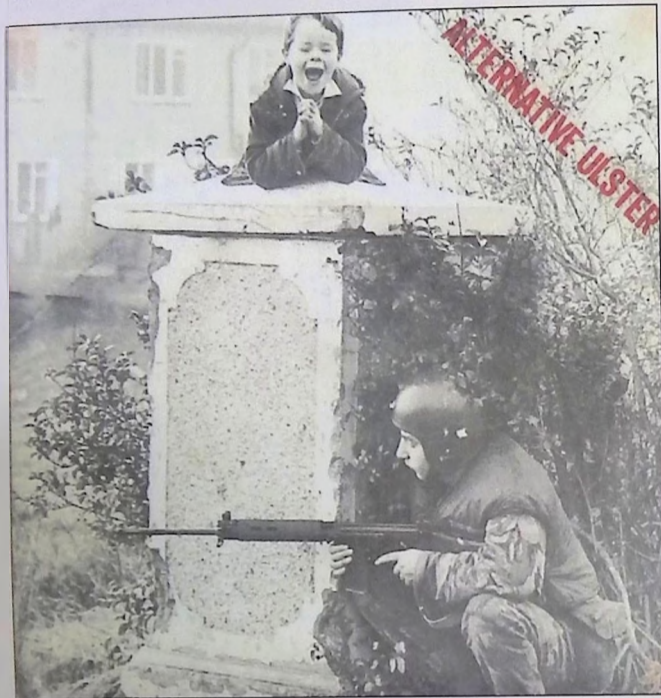
It is clear that there will be a number of large protests against the Tories' Emergency Budget on 8 July and, responding to pressure from below, the TUC has called for a major demonstration at the Tory Conference in Manchester in October.

One interesting aspect of this rise in struggle has



#socialism  1.01
John Molyneux

For an alternative united Ireland



John Molyneux

On 22 May the Irish Republic voted massively for marriage equality.

On Saturday 6 June People Before Profit in Belfast called a march for marriage equality in the North and over 1000 people attended.

Then a week later, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, Amnesty International and the Rainbow Project also held a demo for marriage equality. Up to 20,000 turned out.

In the Republic the past year has seen, as everyone knows, a massive revolt against austerity focussed, above all, on the issue of water charges.

This has led to the possibility at least that radical left and anti-austerity parties will do better than ever before in the next election.

In the recent General Election Gerry Carroll of People before Profit polled an excellent 6798 votes in West Belfast on the basis of opposing Stormont imposed austerity.

The build up to this election result included a large-scale public sector workers strike and demonstration on March 13.

In 2014 there were mass demonstrations for Palestine during the Israeli war of aggression against Gaza.

10,000 marched in protest to the Israeli Embassy in Dublin.

There was also a mass Palestine solidarity movement erupted at the same time in the North with Carroll and People Before Profit playing a very prominent role in it.

On the day of the

demonstration in Dublin coach loads of protestors came down from the North and the rally was addressed by Eamonn McCann from Derry.

There is a pattern here - more and more people are fighting over the same issues North and South.

In 1916 James Connolly predicted that the partition of Ireland would lead to a 'carnival of reaction' on both sides of the border.

He was proved right. Both North and South the establishment - essentially the capitalist ruling class - was able to use a combination of conservative religion (Protestant or Catholic) and nationalism (Orange or Green) to keep their populations down and divided.

Divisions

For most of the 20th century this worked - more or less. It is now starting to break down North and South.

The old divisions between Protestants and Catholics, between Fine Gael and Fianna Fail, are starting to lose their potency and being replaced by a different polarisation between supporters of austerity and its opponents, between the rotten political establishment and the grassroots, between the old guard bigots and a new generation committed to equality.

We at Socialist Worker enthusiastically welcome this change.

We want to unite the Irish people but not on the basis of the old nationalism or republicanism.

We support a

united Ireland but this would be a different, alternative Ireland not an extension of the corrupt and rotten Southern State.

We want a new Ireland that is an anti-austerity Ireland, that doesn't cut wages and welfare and sacrifice our children to please the banks, the bondholders or the Tories and doesn't sell off our public services to private corporations.

We want a new Ireland with real equality for LGBT people and for women including the right to choose - North and South.

We want a new Ireland free of domination by conservative, child abusing, institutionalised religion - North and South.

We want a multi-cultural, anti-racist Ireland that welcomes migrant workers and refugees.

We want a neutral independent Ireland that doesn't get its orders from Britain or America or the EU and the IMF; that speaks up for the people of Palestine, Greece and Egypt, not Obama, Netanyahu, Angela Merkel or General Al-Sisi.

And we want a new different Ireland with some real democracy, that is with public representatives who are accountable to and recallable by their electors, and who are paid the wages of the people they represent not fat cat salaries with massive pensions.

We want neither the Dáil nor Stormont but people power - North and South!

Irish Travellers - th

Lorraine McMahon

Irish Travellers are a small minority of the Irish population, numbering 29,573 according to the census of 2011, but more according to other estimates, or less than 1% of the total.

But they are an indigenous minority who have been part of Irish society for centuries and they are a distinct group with long common history and shared culture, values and customs, in which the tradition of leading a nomadic life plays an important part, and which distinguishes them from the sedentary or settled community.

