

Socialist Worker

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Putting people before profit NORTH AND SOUTH



People Before Profit TDs Gino Kenny, Brid Smith and Richard Boyd Barrett at the Dail



People Before Profit MLAs Gerry Carroll and Eamonn McCann at Stormont

North and South Ireland is ruled by governments that implement austerity and accept neoliberalism.

North and South those governments refuse to tax the corporations and the rich hitting the poor and the poorest instead.

North and South working class communities have been savaged by cuts. North and South wages have been held down and public services attacked.

Since the 2008 working people North and South have been paying for the crisis of the bankers and the system.

But now North and South there is mass opposition.

The recent election of six Anti-Austerity Alliance – People Before Profit TDs in the South and two People Before Profit MLAs in the North reflects this.

For the first time in the history of the state the radical left is advancing in both jurisdictions at the same time.

This changes the dynamic of Irish

politics.

And it is not just about austerity. Now North and South there is a political force that will oppose conservative clerical bigotry, whether it is Catholic bigotry or Protestant bigotry.

North and South there is a force that will fight for a woman's right to choose and for LGBT rights.

North and South there is a force that will defend workers' rights whether it's on picket lines at Falls and Shankill Leisure Centres or at the LUAS and Tescos.

North and South our governments sacrifice the environment for profit whether it's in Woodburn Forest [see p.8] or in Mayo in Dun Laoghaire Bay. North and South we will resist them.

North and South our rulers use sectarianism and racism to deflect our anger and divide us.

North and South we will reject this and work for unity.

Across Ireland there is a hunger for change and across Ireland we are determined to assuage that hunger by building a powerful radical and socialist left.

People Before Profit



NATIONAL RALLY

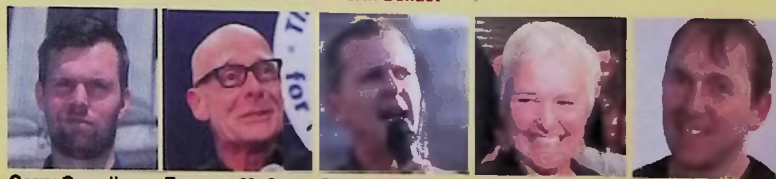
Ireland United >

<Against Austerity

FRIDAY
17 JUNE
7.30pm
Wynn's Hotel
Abbey St.
Dublin

SPEAKERS:

Chair: Fiona Ferguson, PBP candidate North Belfast



Gerry Carroll MLA, West Belfast; Eamonn McCann MLA, Foyle; Richard Boyd Barrett TD, Dun Laoghaire; Brid Smith TD, Dublin South Central; Gino Kenny TD, Dublin Mid-West

People Before Profit Alliance, Phone: 01 818 3448

Bosses attack - workers resistance grows: See p. 3

Government ignores young unemployed

Shay L'Estrange

Youth unemployment is disastrously high and at the end of 2015 the Central Statistics Office showed a youth unemployment rate of 16.9% more than double the rate of unemployment in the wider population.

In reality this means that we have at least 30,000 young people not in employment, education or training (NEET).

The EU agency Eurofound state that those most likely to be NEET are young people with a low level of education, having parents who experience unemployment and young people who come from households who have a low level of income. Eurofound also states that Ireland has one of the highest rates of NEET at 17% compared to a rate of 5.5% in the Netherlands.

Apart from the economic costs to the state of young people who are not in employment, education or training there is also a social consequence.

Social research carried out in Scotland showed that young people, who were NEET continued to be educationally disadvantaged ten and twenty years later.

There is also a "scarring effect" on young people's future economic activity. NEET young people who were surveyed in 2001 were found to be 2.8 times more likely to be unemployed than non-NEET young people



when surveyed again in 2010. Where NEET young people did find employment they were 2.5 times more likely than their non NEET peers to work in low status occupations.

NEET experience is also associated with higher risks of poor physical and mental health, with the risk of depression and anxiety 50% higher than that of non NEET's.

The accumulative effective of NEET results in a higher risk of poor life chances throughout the life cycle, resulting in this group being the most disadvantaged and in need of continuous support.

Interestingly in the "Programme for a Partnership Government" the blueprint by which this government intend to govern, there is no sign that they intend to rake the problem of youth unemployment seriously.

Underfunded

Under the heading "Helping Adolescents and Young People into Employment" there is no mention of the "Youth Guarantee" which was much heralded but sadly underfunded by the previous government.

The Youth Guarantee was an EU initiative which if prop-

erly funded offered a reasonable solution to the issue of youth unemployment.

This guaranteed when working at its best would offer young people a timely offer of further training, education or work. As well as an intervention prior to young people leave second level education, this would come in the form of career guidance and mentoring to reduce the risk of unemployment (prevention being better than cure).

Just as there is no mention of a properly funded Youth Guarantee in the programme for government, a report by the Institute of Guidance

Councillors has shown that the most disadvantaged have taken the brunt of austerity cuts when it comes to career guidance.

"Since 2011/12, in terms of overall practice hours DEIS schools have experienced a 30.0 percent loss, non-DEIS schools a 26.7 percent loss, and fee-paying schools gained 1.9 percent".

This is further proof if proof were needed that this Government has little interest in the needs of the working class youth, instead it prioritises the rich elites ensuring the gap continues to widen between the haves and the have-nots.

Michael Wallace

A short but very successful campaign launched by People Before Profit has inflicted an embarrassing defeat on the new Government over their plans to force people to pay for collection of recycled waste.

The new 'pay by weight' charge for green bin waste was due to come into effect on 1 July but has now been scrapped following a U-turn by the FG/Independent government.

The charge, introduced by the outgoing Minister for the Environment Alan Kelly, was almost certainly prompted by profiteering private waste management companies.

It would have punished the less well-off and been disastrous for the environment by removing any incentive for people to recycle.

The only ones to benefit would have been for-profit waste operators such as the likes of Greyhound, Panda, Greenstar and Thorntons. These companies already make substantial profits from recycling. The result would have been environmental sabotage.

Target households While FG/Labour were busy planning to target households, big agriculture and big industry continued to pay low levels of tax and charges towards the upkeep of waste and recycling infrastructure, despite being the biggest producers of waste.

Although a victory, the



issue remains as to whether the cowboy companies who profited from privatisation of waste collection will still charge for the service. This cynical move to ignore environmental concerns in the interests of profit shows that we urgently need to take waste and recycling services back into full public ownership and control. The privatisation of the waste service has been a disaster, created a major pollution and dumping crisis and must be reversed.

This is a humiliating reverse for Enda's new government and again demonstrates its weakness. The scrapping of the green bin charge is a big victory for the environment, for common sense and for the politics that puts people and the environment before profit.

As for power-crazed Alan Kelly, the disintegrating Labour Party have dumped him as a possible leader, his plans to impose another unjust charge have been rubbish and his political career is unlikely to be successfully recycled in the near future.

No end to attack on women and children

Leah Speight

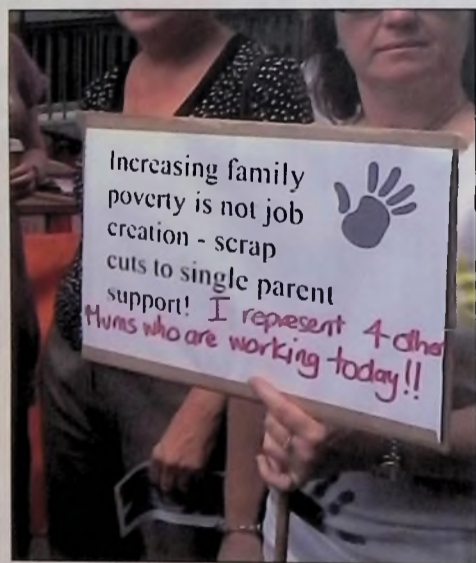
The Fine Gael Programme for Government supported by Fianna Fail and some independents is a frightening insight into a right-wing agenda that will further increase the poverty levels of women and children.

Sifting through the rhetoric you can clearly see the FG stamp all over the programme, and what is most shocking for the public is the support from the independents.

When it was announced in the media about Children's Allowance being linked to school attendance, it didn't take long for FF to crumble.

The idea of linking school attendance to Children's Allowance would only hurt families on low income.

This was the baby of ex-FG Independent Dennis Naughton, and was his reward for signing up to Government.



What FF and the Independents did not expect was the reaction to the attack on the Children's Allowance.

It is unclear if they will get this passed but, of course, it shows what they are willing to do. Other aspects of the

Programme for Government may not be picked up as easily, as loss of payments such as Family Income Supplement is not universal.

For most people the details of certain Social Welfare payments get lost on them; the only details they will hear are from Government PR.

Lone parent cuts

This was most evident with the lone parent cuts by the last Minister for Social Protection, Joan Burton.

There was no definitive figure of what a lone parent was down in money, as it was different for each parent.

Thanks to campaign groups like SPARK the public were made aware that Joan Burton's spin about getting parents into work was false.

Those parents who were working part-time suffered losses ranging from €30 to over a €100 per week.

The plan now is to get rid of Family Income Supplement

(FIS) and to replace it with a new Family Working Payment.

We have yet to see the details of this new payment, but lone parent groups in particular are concerned with the language and rhetoric around this payment.

Joan Burton was infamous for using words like "incentive to work" and "promoting work over welfare".

The proposal by FG for their new payment bares many similarities, with claims that they will promote work over welfare, and "incentivise" poorer families to work more hours.

Their reason for ditching FIS, they say, is it creates a hurdle for parents by locking them into working fewer hours.

They have also stated that the new payment will be a graduated payment.

All of this is a warning that we must fight it now before it is implemented.

FIS is a payment for all low income families, but most claimants are lone parents. Forcing lone parents off their One Parent Family Payment onto FIS was a failure.

Many could not get the 19 hours work required to claim FIS and those in some form of part-time work lost their jobs.

Prior to 2012 up to 60% of lone parents were in some form of employment, this dropped to 36% by 2014.

For those who were already working 19 hours and on FIS the removal of their part-payment of OPFA was a loss of up to 18% of income for those on minimum wage.

Child poverty

The statistics for lone parent families show the highest rates of child poverty in the country.

There are 22% living in consistent poverty, and 58% suffer two or more forms of deprivation regularly.

The obsession with forcing

parents into working more hours without childcare support combined with low-wage jobs meant women and children bore the brunt of austerity.

Minister Vardakar has already stated that he will not do an impact study on the cuts to the One Parent Family Payment.

He is adamant on making plans to work towards his new Working Family Payment.

There was no equality proofing of the budget that implemented lone parent cuts, and even the Mangan Report commissioned to have a look at social welfare prior to Budget 2012 says in its introduction they did not have adequate time.

The same obsession with forcing parents into low-paid work looks set to continue.

Instead we need to fight for the real supports needed such as childcare, affordable housing and an end to low-wage.

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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.

Join the Socialists

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

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SWP

TRANSDEV'S ATTACK ON LUAS DRIVERS ESCALATES

All trade unionists must support drivers' fight!

Owen McCormack

As Socialist Worker went to press, the scheduled strikes on the Luas had been deferred pending talks at the Labour Court initiated by the ICTU president Patricia King.

While workers have been told their action must be deferred, the company has continued with its bully boy tactics aimed at demoralising the drivers.

Several drivers have been suspended, including at least one shop steward and the company have broken the law by deducting 10% of driver's wages to compensate themselves for the costs of the dispute.

Drivers have been suspended for refusing to work new rosters that were not agreed to and are unsafe with shorter breaks and often longer shifts.

Drivers were preparing for a ballot for all out strike when the offer of new talks came.

The company have continued to threaten and bully drivers aided by a vicious media campaign aimed at undermining the driver's case.

Both employers and the Government understand the importance of the Luas dispute with both keen to stop the example of a well organised and militant group winning a significant pay dispute. They fear this will inspire other workers



to try to roll back the years of austerity cuts and pay freezes.

One driver told SW that they are sceptical of the Labour Court intervention and are seething at the continued bullying of Transdev. The company's latest tough guy

tactics are aimed at weakening workers resolve pending another offer brokered by the Labour Court.

The last offer was worse than Transdev's initial offer and was roundly rejected for seeking to savage the pay

of new entrants.

The stance of Luas drivers should be welcomed by all trade unionists for refusing to sacrifice new recruits.

Tesco and others show the dangers of allowing employers to divide and rule

with different groups of workers doing the same work for different pay.

Transdev are a profitable multinational company that has repatriated over €9 million in profits to its French parent company since 2009 and has a notorious record internationally on workers and human rights.

In 2012 Transdev's parent company, Veolia, tried to sue the Egyptian Government to prevent the raising of the minimum wage at a time that wage stood at less than 0.75 cents an hour!

Transdev has tendered for Dublin Bus routes that the Government and the National Transport Authority are trying to hive off for privatisation.

If Transdev get away with this attack on Luas drivers it will be a blueprint for other employers and set a benchmark for other transport workers' claims.

Both Dublin Bus and Irish Rail workers are due to have pay claims dealt with in the Labour Court next month.

Transdev cannot be allowed to get away with these attacks.

All Trade unionists should pass motions supporting the workers and invite them to their branches to explain their case and counter the media attacks.

SIPTU and the ICTU should withdraw from all talks until the illegal cuts to wages and the suspensions are lifted.

Union conferences show signs of growing workers rebellion

Owen McCormack

A number of Union conferences last month showed that workers anger over the austerity cuts is beginning to boil over and we could see significant industrial action for the first time in many years.

At the heart of many of the

conferences debates is the attack on the pay of newly qualified recruits in the public service, and a general feeling that the so called recovery is not reaching workers.

The TUI conference heard that the scale of cuts in pay, pension and increments for new workers amounted to about €300,000 over their career.