Travellers have long faced and continue to face intense racism and discrimination.

It comes in the form of verbal abuse, racist language and sometimes violent attacks but even more importantly it is embedded in the daily practice of the institutions of the state.

To see how severe this is you have to look at the statistics on Traveller health, housing, education and employment.

Traveller Health

The gap between the health status of Travellers and that of the settled population is startling.

■ Life expectancy at birth for male Travellers is 15.1 years less than the general population.

■ Life expectancy at birth for female Travellers is now 70.1 which is 11.5 years less than women in the general population

■ Traveller infant mortality is estimated at 14.1 per 1,000 live births (compared with the general population rate of 3.9 per 1,000 live births).

■ Travellers have a greater burden of chronic diseases than the general population

■ Suicide rates are nearly 7 times higher in Traveller men compared with the general male population.

■ Suicide accounts for 11% of all Traveller deaths.

Traveller Accommodation

Accommodation is one of the most critical issues for the Traveller community and the most significant determinant on health.

The report of the Task Force on the Traveller Community 1995 recommended that 3100 units of Traveller specific accommodation be provided. Two decades later less than 10% has been provided.

The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 places a statutory obligation on Local Authorities to develop 5 year Traveller Accommodation Programmes (TAPs) to include halting sites, group housing and transient sites. But local authorities have consistently failed to deliver on these programmes and there is no accountability or sanctions for non delivery.

With the States failure to deliver accommodation for Travellers, increasing



The states response to accommodation needs for Traveller families - steel sheds providing

numbers of Travellers families are finding themselves homeless.

At the same time the anti-trespass legislation in the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2002 means that Travellers forced to live on unofficial sites are committing the offence of trespass and are open to prosecution and having their homes impounded.

In July 2014 the UN Human Rights committee called on the Irish government to amend the 2002 Housing Act to meet the specific accommodation requirements of Traveller families.

To date the government have made no amendments in this regard.

In 2013 361 Traveller families comprising over 1400 individuals were living on the road side or on unofficial sites.

In 2014 this increased to 445 families. Many have to endure intolerable conditions, that are often unsafe, severely overcrowded and without access to the basic facilities of sanitation, water and electricity.

The Irish Traveller Movement in collaboration with the European Roma Rights Centre have submitted a collective complaint to the European Committee of Social Rights against the Irish Government for failing to live up to its promises under the European Social Charter to deliver proper accommodation to Travellers.

The final outcome of this complaint

is awaited.

Employment, Enterprise and Traveller Economy

Nationally Traveller unemployment is alarmingly high at 84.3%.

There is a grave mismatch between Travellers' multiple skills, abilities and ways of organising and the opportunities currently available to engage in economic activity.

The distinct manner in which Travellers organise economic activity includes; Nomadism - where mobility makes marginal activity viable; an emphasis on self employment; the extended family as the basic economic unit; the home and the work base being one of the same; self sufficiency and flexibility.

However, government policies and regulations have impacted directly and negatively on Traveller economy.

This includes the Control of Horses Act (1996); the Directive on End of Life of Vehicles (2000); the anti-trespass legislation (Housing (Miscellaneous provisions) Act 2002); the Casual Trading Act (2005); as well as proposed new legislation on scrap metal.

There has been no measures put in place by the state to mitigate the negative impacts of these policies on Traveller economy, nor was there any impact assessment prior to introduction of the Acts.

Strike wave sweeps Germany

Maevie McGrath

There has been a wave of industrial action sweeping Germany over the last few weeks.

Train drivers have been on strike on multiple days since May over rates of pay.

The train company, Deutsche Bahn, is a private joint-stock company with the Federal Republic of Germany being its single shareholder.

Also in May, special needs assistants protested in Stuttgart for better pay.

Their union, Ver.di, called for work stoppages in multiple cities in solidarity with them.

Since June 8 the postal service in Germany have been on strike - with no date to return to work until an agreement is reached.

The workers voted 92% in favour of



Globe Ground ground personnel on the mar

strike action. Ver.di, is seeking higher wages and shorter working hours.

In addition, the company has set up a new, internal company; and is paying their 6,500 workers lower salaries for

The Reality of Racism



Water, sanitation and electricity made for construction sites not family living; (Right) Traveller protest.

The fact is that Travellers ways of organising economic activity are deemed not to 'fit' this society and therefore have been shut down by discriminatory policies.

Ethnicity and Racism

This massive institutional disadvantage and discrimination is reinforced by the fact that the ethnic identity of Irish Travellers is still not recognised by the state.

There is no excuse for this.

It is the declared wish of most Travellers in Ireland to have formal recognition of their ethnic status.

The Irish government have obligations in line with various human rights treaties that it has signed up to.

These treaties include The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, The Framework Convention on National Minorities, the Universal Periodic Review, and the UN Commission on the Rights of the Child which take account of Travellers right to recognition and self identity.

Recognition was also recommended by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Traveller Ethnicity in April 2014.

And yet it still hasn't happened.

The protracted refusal by consecutive governments to recognise Traveller ethnicity remains a barrier to the realisation of Travellers' human rights in Ireland.