Many debates saw growing opposition to union leaders who went along with these cuts and who are now trying to head off any campaigns to reverse them immediately.

Resurgence

The signs of resurgence in workers militancy are of crucial importance for what happens in the years ahead.

The Government and some union officials will want to keep the Fempil legislation in order to control workers with the threat of cuts and loss of pay if they don't stay within the Lansdowne Road agreement. In a bizarre twist of logic they have even claimed that reversing the cuts to pay could jeopardise moves to raise the pay of new recruits!

This so called emergency legislation allows the Govt to cut pension and pay of public service workers.

People Before Profit TDs have tabled a motion calling for the immediate repeal of the legislation and will be opposing any attempt to renew the act in the Dail this June.

The growing campaigns against lower pay for new

recruits as well as the Luas and Tesco disputes show the need for trade unionists to build real solidarity networks across unions and to link up the different struggles in the months ahead.

A conference for trade unionists is being hosted by People Before Profit TD Brid Smith to assist these struggles and exchange experiences

among trade unionists.

We urge all workers to come along and help the fight to reverse the cuts of the austerity years and the ongoing attempt to make workers pay for the crisis.

The conference will hear from teachers, nurses, Luas and other workers and activists.

See details below.

CONFERENCE ROUND UP



ASTI MEMBERS RISE UP

Mark Waisre reports

This year's ASTI Convention saw a determined push by members to reclaim all of the pay and conditions cut or worsened since the economic crisis struck in 2008.

Three key demands were made, backed up by contingency plans for industrial action up to and including strike action.

First, Convention passed overwhelmingly a motion calling on the Government to restore all new entrants (Newly Qualified Teachers / NQTs) to the pre-2011 salary scale by 31 August 2016, or face industrial action from 1 September.

A second motion, also passed overwhelmingly,

called for members to withdraw from the so-called Croke Park hours — 33 unpaid hours worked annually by 27,000 second level teachers, amounting to 890,000 hours of free labour per year, saving the Government at least €43m annually according to the Croke Park Implementation Body. In 2013, the Haddington Road Agreement (HRA) extended the Croke Park hours to the end of June 2016.

Now that HRA is coming to an end, members decided that so too must the Croke Park hours.

A few weeks after Convention, a school-based ballot was held in which members voted to stop doing these hours by 68.5 to 31.5 per cent on a turnout of 76 per cent.

The third motion reiterated our position that

members not assess our own students for certification in the Junior Cycle.

Using the Junior Cycle as the thin end of the wedge, the Government is trying to introduce school-based certification as a replacement for State certification.

This is part of an overarching project which seeks to pave the way for turning Irish schools into UK-style 'academies'.

There was a real sense of militancy and determination among members to fight back at Convention 2016.

Members have already followed through and delivered a decisive ballot result on ending the Croke Park hours.

Now the new entrant and Junior Cycle demands must be pursued with the same determination and vigour.

INMO (IRISH NURSES AND MIDWIVES ORGANISATION): DISCONTENT BREWING

From a St. James' Hospital nurse

At the INMO conference in May numerous motions were passed criticising conditions for both staff and patients

right across the health service.

While the emergency department crisis has been partially but very temporarily, controlled, it has been done at the expense of the rest of the health service.

Under new arrangements the build up of patients on trolleys in Emergency Departments must be relieved.

The inevitable result is that more and more trolleys are simply pushed out of the ED up to in-patient wards etc, putting even more pressure on an even more intolerable ward situation.

Despite the lifting of the staff moratorium, and ongoing recruitment drives from at home and abroad we continue to lose more and more staff - both nurses and doctors.

Nurses are leaving in unsustainable numbers.

The health service is now imploding.

In James's, one of the biggest in Dublin, two of its eleven operating theatres are now closed because of staff shortages.

The closure of further theatres is under active consideration.

Whether the government or the Union leaders like it or not there is now an objective necessity to raise

pay and improve conditions for nurses. Motions calling for a review of our ongoing cooperation with the Lansdowne Road Agreement and the lodging of a claim for the restoration of previous pay rates bode for a summer and autumn of discontent.

IMPACT: GROWING OPPOSITION

Report from Liam O'Neill

Conference was a mixed bag with big debates on pay restoration, water, union amalgamation and repeal the eight. IMPACT is one of the country's traditionally more conservative unions with a leadership deeply hostile to militancy and embedded in the "Partnership" process.

Nevertheless, this year saw significant opposition from the general membership on a number of issues with one motion calling for the immediate scrapping of the Fempil cuts gathering much larger support among delegates than the leadership will have liked.

The debate on pay reflected a mood that the fruits of the 'recovery' should benefit all those that lost out under austerity, but stuck with the leadership position of opposition to special

EIGHT YEARS OF AUSTERITY: TIME TO CHALLENGE LOW WAGES AND HIGH PROFITS. TIME TO...

RISE UP!

GRASSROOTS TRADE UNION CONFERENCE

Saturday 25th June
Teachers Club, Parnell Square.

To register for the conference or to get more information you can contact Brid Smith TD at 087 909 0166 or brid.smith@oireachtas.ie
Sponsored by Brid Smith TD

claims and the immediate repeal of the FEMPI legislation.

On water the motion passed by the ICTU last year was amended to delete opposition to charges but calling for a referendum to ensure that it remains in

public ownership.

A motion calling for the repeal of the eight amendment was overwhelmingly supported, a reflection perhaps of the significant growth in the proportion of women membership.

#socialism 1.01

John Moynaux

Independents and the Left

Entirely justified disillusionment with the 'mainstream' political parties – Fine Gael, Fianna Fail and Labour – has led to the rise of 'the independents'.

Time and again, while canvassing for People Before Profit in the last election we were met on the doorstep with, 'Yes, we are voting independents this time'.

At least three different ideas were combined in this response:

1) We have been badly let down by FF, FG and Labour – and don't

have served to clarify in many people's minds the fact that 'independent' is a highly inadequate political label. In the first place it often conceals the fact that the candidate is very much from the stable of one of the establishment parties.

For example Michael Lowry was not just a Fine Gael member but Chair of the party; the Healy-Raes were Fianna Failers who only became 'independent' when FF declined to nominate Jackie Healy-Rae as a candidate; Shane Ross was Fine Gael; Róisín Shortall was a Labour TD

he was voting with Fine Gael.

How come? Well perhaps getting a Ministerial job had something to do with it.

General

But the general point which needs to be grasped – including by many on the left – is that 'independent' is not a badge of honour or even a particular virtue.

The system, capitalism, and its ruling 1%, are always trying to co-opt, corrupt and neutralise elected representatives.

They are experts at doing this with carrot-



Katherine Zappone and John Halligan - Independents

trust Sinn Fein

2) Candidates linked to these parties will put party (and their own careers) before the interests of the people. We want something different – people who are independent of the establishment

3) We are not really clear about the difference between various independents – the likes of Shane Ross, Katherine Zappone and John Halligan – and the left like People Before Profit and the Anti-Austerity Alliance or Clare Daly and Joan Collins.

4) They all sound roughly the same. Ideas one and two are, broadly speaking, a reasonable and progressive response to the experience of recent years and to the current situation. Idea three is generally a product of political inexperience – I don't mean of youth, because you often hear it from the middle-aged and above, but of only recent engagement in politics. Hopefully events since the election will

from 1992 – 2012. By leaving Labour at the right moment Shortall escaped the shipwreck that rightly befell that party but is there any reason to believe she has really changed?

But what of Katherine Zappone and John Halligan? Zappone as a 'feminist theologian' and first openly lesbian Senator with a record in children's community education might have been seen as a progressive, left-of-centre figure.

Yet she is now a minister in the Fine Gael Government.

Pledged

John Halligan has a more substantial left-wing past, being a member of the Workers Party until 2008.

In 2012 he pledged not to pay the household charge, saying he'd go to jail; on 15 May he said he would never pay his water bill (though in the small print he said that he wasn't eligible) and on the morning of 24 May he was going to vote to abolish water charges.

But by the evening

and-stick tactics, a mixture of patronage and marginalisation. "Come on board, or at least be reasonable, and we'll reward you with respect, a job and a little something for your constituents as well.

"Refuse and we'll denounce and denigrate you and we can get our friends at RTE and the Independent to join in. Indeed Garda Síochána may lend a hand as well – ask Paul Murphy."

The fact is being a member of a party – a serious left party that is – puts an elected representative in a better position to resist the pressures they will come under than just being an 'independent' because it makes them part of a collective.

In addition the crisis of Irish society requires a national all-Ireland response and that in turn needs a national all-Ireland political party.

In this respect even for genuine lefts being 'independent' is a source of weakness rather than a source of strength.

THE POLITICAL ACTIVIST

In the run up to Dublin Pride on 25 June Socialist Worker spoke to a number of activists about their views on equality victory and what they see as the



GER ORMOND, 50, and a trade unionist with UNITE, recalled: 'I have marched in the Dublin LGBT Pride parade every year since I came out in 2000. That year I took my daughter in her buggy all dressed up in rainbow accessories. We loved it, despite my initial fear of being spotted as I wasn't fully out.'

I love the diversity and display of gay culture from the drag queens, to guys wearing chaps with their ass cheeks out, to queer families with their children. It's a melting pot and I feel a real sense of pride in the LGBT community as I walk in it, with my community.

It's important to remember the people who came before us. It's through their activism that we have gained freedoms today they didn't have 20 and 30 years ago.'

SEAN EGAN, 19, agreed on the importance of Pride: 'Pride is important as a celebration to counter the shame and fear associated with LGBTQ identity that despite certain advances is still prevalent' As did RORY O'NEILL, 20, from Trinity: 'I've been at Pride each year since 2013. It is important that queer people collectively make our existence recognised and show solidarity with each other'

AISLINN DALY, 21, from IADT, also

wanted 'to show respect to those who fought before me'.

But despite agreeing on the importance of Pride all our respondents had misgivings about its corporatisation and depoliticisation.

Ger who was on the Pride Committee 8 years ago said 'in recent years Dublin Pride has become less political and LGBT activist groups in the community have had to fight for their right to address the audience at the after parade gathering. The emphasis now seems to be more on partying and fun, which of course is great, but we should not forget the roots of Pride. It originated with the Stonewall riots on June 28 1969.

Also Pride in Ireland gained momentum after the homophobic killing of DECLAN FLYNN in Fairview Park and the mobilisation of gay protest in 1983. As we commercialise Pride we run the risk of losing its message and importance for LGBT Liberty.'

Likewise Aislinn felt, 'corporatization of pride encourages queers to be complicit in capitalist consumerism' and Sean Egan warned of 'the practise of pinkwashing when governments and corporations use the support of certain LGBT rights to disguise reactionary policies. The de-politicisation of

Pride enables this to happen unchallenged which makes the presence of radicals in the movement so important. It's also important to remember that the first pride movements had a feminist, anti-capitalist, revolutionary agenda and we need to continue that tradition.'

Naturally all were pleased about the Yes vote in the Referendum but there was a difference in emphasis.

For Ger who remembers the bad old days 'it was hugely important to the gay community and to Irish society as a whole. I canvassed door to door in the final week of the campaign. It was hugely empowering to do this in my own parish where I had grown up unable to accept my homosexuality as a teenager. It showed the growth in Irish society, and in myself.'

And for Sean Carroll it was 'a tremendous victory and a victory for democracy itself. In the days before polling day we saw young people queuing up registering to vote for the first time. For many years young people have been marginalised by the major political parties because they do not vote, a surge in youth participation can I hope force parties to pay attention to the needs of young people'

Sean, who is marching with the People

LEXIT: Why we need

People Before Profit in Northern Ireland will be calling for a LEFT EXIT from the European Union. Should a majority vote to leave, we shall be campaigning for Southern Ireland to leave as well. We favour the break-up of the current structures of the EU on left wing grounds.

Up to now the political establishment in the South has been arguing that it is 'in Ireland's interest' that Britain as a whole stays in the EU.

They claim that if Northern Ireland leaves the EU, border controls will re-appear on the North-South border. However, the common travel area between Ireland and Britain predates the EU.

There is no need to change border arrangements in the event of a Brexit because they have been broadly consistent in the 100 years since the creation of Ireland as a separate state.

A similar argument pertains to exports from Ireland. Once again, an Anglo-Irish Treaty, which opened free trade between Ireland and Britain, pre-dates the EU.

The political elite are trying to cloak their support for the EU in a nationalist green jersey. They want to avoid discussion on the real issue: Does the EU serve the interests of working people? Or is it a 'bosses club'?

Greece

The EU's treatment of Ireland and Greece after the 2008 economic crash shows its real nature.

Finance Minister, Michael Noonan, stated in the Dáil that the European Central Bank informed him that if he burned bondholders at Anglo-Irish Bank a 'bomb would go off' in Dublin. A 'bomb' meant a financial explosion. The EU prefers to use financial methods rather than military

intervention to change the policies of elected governments.

Greece illustrates precisely the EU's method of 'banks not tanks'. When the left wing Syriza party was elected to government, the EU changed the rules so that its bank reserves ratios were reduced. The result was a run on Greek banks and a turning of the financial screw until the Syriza government capitulated.

Four grounds

There are four main grounds on which the People Before Profit will be advocating a No Vote.

■ Neoliberal policies have been sealed into the EU. Budgets are no longer determined by national governments but are restricted by an 'Annual Growth Survey' that is promoted by the EU Commission. Since the crash of 2008,

S OF PRIDE - S SPEAK

Left activists about how they see the event, how they feel about the Marriage
ay forward for the struggle for equality.



Before Profit contingent, also stressed 'This victory was won by people power, there were evenings in places like Ballyfermot where 40 plus people turned up on a street corner ready to canvass,' and internationally, he thought it would 'give hope to LGBT activists around the world'.