Therefore the question needs to be asked; why does the Irish State continue to deny the recognition of Traveller Ethnicity? And why is there so much discrimination against Travellers?

Although in Ireland there is no organised racist movement, there is an established and deep rooted institutional racism against Travellers which is quite complex.

It is racism from the top down backed through the institutions of the state system and the media and assisted by government policies which create the conditions for racism to take root and grow.

Equality legislation from 1998 formally made discrimination against Travellers an offence.

Contrary to this, the rise of anti Traveller racism among arms of the state has been alarming.

For example, District Court Judge, Seamus Hughes 2012 in a court hearing, referred to a Traveller man as "like Neanderthal men abiding by the 'laws of the jungle'".

Former Minister for Environment with responsibility for Traveller Accommodation, Phil Hogan wrote to members of his constituency stating "they had nothing to be concerned about as Travellers would not be housed in his constituency".

Donegal Fianna Fáil Councillor Sean McEniff stated, that Travellers should be

"housed away from settled communities, there should be a community of themselves together".

Yet not one of these public figures was held accountable for their disgraceful comments.

The Roots of this Racism

The fact that this discrimination and racism is not just a matter of individual attitudes nor a peculiarity of Irish culture is shown by the fact that Travellers and nomadic people, like the Roma in Europe, have been persecuted for centuries and continue to be persecuted today right across the world.

The underlying reason is that the capitalist system wants a docile settled workforce accustomed to regular wage labour and a travelling life style is seen as a threat to this.

This leads to a persistent tendency to try to force Travellers to conform and assimilate and to see them as 'a problem'.

This is then reinforced by the system's needs for scapegoats onto whom popular fear and anger at austerity and inequality can be diverted as part of a strategy of divide and rule.

This is why socialists support the immediate recognition of Traveller ethnicity, oppose all forms of anti-Traveller racism and argue that everyone in the working class and anti-austerity movement should unite with and defend the Traveller community.

holders an unusual promise: they have promised stakeholders 8% annually. To do this the corporation needs to raise their profits by five billion.

At least half of their annual profits go back to shareholders.

This pressure comes as a result of the privatisation and floatation of the formerly public service on the stock market in 1995.

Although Germany operates on a federal system this is a national strike and is having a massive impact.

The employer has started seeking unpaid scab labour via WhatsApp to help deliver post, and offering €100 vouchers for Amazon in return.

The DPV, a communications union, has balloted their members, who voted in favour of strike action and have begun an indefinite strike.

Staff at Amazon have also voted in

favour of strike action. Air traffic controllers have planned strikes this month to protest EU measures to change air space regulation under the guise of lowering emissions - but in the process lower safety standards and costs.

Politically, casualised work and deregulation of conditions has been promoted by the state.

Low paid work is now more predominant in Germany than in Bulgaria. A quarter of the workforce are in low paying jobs.

For decades now, wages have not risen in Germany.

Much like we have seen with the water movement in Ireland, it has taken longer than expected to see a fight back but these strikes represent the most significant challenge to capital in Germany in the last twenty years and come at an excellent time to link in with resistance in Greece.



Eamonn McCann says

Making sense of the Middle East



Saudi airstrike on residential area near Sana'a in Yemen

"What are you fighting for? It's not my security. It's just an old war. Not even a cold war." Thus Marianne Faithful in her classic 1979 song, Broken English.

She might have been singing about the Middle East today.

In Syria in September 2013 the residents of a Christian village, Maaloula, about 20 miles from Damascus, which had been overrun by Islamic militants, appealed for help from a nearby base of Bashar Assad's Syrian army - which promptly provided them with jeep-loads of guns.

They returned to Maaloula and drove the Islamists out.

At the time, Obama was contemplating a bombing campaign against Assad in retaliation for a chemical weapons assault on a suburb of Damascus which had killed dozens (at least) of civilians and which was widely attributed to Assad.

On BBC News, distraught Maaloula villagers voiced fears that, having gone into battle with Assad's weapons against Assad's enemies, they might now be targeted by US bombers.

Targeted

In the event, the air strikes were called off after Russia brokered a deal under which Assad agreed to get rid of his chemical weapons.

Yemen is even more confusing.

The Islamic dictatorship of Saudi Arabia has for months been bombing the Yemeni capital Sana'a in an effort to dislodge the Houthi movement which seized power there in 2014.

The US, viewing the conflict as a proxy war between the Saudis and Iran, is backing the Saudis with arms, intelligence and diplomatic encouragement.

American determination to oust the Houthis has been sharpened by reports that contingents from the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps have been in Sana'a supporting the Houthis.

Meanwhile, 1,500 miles to the North, Iranian Revolutionary Guards have been fighting alongside the US's Iraqi allies against Islamic State.

Photographs have appeared of Qassem Soleimani, commander of the elite Quds division of the Revolutionary Guards, inspecting troops outside Saddam Hussein's home town, Tikrit, just before an offensive to wrest it away from Islamic State.

US bombers have provided cover for forces, including forces aligned with Iran, advancing on IS positions.

America's most senior soldier, General Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told the Senate Armed Services Committee earlier this year that Iran's involvement in Iraq could be seen as "a positive thing".