For Rory, however, 'The Yes vote represented a break with the legacy of the Catholic Church and the conservative domination of Irish society. Nonetheless, it was only a limited victory and nothing more than a step. LGBTQ liberation remains an unfinished task both in Ireland and all over the world, whether there is marriage equality or not.'

Sceptical

And for Aislinn, 'A yes vote was necessary. But it was led by a mainstream agenda of gay assimilation, which proved to be exclusionary to queers that didn't fit a non-confrontational mold'.

Sean Egan said, 'As a Marxist I'm sceptical of marriage, historically it has been a tool to oppress women, but it was the victory of thousands of ordinary people who campaigned for years and the massive yes vote among young people and in working class communities indicates a broader desire

for societal change. It was also immensely personally gratifying as a gay person to see my friends and family members take action to support my civil rights.'

On the way forward, Aislinn emphasised the importance of transgender issues

'Transgender issues have been brushed aside for too long. Healthcare for trans people in this country is not up to standard. If you are transgender you must get a diagnosis of Gender Identity Disorder to access most healthcare procedures related to physical transition. It is cost heavy, involves seeing counsellors, doctors, endocrinologists, psychiatrists and psychologists. Being transgender is not a mental illness, and doesn't require a team of medical professionals to diagnose. I believe we need to fight for an informed consent model for transgender people to access treatment, that is accessible to people of all financial backgrounds'.

Rory agrees with this noting that '2015 was the year with the most murders of transgender people on record' and also stressed the importance of 'fighting women's oppression' and 'the repeal of the 8th Amendment'.

Sean Carroll thinks 'the next step for the movement now is to tackle the alarm-

ing mental health crises within the LGBT community, with gay teens being 3 times more likely to attempt suicide and 4 times more likely to experience anxiety or depression.. We must also push for greater visibility of LGBT people in children's and family orientated media'.

Ger, Aislinn, the two Seans and Rory all saw a link between the fight for LGBTQ liberation and for socialism.

Said Sean Carroll, 'the working class is made up of gay workers, straight workers, black workers, white workers and so on, as long as workers are divided along the lines of sexuality, race, gender or religion they are not united against the real enemy of capitalism.'

Aislinn argued, 'We need to fight for socialism in order to dismantle structures of oppression that are inherent to the capitalist system.' And for Sean Egan, 'Socialism and LGBTQ liberation are inseparable, they're both about challenging existing power structures. You can't have one without the other'.

And Ger stressed the need for solidarity 'As we have gained rights in recent years we should not forget other oppressed minorities such as people with disability, migrants, refugees, travellers.'

a left exit from EU

the EU Commission has promoted an increase in the retirement age to 68; 'labour activation' policies to conscript youth into low paid schemes and increased use of 'user fees' such as water charges.

The unelected European Central Bank also wields tremendous power and uses it to promote 'balanced budgets' which cut back on social spending.. Any public service defined as a 'service of general economic interest' must be 'opened up to market competition' i.e. privatised.

■ The EU is developing military structures to fight 'resource wars'. Under the cover of 'humanitarian interventions' the EU promotes a new style colonial policy in its dealings with the developing world. It has created its own 'battle groups' for emergency responses. It actively fosters an arms industry.

■ The EU is fundamentally undemocratic. It is an executive run institution where elected MEPs are restricted in what they can propose. The unelected EU Commission proposes legislation and then 'shadowy structures known as 'trilogue committees' hammer out deals. This gives huge scope to corporations to lobby the political elite behind closed doors..

■ The EU legitimises racism though Fortress Europe. The EU-Turkey deal prevents refugees fleeing from war entering the EU.

They are first sent back to Turkey and then monitored by a regime that refuses to sign conventions on human rights. By framing the refugee crisis as a major problem that cannot be accommodated, the EU gives succour to the far right racist and fascists who are growing on the continent. Supporters of the EU claim that it

protects workers rights. This is untrue. There are some EU sanctioned measures that arose in the boom period of Western capitalism when elites wanted to expand the workforce and so gave legal protections for equal pay or contract staff.

But these rights were also fought for by workers across Europe and cannot be so easily taken away.

Nor does the EU care much about human rights. It gave Ireland a special protocol, for example, to block women claiming access to reproductive rights .

The much vaunted Charter for Fundamental Rights does not fundamentally undermine a body of EU law which is essentially about market competition and building up big EU corporations.

Leaving the EU will be part of a process of creating a different Ireland which puts people before profit.



Gino Kenny TD says

The real cause of climate change

Weather statistics showed that April 2016 was globally the hottest month on record. In the Dáil Danny Healy-Rae, recently elected Kerry TD, said it was all down 'to the man upstairs'.

Fortunately People Before Profit TD Gino Kenny pointed to the real reasons for climate change and the failure of the Irish government to address them.

If there's one thing we can all agree on, it is that: climate change is a clear and present danger.

Though it may seem abstract and far away at times, climate change increasingly brings the reality home to everybody's lives, with heavy rainfall, storms and floods causing distress and dislocation in people's lives.

In her book, This Changes Everything, Naomi Klein points out that, "the natural world and the economic system are on a collision course and one of them is going to

the markets were put first.

In transport, the national transport authority has also focused on promoting competition, rather than increasing public transport's capacity to cater for the massive shift we need away from cars and onto buses, trams and trains;

Policy seems more geared towards facilitating giant transport multinationals, like Transdev or Arriva, than on our transport needs or the environment.

Piecemeal investments in housing or transport will not deliver the kind



Danny Healy-Rae and Gino Kenny - a tale of two TDs.

have to change utterly.'

Either we change the priorities of capitalism, that is, profit and competition, or, the natural world may no longer be able to sustain the planet as a place to live for humanity and animal and plant kingdoms.

This addition to expanding profits is not sustainable, even in the short term.

Put simply, capitalism is polluting and poisoning our planet in the interests of big business and the wealth of the super-rich 1%.

What does this mean for people in Ireland? Is our priority the rich and powerful or, the interests of the people who live here?

Combating climate change requires reducing the amount of carbon dioxide, we release through human activities.

In construction, reducing our expenditure on heating by improving insulation reduces both carbon emissions and heating bills.

New designs for houses with better insulation and heating systems, known as 'passive houses', can reduce bills to under €200 a year for the average home.

However, the Minister for the Environment, instead, has demanded that local authorities delete all references to 'passive houses' in their development plans.

Incredibly, at the request of the construction industry federation and the building lobby, Minister Kelly gutted proposals to make the passive house the standard in all newly built homes: Instead of human needs profits and

of change needed to cut carbon emissions.

What is needed is a national transport and housing strategy that provides both high quality service and low emissions,

In Ireland agriculture accounts for 29% of all emissions but, after the excuses given by the Taoiseach at the Paris climate conference in December, it seems that big agri business and the beef barons were calling the shots.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency: "overall it is evident...that Ireland is not on track towards decarbonising the economy...AND Will face steep challenges...unless further policies and measures are put in place."