Thus, Iran and the US are effectively conducting joint operations in Iraq even as they battle it out in Yemen.

In Syria at the same time, Iran continues to help finance and arm the forces of Bashar Assad who, at least when it suits them, as in Maaloula, help defend Christians against attack by Islamic State.

The only way to make sense of any of this is by keeping in mind that, ultimately, these are wars for control of the resources of the region.

The hatred and twisted extremism on display are distorted expressions of the competitive greed of the various interests.

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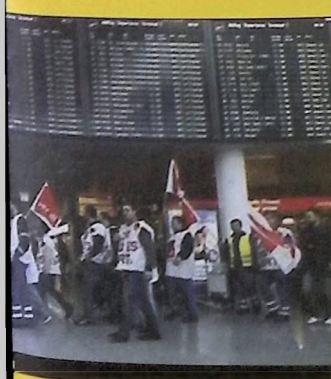
The politics are generated by the clashes between gangs of cut-throats carving out territories which they hope to rob and rule.

In the process, many thousands have perished and millions been hunted across deserts to live in sickness and despair in tattered camps, dependent on grudging charity and cruel chance.

Those who manage to make a break for a better life might die by the boat-load in the Mediterranean or, if they make it that far, cluster in Calais in hopes of smuggling themselves like contraband into England, where newspapers denounce them in advance as spongers and worse and it's only in whispers that it's ever suggested that the solution is simple - let them in.

The big powers, with Britain and France in the van, more lately joined by the US, Russia and others, have been carving up the Middle East and gouging out its riches for generations, inventing fraudulent "nations", mangling history, bribing, brow-beating, murdering, maiming, taking this side or that depending on passing perceptions of advantage for themselves.

Looked at in that light, what's happening now isn't perplexing at all. It's nothing but the same old story.



doing the same job. This trick has become a trend amongst employers in Germany. The company is motivated to raise their profits as they have made share-

Gramsci, Strategy and Podemos

Marnie Holborow

Pablo Iglesias, leader of Podemos, the new radical party in Spain, is fond of quoting the Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci. A recent article of his, entitled *Trench Warfare and Political Strategy*, Iglesias cites Gramsci as being the first to understand the strategic importance of creating 'hegemonic narratives' which draw consent across the social spectrum.

Podemos, the political grouping that grew out of the mass mobilisations of the *Indignados* movement in Spain, is grappling with how to steer the anti-austerity movement into a successful strategy for the Spanish elections in the autumn.

Quoting Gramsci as an authority shows how strong the left tradition is in Spain. But, too often, Gramsci is invoked to argue for a pathway away from radicalism to politics as normal.

Gramsci was deeply concerned with strategy and how mass movements could challenge the power structures of capitalism. In 1921, in response to the employers' lock-out across the factories in Turin, Gramsci and other militants established workers' committees as alternative way of organising society. Like Lenin he saw the need for revolutionaries to break with the Labour Parties of his day and founded the Italian Communist Party. Gramsci also had to endure the terrible cost of mistaken strategies as he spent the last ten years of his life in Mussolini's jails.

But this combative revolutionary is not the Gramsci that Iglesias is referring to. For Iglesias the struggle for hegemony, is not so much a practical strategy in the course of struggle as an ideological project aimed at changing the way politics is described. This watered-down version of Gramsci is possible because Gramsci's writings in prison were disjointed and, taken on their own, often ambiguous.

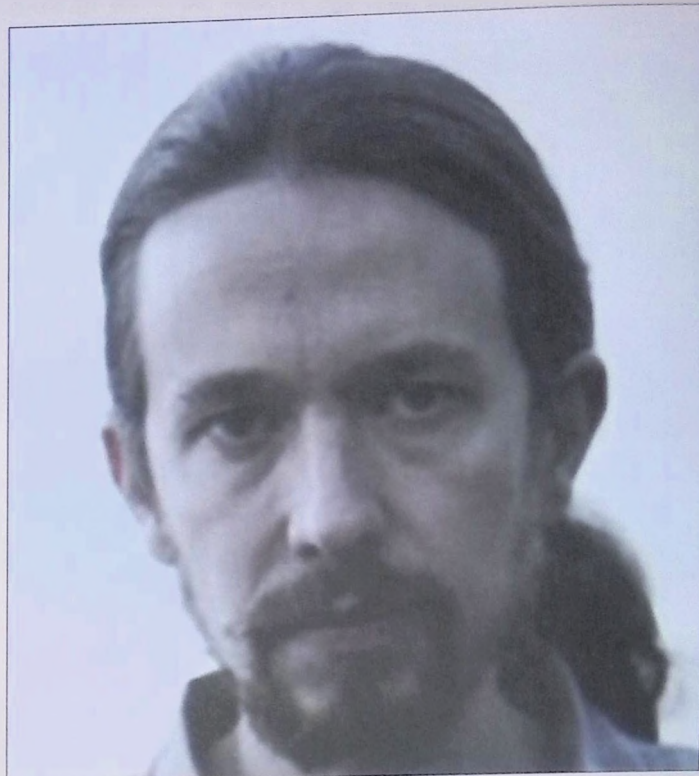
Gramsci's discussion of hegemony is based on the idea that struggles against the system take different forms at different times. Sometimes they involve a head-on clash with the state – what he called a *war of movement* – like Russian workers' revolution in October 1917.

At other times, they are long, drawn-out affairs which, like the trench warfare of the First World War, saw neither side gaining ground. At such moments, demands for social change had to stop short of revolution in order to unite people of different political persuasions against the common enemy.

These battles Gramsci described as a *war of position*. In both instances, socialists sought win people over – or gain hegemony



Antonio Gramsci and Pablo Iglesias - spot the difference.



– within the mass of people involved.

Gramsci's wrote about the war of position because of the specific situation that revolutionaries faced in the early 1920's. In the wake of a defeated movement and the rise of fascism, some believed that socialists could make revolution on their own, without the involvement of wider social forces. Gramsci was against this political purism.

Challenge

Unity in action but also, he argued, the political challenge to ruling ideas – in every domain – was vital to winning over the majority to socialism.

Strategies in the war of position had as their aim strengthening the movement politically for greater confrontations to come.

The trouble is that many on the left have taken Gramsci's writings about the war of position as the *only* strategy and the end point. In the 1970s, some Communist Parties decided that Gramsci's strategy of hegemony allowed them to sign up to electoral pacts with right-wing parties. The Spanish Communist Party, under the Eurocommunist Santiago Carrillo,

used these arguments to justify the pact of Moncloa, a cross-party agreement which proposed austerity measures and social containment to 'manage the transition' after Franco. The 'struggle for hegemony' had thus come to mean little more than participating in governments and working within the institutions of capitalism.

Iglesias today is critical of these strategies of the past. But he continues to use Gramsci to justify a move to the centre. He argues that in modern capitalist societies, 'culture' and 'political narratives' are the main means through which capitalist hegemony is secured. Election campaigns – what Iglesias calls Gramsci's 'trench warfare of modern times' – need to 'speak the language of the 'centre of the political chessboard', creating a new 'common sense' which breaks with the dominant narrative of 'the political caste'.

Thus Iglesias and his advisory team have proposed to remove any demands and language in the Podemos programme which will 'put people off'.

For example, a universal basic income, the lowering of the retirement age, and the non-payment of illegitimate debt – Indignados movement demands – have

been replaced by 'promoting employment rights' and 'debt restructuring' to be paid for by 'boosting consumer demand'.

These proposals are not being developed democratically in the course of struggles, as Gramsci envisaged, but by political 'experts' who supposedly know the current state of mass consciousness.

The mood in the anti-austerity movement, as the May 24 local and regional elections in Spain showed, is rather more radical. Ada Colau, the anti-eviction activist who was elected mayor of Barcelona, has promised to return decision-making in the city to the people, do away with home evictions, increase public housing and redistribute the city's wealth.

Social Forces

Podemos backed her as a candidate but she clearly stood for Indignados movement radicalism, not for a softer, centrist strategy.

The struggle for hegemony is not just about representations of reality but takes place amongst real social forces locked in a battle over resources and who controls what.

Colau won because she expressed the needs of the anti- eviction movement and

the concerns of people suffering austerity. As an activist on the ground, she understood that her election campaign had to be the mobilising voice of the movement and aim to extend its radicalism, not dilute it. This is a lesson which should not be lost on the anti-austerity movement in Ireland.

Gramsci described the working class as holding a mix of political ideas. One set is the seeming 'common sense' which is pushed at us by the government and the media and which we often accept uncritically. Another is what Gramsci called 'good sense' that is developed in the course of struggles and which represents our interests against those who control the system.

Iglesias claims, although many in Podemos disagree, that Gramsci teaches us to taper our political programmes to the common sense of the centre ground.

But the best strategy that we can take from Gramsci is spreading and popularising the 'good sense' that has emerged from the struggles against austerity.

This is what the battle for hegemony is in practice, a strategy based on the understanding that elections should be subordinate to the needs of the movement – not the other way round.

Is the Pope a Catholic?



John Molyneux

Reading only the headlines about Pope Francis issuing an encyclical warning about climate change one could be forgiven for asking this question.

Certainly it shocked and angered some of the conservative Catholics in the US and the Republican Right who are climate change deniers to the last barrel of oil. He should stick to his job, they said, and mind his own business, which is to worry about what happens to people after they are dead not while they are alive.

Presumably the Republican Right think deciding the fate of the world and all its citizens is their job, given to them by God no doubt, and that no one else should interfere.

However when you look a little further into what the Pope said it turns out to be very much in line with certain strands in traditional Catholic thinking.

For a start he doesn't blame climate change on anything as material as production for profit or capitalism or even the oil companies. Rather he sees it as a result of 'human selfishness' – original sin don't you know – and particularly as the fault of enlightenment philosophers such as Descartes and Bacon who thought human beings could change nature to meet their needs instead of seeing it primarily as God's creation and God's property.

Moving with the times

This move enables the Pope to link climate change with the issue of abortion rights – both examples of humans trespassing on territory that is rightfully God's.

So yes, the Pope is a Catholic.