PBP believe that we should massively increase our forests, nationalise all of the state's gas and oil fields, ban fracking and use all of the state's natural resources to switch the economy to a carbon neutral basis as soon as practically possible.

We support the taxing of corporate profits to fund the switch to renewable forms of energy generation and invest in wave, solar and wind power generation.

Out of consideration for those who will inherit the earth, it is imperative that we leave it as we found it.

I believe it is not the presence of human beings on the earth that is causing grave harm, but the system that puts profit before people and profits before the environment.

Until we challenge that system there is a stopwatch on all of us and our time is running out.

Mass strikes and protests hit France

A huge movement of resistance involving mass strikes and protests has engulfed France. The issue is so-called 'Labour Reform' where reform means lengthening working hours, reducing holidays and overtime and making it easier to sack workers. As we go to press the majority of France's oil refineries remain strike bound, creating a major energy crisis.

Out of and alongside the strikes an exciting new movement called Nuit Debout has arisen. The notorious French riot cops, The CRS, have responded with their traditional brutality. CATHERINE CURRAN VIGIER, lecturer at University of Rouen, member of SNESUP union and of Rouen NPA (New Anti-Capitalist Party) reports on the development of Nuit Debout

Nuit Debout (Night on our feet) began when young people refused to go home after the huge strikes and demonstrations against the reform of the labour code (the El Khomri law) on March 31st. Groups of young people organized sit-downs in several town centres.

The biggest was in Republic Square in Paris. Despite violent attacks by the CRS riot police, and a lot of media hostility, Nuit Debout has spread all over France.

Anais, a co-ordinator at Nuit Debout Rouen, explained:

"We've been meeting every evening at six o'clock for the last 2 months to give citizens the right to express themselves. We want to make people realise that we all have a part to play in the world we're living in, we can all act, make ourselves heard. We want to put forward alternatives to the system, so that as well as fighting we have something else to propose. The more numerous we are, the more we can build an alternative to this system which is falling apart."

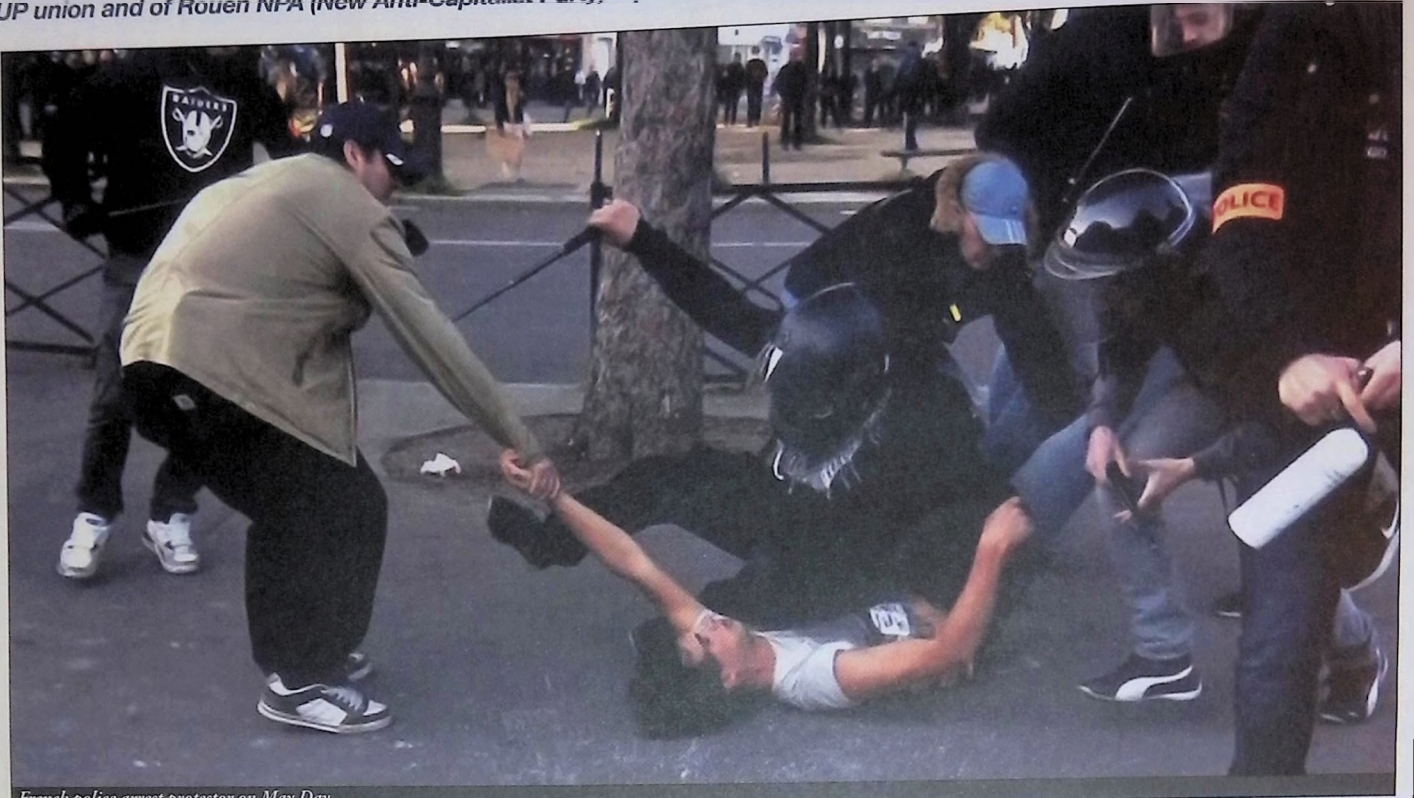
"We've initiated a lot of actions, notably, going to put our demands before the Town Council, because we'd been meeting outside the town hall for two months without any contact with the councillors... We've also occupied public places, like the abandoned church at St Nicaise. We've started a soup kitchen there, and a citizen's garden, with the support of the local community. We have also linked up with the trade unions, there's a real struggle at this point in time and Nuit Debout has supported the CGT, FO, and Sud-Solidaires trade unions."

"Last Tuesday, after the demonstration, Nuit Debout held its General Assembly outside the blocked Rubis Fuel depot, everyone joined in, and we were able to show our solidarity with the Trade Unions."

Struggle intensifies

As the struggle intensifies, Nuit Debout is proving to be of crucial importance in bringing different forces together. After a week of strikes in which Prime Minister Manuel Valls sent in CRS against demonstrators blocking fuel depots, Nuit Debout Rouen called a meeting to discuss what to do next.

On Saturday evening, about 200 activ-



French police arrest protestor on May Day.

ists and supporters gathered in front of the Town Hall. Trade unionists from the CGT and Sud-Solidaires opened with accounts of the struggle in the Department of Seine-Maritime, which includes the ports of Rouen and Le Havre as well as France's biggest oil refinery, Gonfreville l'Orcher.