He's also a Catholic in another sense. No 'great' religion can survive through the centuries, as Catholicism has done, unless it is able to move with the times and reflect, at least to some degree, real social pressures. Thus despite claiming divine authority Catholicism has to bend and keep up with changing science and a changing world.

In particular in order to fulfil its key function for the system as a whole which is to reconcile the mass of the oppressed to their lot in this rotten world the Catholic Church has to retain their allegiance.

It can't do that by simply saying let the poor starve or drown or let the planet burn. It has to show it cares. Only then can it also say to the poor and the downtrodden 'Patience!', 'Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's', 'Don't rise up, leave it to us – we will look after you'.

In this too the Pope is proving himself a good Catholic.

Pressure increases to repeal the 8th

Madeleine Johansson

Following the success of the Marriage Equality referendum, there is a significant sense that the next issue we need to tackle is the question of abortion rights.

Young people in Ireland have shown a high level of support for changing the current abortion laws, favouring abortion rights under any circumstance in polls from 2004 onwards.

Changes in abortion law would require a referendum in order to remove the 8th Amendment to the constitution, which was inserted in 1983 and equates a woman's life with that of a foetus.

In the month of June two different reports have been published in favour of repealing the 8th.

The first was by Amnesty International which highlights the criminalisation of abortion and calls on the Taoiseach Enda Kenny to repeal the 8th to enable the provision of a human rights

compliant framework for abortion and information, in law and in practice' and to decriminalise abortion.

The two small words 'in practice' are extremely significant.

The Protection of Life during Pregnancy Act has provided for abortions in law, but we have already seen that this legislation is completely dysfunctional in practice.

It was proven last summer in the tragic case of Miss Y, an asylum seeker who was pregnant as result of rape and became suicidal, who was denied an abortion, was unable to travel and forced to have a C-section.

The second was by the UN's Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which urged the government to take all necessary steps, including a referendum, to bring Ireland in line with international human rights standards.

The UN committee also criticised the Government's austerity measures in areas such as housing,



health care and education.

Both reports have put increasing pressure on the government to hold a referendum to repeal the 8th.

In response, Minister Brendan Howlin has stated that there will be no referendum under the current government, but that it will be part of the Labour Party general election manifesto.

Most people will know not to trust the Labour Party when it comes to election promises.

If a referendum was called by the next government, we must not think that it will be the same as the Marriage Equality.

The Catholic Right in Ireland (and internationally) will fight tooth and nail for what they call the only 'abortion-free' country

in Western Europe.

They will pump out a huge amount of propaganda and use vast amounts of resources in order to stop any progress for women in Ireland.

Also, polls have shown varying levels of support for abortion rights in Ireland.

They have clearly shown a majority support (over 70%) for abortion under certain circumstances, including rape, incest and fatal foetal abnormalities.

The support for full abortion rights is lower, but significantly higher than in the past at 39% in 2013 as compared to 28% in 1997.

The Pro-Choice movement and all its supporters would have to work incredibly hard in order to win a referendum on repeal the 8th.

Political parties may also attempt to divert from a referendum by proposing amendments to Article 40.3.3 to allow for abortion under some circumstances, such as rape or fatal foetal abnor-

malities, rather than a removal of the Article.

This would only cause further complications around what constitutes rape and how such an incident could be proven, and once again women would suffer and be further stigmatised.

Abortion has no place in the constitution, but should be regarded as a medical procedure and as such it should be a matter for a woman and her doctor, with the final decision always lying with the woman.

It should also be made available for all women, regardless of ability to pay or where in the country she lives.

We must also remember that repealing the 8th is necessary not just to give women abortion rights but also to give appropriate health care to pregnant women.

The struggle to repeal the 8th continues with a conference of the Coalition to Repeal the 8th on Saturday 12th September and the annual March4Choice in September.

TELEVISION

Crossing and challenging borders

Linda Kehoe reviews Sense8 – the latest offering from the Wachowski siblings.

There is much talk about Sense8 - which is available on Netflix. It is a TV series about eight people who become connected despite those perceived borders of language, race, religion, gender and sexuality and the actual borders of continents.

We could be sceptical and imagine that the creators had taken this idea and started ticking the boxes on a list of "How to show the diversity of the human race?" Hispanic, Asian, Caucasian and African actors: tick. Straight and queer: tick. Atheists and devout: tick. Male, female and transgender: tick. Cops and robbers: tick. Rich and poor: tick.

But after the first few episodes, it proves itself as more than that.

The eight "sense8" (from the latin gifted with sense) are ordinary people living ordinary lives until something extraordinary happens to them.

This is a common theme for the Wachowskis, who brought us The Matrix and Jupiter Ascending.

The first few episodes are confusing, we only see and hear what the sense8 themselves see and hear.

And they are confused- they don't know what is happening to them or why.

Perhaps its drug-induced hallucinations, perhaps the gods are speaking to them. Perhaps they are simply going crazy.

There are no scenes shot outside of their experiences so we do not have any background knowledge.

We know what they know.

From their birth as sense8, to the development of their understanding and the deepening of their connections with one another the audience is brought along for the ride.

Sometimes its fast and exciting, sometimes it's slow.

There is the shadowy overhanging threat that someone, out-there, does not want them to exist. This is the storyline that has taken a back-seat to the portrayal of the relationships of the characters.