They explained that the Ports and Docks had been on strike for 72 hours, and that oil workers had voted to shut down Gonfreville. The oil strike would stop production at the refinery for nearly ten days, they said.

A trade unionist from Sud-solidaires told the meeting that the question of unlimited strike action is still being debated by the rail workers, who struck massively on the first day of protest, March 9th. The CGT has focused on one-day strikes by rail workers, but pressure is growing for

continuous strike action.

In road transport, the government's promise to exclude the sector from the new cuts in overtime pay was taken as a sign that we should step up the fight.

Health workers

Health workers brought up the victorious strike at the private Clinique Mathilde, where employees have just won a pay rise, a bonus of over 900 euros, and the payment of all strike days.

A striking museum worker explained that several museums had been shut down in protest against working conditions and the constant use of part-time and temporary workers.

A debate followed on the best way to block the Rubis fuel depots again, after the CRS smashed the barricades on Friday

last. Some people wanted to march back out to the site and set up new, stronger barriers, but others insisted on the need to get more workers out before taking on the CRS again.

Following this debate, a meeting of the Nuit Debout health and social workers took place. This meeting was chaired by Claire, a youth worker, who explained that Nuit Debout was a way for the existing network of militant health and social workers to reach a wider audience and gain support for their struggles.

J-M, a co-ordinator of Nuit Debout Social Workers in Paris, was there to give support to the Rouen group. He said:

"The El Khomri law is very clearly linked to what's happening in Greece, in Spain and Portugal, it's a demand from Europe to smash the labour code in order

to eventually align all European countries with a single model of society."

As far as social workers are concerned, he said 'concretely, what's happening is that we're entering a logic in which... the people who should be doing their work are asked to do something else, filling out dossiers, keeping files on people; we have more and more project leaders to evaluate everybody's work, and fewer and fewer social workers in direct contact with the population...'

He spoke of the need for another vision of social work, and another society, in which the needs of the vulnerable would be taken into account.

Nuit Debout is playing a key rôle not just in combating the Labour Code reform, but also in debating what kind of future society people want to live in.

Neither Orange nor Green but Socialist

Following its recent electoral breakthrough People Before Profit has been variously denounced as essentially unionist and essentially nationalist. Sean Mitchell, PBP North-South Coordinator, replies.

There is an old joke, frequently told by Eamonn McCann, that if you are from this part of the world, and decide that you are an atheist, then the question immediately follows: "Yes, but are you a catholic atheist or a protestant atheist?"

Presumably agnostics get a similar treatment. You can be undecided on trivial matters like the after life, certainly, but surely you have a preferred option on the big questions? "Gers or Hoops mate?"

Secularism, of course, was always much more than a difference of opinion over theological questions.

Or support for football teams for that matter.

Hundreds of years of capitalist exploitation and imperialist divide and rule might be a better starting point. Just a thought.

But then there is no doubting, that whatever its origins, the pressure to place yourself into one 'camp' or the other in the North is intense and very real. And it reaches into every aspect of life, particularly the sphere of politics.

Stormont

This is most obvious in the case of Stormont itself. Upon entering you are asked to declare yourself as 'Unionist', 'Nationalist' or 'Other'. PBP's two MLAs



Gerry and Eamonn with sub. Gerry Carroll and Eamonn McCann outside Stormont

were asked to do the same.

When it came to their turn to register, Gerry Carroll and Eamonn McCann proudly designated themselves as 'socialist' instead. (Irish News columnist Brian Feeney suggested that they should have designated as the 'front for the Trotskyist Socialist Party'.

Presumably he thought they were registering at the House Un-American

Activities Committee, not a legislative Assembly. Apologies Senator Feeney.)

Still, they did not designate as Nationalist or Unionist.

Nor did they simply write 'other', even if that's how they will be treated at Stormont. "PBP isn't the Alliance Party," Carroll and McCann boldly declared. "This is the new, radical, socialist alternative," they said.

True, but bit cheeky of them I suppose,

seeing as it was Naomi Long and David Ford who alerted us to the fact we could declare ourselves in this way in the first place.

Apparently they weren't too happy afterwards either.

But then if you are going to describe where our MLAs sit as the 'Naughty Corner', you can hardly complain when they copy your homework.

Very quickly, however, another question seems to follow for those like PBP who define themselves in this way: "I know you are a socialist, but are you a catholic socialist or a protestant socialist?"

Or at least this is the question that political commentators seem to be asking themselves lately. One day you open up the paper and there is an article from a pundit like Jim Gibney saying PBP is essentially unionist. Time for the SDLP and SF to unite he says, reignite the old 'Pan Nationalist Alliance' pact. More power to his elbow I say.

Then a few days later you open up the same paper and there is an article from the aforementioned Brian Feeney, saying PBP is essentially nationalist. Our votes were in mainly Catholic districts you see. How can we say we are not nationalist when we stand in the tradition of James Connolly he asks? The same Connolly who condemned the "Orange fanatic and the capitalist-minded Home Ruler" alike. Seems obvious to me.

This kind of labelling is intrinsic to politics here. At least for the time being. And I have no doubt it will continue apace for some years ahead. But maybe, just maybe, the tide can be turned, and the question will be one day be asked. "Yes I know you are an atheist, but are you a socialist atheist or a capitalist atheist?" Worth a try at least.

The threat from TTIP

TTIP, the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, sounds boring. It is a proposed EU-US trade agreement which is scheduled to be ratified later this year. LINDA KEHOE reports

It may sound innocent and progressive – just about facilitating trade – but do not be fooled; TTIP and its sister agreement CETA (between the EU and Canada) is a dangerous deal that puts the interests of big business before the interests of people, their health and our environment.

TTIP isn't about reducing trade tariffs; it's about removing regulations which are barriers to corporate interests i.e. private profit.

It's about increasing privatisation and making it impossible to return privatised services to state ownership and transferring sovereignty i.e. giving power to unaccountable officials.

Deregulation

TTIP won't just affect the financial sector. Food, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, medical devices, pesticides, cosmetics and textiles will be affected.

Regulations are in place to protect people from unscrupulous businesses.

They force corporations to abide by standards that protect our health, our rights, our jobs, services and the environment.

TTIP would undermine current minimum standards agreed by the EU.

There are also huge labour and environmental concerns with estimates of 600,000 job losses in the EU and 300,000 job losses in the US as a result of TTIP.

In 1994 a similar agreement called NAFTA- The North American Free Trade Agreement- was put in place between the USA, Canada and Mexico.

It promised extra jobs but in fact cost over one million US jobs and significantly

OBITUARY:

Peter Coules, 1955-2016,

R.I.P.

Cllr. Nicky Coules and Mary Smith

Our comrade Peter Coules lost his battle with cancer. He died surrounded by his family. Peter was highly intelligent, well-read and cultured.

He could empathise with his fellows. These characteristics made him popular and good company.

When added to his being working class they made him a socialist.