We are shown the loves and hates, the ups and the downs of each of the 8 in their individual lives.

The most impressive character is arguably the transgender Nomi, whose mother rejects forcibly the notion that her "Michael" identifies as a woman, who has fought to gain acceptance within the gay community and acceptance of herself - and has overcome it all to find love with Amanita.

This excellent portrayal of Nomi's character can be attributed to the skill and real life experiences of actor Jamie Clayton and by the direction of Lana, formally Larry, Wachowski.

Nomi is one of 8 characters who between them experience so many aspects of life, that the audience is sure to connect with at least one.

As the empathy-based shared consciousness of the eight develops we are brought along with them.

From scene-by-scene step by step we develop a different view of gender politics and identity, which introduced in any other way would have seemed radical.

Sense8 is worth the watch.



Blowing away the cobwebs

James Granell reviews a new collection of Irish short fiction. *Young Irishlanders*, New Island Books €13.99

Dave Lordan's anthology, *Young Irishlanders*, blows away the cobwebs of the culturally homogeneous, Catholic, conservative Ireland of the twentieth century with all of its little islander mentality, false prophets and false profits.

In its place it presents the new Ireland – the island of young Irishlanders.

These young Irishlanders are a dynamic group of contemporary authors who express the reality of life in the twenty-first century.

The authors navigate new ethical considerations, adapt to the new cultural and political circumstances and deal with the immense changes that have pervaded their society in recent years.

By presenting twelve contemporary works of short fiction by twelve diverse authors, *Young Irishlanders* offers the reader a sample of an evolving scene of literature that awaits discovery.

Sometimes dark, but always exhilarating, this anthology will certainly provoke the reader to delve into the vibrant world of contemporary

Irish fiction.

While Lordan, in his introduction, concedes that there have been other epochs – he points to the 1790s – in which the cosmopolitan and international nature of Ireland has proven fertile ground for literature to feed upon, he contends that 'there are more talented writers, in short fiction especially, coming from a far wider range of perspectives, with more things to say and more ways of saying it, than ever before.' He also makes the bold, and perhaps unsubstantiated, claim that the fiction of grief and mourning and of melancholy naturalism, which was prevalent during the twentieth-century 'tempts one to describe Irish fiction in this period as a provincial or regional literature rather than a truly international one.' Lordan contrasts this tendency towards melancholy naturalism with the more optimistic style ushered in by the emergence of a more pluralistic and inclusive Irish society as represented in this anthology.

The stories themselves merit time and savouring.

This is not an anthology to rush through. Each work ought to be given its own time to allow the reader to fully appreciate the complexity of the various visions of contemporary Ireland contained within the volume.



While there is no single major theme running throughout the anthology but a number of the stories do contain feelings of discomfort and otherness, which perhaps challenge the idea of the pluralist and inclusive Ireland spoken about in the introduction.

This is certainly evident in Kevin Curran's *Saving Tanya*, Roisin O'Donnell's *How to Learn Irish in Seventeen Steps* and Mia Gallagher's *17:57:39-20:59:03*.

One can't help but feel that the growing secularisation of Irish culture has had an impact on a number of the authors too.

Pain, illness and misfortune have no sanctifying role in these short stories, rather they are presented as chillingly

meaningless aspects of the human condition.

A couple of outstanding works deserve particular mention.

In the above mentioned *How to Learn Irish in Seventeen Steps*, Roisin O'Donnell captures the absurdity and humour of a national language that very few on the island actually speak, while highlighting the difficulties and struggles faced by many immigrants who attempt to embrace the contradictions of Irish culture.

All this is skillfully set against the backdrop of a troubled relationship.

Alan McMonagle's *The Remarks* is a Flann O'Brien style whirlwind, weaving the reality of shared accommodation - two minute noodles and cheap bread — with frequent visits to the vale of tears.

The story defies a brief synopsis and merits reading and rereading.

However, by far the best work of literature in this anthology is *Subject* by Oisín Fagan.

It consists of a single sentence, evolving staccato style, yet sinuously capturing every emotion, reality and experience of the young Irishlander in one painful yet vital breath.

It is a truly masterful story, woven together with care and talent.

Fagan is certainly a young author to keep an eye out for.

Socialist Worker

Sinn Féin & DUP agree on Austerity Budget

Michael Collins

For months, the Stormont institutions have been on the verge of collapse as the main parties try to settle disputes over the budget.

They have now come to an agreement, the so called 'fantasy budget'.

Fantasy, as it presupposes all parties will implement Welfare Reform.

This is not the case, as Welfare is now one aspect of the Agreement which is a matter of contention between Sinn Féin and the DUP.

As for the other parts of the Agreement; austerity in the public sector, the sell-off of public assets, the 20,000 job redundancy scheme; both Sinn Féin and the DUP are in agreement that these must go ahead.

Digging the feet in the sand over Welfare is welcome, but hardly enough, given the extent of austerity implicit in the rest of agreement.

In fact, it could even be seen as merely an attempt to save face, and put a left wing gloss over a budget which will see unprecedented job losses, and austerity measures like never before in the North.

The majority of all this was already agreed as far back as December, when Sinn Féin and the DUP produced the Stormont House Agreement.

Subsequently, Sinn Féin dropped its support for this on the basis they had 'been misled' by the DUP over Welfare cuts.

It was, however, not the case that Sinn Féin had been misled.

As pointed out by Socialist Worker as far back as January, the extent of the welfare cuts had been made clear in Assembly debates, and Secretary of State Theresa Villiers, among other Tories, consistently stated there would be no extra provisions for Welfare.

The real reason behind Sinn Féin's decision to renege on the STA is they underestimated the extent of opposition from the Trade Union Movement in the North. Their decision to revert was taken shortly after the massive March 13 strike.

Furthermore, the contradictions of a



March 13 Strike in Belfast

party which claims to be anti-austerity in the South, while at the same time, implementing a neoliberal budget in the North, presented serious problems for their electoral aspirations south of the border.

Content

While Sinn Féin, rightly, have grievances over welfare reform, they are perfectly content with the rest of the Agreement.

This is worrying as implicit in the budget are the worst attacks on working class people we have seen for a generation.

It is comprised of three main elements; firstly, the Stormont House Agreement diagnoses the North's economic problems

as lying in the public sector being too large. It proposes massive cutbacks to public services such as schools, hospitals, roads, transport and welfare.

These cuts are most apparent in the plan to slash 20,000 civil service jobs in a voluntary redundancy scheme.

This would see Stormont borrow £700 million from Westminster to lay off thousands of workers; a move which no doubt would see the Tories rubbing their hands together with glee in Downing Street.

Secondly, the Agreement intends the sell-off of public assets; something which neither Sinn Féin or the DUP are contesting.

The Waterfront Hall and Belfast Harbor

have been earmarked for privatization, and the DUP's Arlene Foster recently stated NI Water could be a potential revenue raiser if water charges were brought in.

Thirdly, the Agreement intends to see powers to set corporation tax devolved.

Reduce

The intention here, is to reduce corporation tax for big business, in the hope investment from the private sector will plug the inevitable hole that results from billions of cuts to public services, and thousands of redundancies.

All the discussions surrounding this budget have been squarely situated within framework the neo-liberal narrative set

by Westminster; i.e.

the public sector is too large, welfare spending is too high, we must cut back on services and give incentives to big business in order to reinvigorate the economy.

Sinn Féin is not challenging this narrative.

The DUP want to press on with the Stormont House Agreement, accepting that cuts and austerity are the only way forward for the economy.

Sinn Féin are in agreement with every other aspect of the STA apart from Welfare cuts.

When it comes to hospitals, the community and voluntary sector, roads, transport, schools; there is to be cuts.

Sinn Féin Education Minister John O'Dowd, himself, recently announced that 500 teachers and 1000 support staff would be lost in schools by September 2015.

We need to mount a major grassroots resistance to this budget.

Any party that considers itself genuinely, anti-austerity, should refuse to implement it.

If this means collapsing the Assembly then so be it.

Why is the institution worth upholding if it is simply an instrument for the Tories to implement austerity measures?

If Stormont collapsed it has been suggested that we could return to the 'dark days' of the troubles.

This is nonsense, and in fact, is insulting to working class people here.

If Stormont collapsed on the basis of one party's rejection of austerity, this would give confidence to the anti-austerity movement on the streets, give confidence to trade unionists in the workplaces, and inspire confidence in people across the North to mount a serious challenge to the Tories' neoliberal agenda.

It's not enough to raise concerns about one aspect of this agreement. We must oppose it in its entirety.

Stormont has shifted, certainly. But only because of pressure from below. More of the same will force their hand further.

LGBT Movement in the North

Pdraigine Mervyn

Following the outstanding success in the Republic of Ireland's referendum, there has been a massive increase in the momentum for the LGBT movement in the North.

Around 1000 people attended a marriage equality rally in Belfast (called by People Before Profit Youth) the week following the referendum.

Following this, the Rainbow Project, Amnesty International and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions organised a major demonstration, attracting at least 10,000 people, with many mainstream media outlets reporting 20,000.

Agenda

These demonstrations have helped shape public opinion and have put LGBT liberation back on the agenda in the North.

The question now is how do we continue this movement to achieve LGBT equality? We obviously cannot rely on Stormont to legislate. They are



Belfast PBP Marriage equality meeting

completely divided on the issue, and a motion for same sex marriage has failed

four times already, with the DUP using a petition of concern to veto this.

There are some who argue the best way to win liberation is through the

courts. But this isolates discussions about LGBT liberation to the confines of the courtroom, and doesn't in any way increase confidence for those who want to fight back in the meantime.

As socialists, we have to be clear that the movement needs to stay out on the streets.

Pressure

Mass mobilisations like the ones we've seen in previous weeks, are the best way to influence and put pressure on those at the top; be it judges in the courtrooms, or politicians in Stormont.

Pride Festival in Belfast this year – from the 24 July to the parade on the 1 August has the potential to be massive, and the demand for marriage equality should be central.

We need to continue the campaign on the streets and put pressure on Stormont so they can no longer ignore us. More rallies and protests are needed if we are to stand up to the bigots and break down prejudice and irrational social barriers.