The economic crash followed by the austerity imposed by the government on the ordinary people of Ireland to pay off the debts of the rich were for Peter Coules a call to arms. He joined the Socialist Workers Party and People Before Profit.

Peter was an active and committed member of the Dublin South branch of both organisations.

Until his illness made political activity impossible, Peter could always be relied upon to deliver on the work of the branch – you could tell his house by the stack of recent posters and cable-ties by the porch.

His input into political discussion in the branch was very fine – his grasp of Marxist ideas, and his ability to relate them to everyday experiences were really wonderful; you knew that when Peter indicated he wanted to speak, what he had to say would be worth listening to.



That he cannot share in the bliss of the rediscovered rising militancy of our class, our people, would be a matter of deep regret to him.

But he lives on in the struggle and in our hearts.

More than 30% of all corporate lobby groups lobby undercover



reduced the value of wages for millions more workers.

Health services, education, postal services and sewerage services are all included in the TTIP negotiations and would be open to privatisation.

This would potentially leave public services open to private tender.

ISDS

TTIP includes Investor State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) provisions which mean that private investors will be able to bypass national courts and sue states in private arbitration courts for any actions that could damage their profit expectations and demand compensation.

A referendum in the State of Quebec resulted in a moratorium on fracking; the people democratically chose to protect their environment. The state is being sued by Gas and Oil company Lone Pine for \$250 million dollars in lost profits.

In 2012 Veolia sued the Egyptian Government as a result of an increased

national minimum wage.

The minimum wage in Egypt was, and is, below €0.75 an hour! If a private corporation are able to sue governments when they make changes that could potentially affect their profits, that is a brutal attack on democracy.

97% of the public response to EC consultation called for ISDS to be taken out of TTIP but the US government wants it in,

Secrecy

TTIP and CETA negotiations have been carried out behind closed doors, secret even from MEPs. MEP Mick Wallace video on this. During negotiations 90% of lobbying groups were corporates, and only 9% social groups. Despite this some of the documents have been leaked.

The Director of Greenpeace EU said: "These leaked documents give us an unparalleled look at the scope of US demands to lower or circumvent EU protections for environment and public health as part of TTIP."

The EU position is very bad, and the US position is terrible. The prospect of a TTIP compromising within that range is an awful one.

The way is being cleared for a race to the bottom in environmental, consumer protection and public health standards."

Over a million people in Europe have signed a petition against TTIP and hundreds of councils across Europe have already said they don't want TTIP; Clare has declared itself a TTIP free zone!

People power across the EU (and the US) is sending the message that we won't stand aside and let our democracy and rights be sold off.

The drugs aren't working

Report from People Before Profit in Cork on Mental Health and Prescription Drugs issues in the area

Cork University Hospital, the first port of call for many people suffering from debilitating and severe psychological distress, does not have a Department of Psychiatry.

It does, however, have a secure (locked) psychiatric ward and a psychiatric outpatient clinic, which operates almost solely on the basis of medical intervention.

In this psychiatric ward and clinic you will find not only patients presenting with non-neurological symptoms of mental ill-health, but you will also find patients suffering from non-geriatric progressive dementia, and patients with acquired brain injury – neither of which is a

psychiatric illness.

The waiting list for psychological intervention in Cork via the public health service numbers in the thousands.

Psychological intervention covers psychotherapy, counselling, mindfulness groups and neuro-psychological assessment – exactly the treatment that will uncover and work through the cause of the distress rather than masking it the way drug treatments often do.

Rarity

But access to clinical psychologists when it comes is often restricted, leaving insufficient space and time for either party in the therapeutic relationship to make the required changes and progress. The alternative option, to seek private intervention, can be

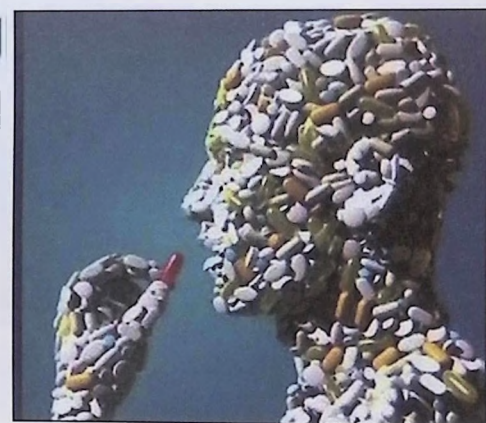
prohibitively expensive.

Low-cost counselling services are a rarity in Cork city, leading to waiting lists that can be just too long for someone in severe distress. Full-price options range from €50-€70 for psychotherapy and counselling, to €150 for a clinical psychologist.

The continued emphasis within our hospital system, and thus within the HSE and Department of Health, on the medical and psychiatric model of treatment for mental illness, speaks of a blatant disregard for and misunderstanding of best practice in mental healthcare.

The over-use of prescription drugs fixes nothing, but instead causes numerous physical problems. In too many cases, psychiatric drugs serve only to increase distress and add symptoms that never existed.

We are a society with its



head buried in the sand, refusing to confront the past and present realities of traumatic events and increasing daily stresses.

Until we recognise the importance of unlocking the causes of mental illness, our collective and individual malaise will only grow; bringing with it an addiction

to the very drugs supposedly concocted to make it all better.

Both the lack of care for those in mental distress and the cost-cutting inhumane nature of the care that is on offer are symptomatic of a society that in this, along with everything else, puts profit before people's needs.

End Direct Provision: New Campaign

Memet Uludag

Following the recent successful rally in Rathfarnham in support of the Afghan family subjected to racist attacks United Against Racism is building a campaign to abolish the Direct Provision System (DPS).

Introduced more than 15 years ago as a 6-monthly temporary solution to address the accommodation needs of asylum seekers, the DPS has become a permanent inhumane entrapment for many.

There are currently around 5,000 people in



Direct Provision Centre in Co. Westmeath

DPS centres with 15% there more than 8 years. The average time asylum

seekers spend in DPS is 38 months. Asylum seekers in the DPS are

not allowed to work, and don't have access to 3rd Level education. A weekly

allowance of €19.10 per adult and €16.60 per child is payable to asylum seekers living in direct provision

As reported many times before the DPS is an oppressive discriminatory system and the asylum seekers, adult and children, isolated in DPS centres face serious physical and mental difficulties. DPS centres are proven to be extremely unsuitable for children to grow up in.

The previous FG/Labour government had promised serious reforms to DPS and the asylum process but after long waiting this came to

nothing.

Direct provision reform is not in the new government programme.

United Against Racism is building a campaign against the institutional racist Direct Provision System and calling on the government to abolish it and give the 5000 people trapped for so long in this system the right to permanent residency, and the right to work and education and protection.

UAR is calling on all anti-racism activists to join the campaign. For more information visit www.united-against-racism.net or visit the UAR Facebook Page

Socialist Worker

NORTHERN ELECTIONS:

The left breaks through

Fiona Ferguson

The 2016 Assembly election is over, and the result in terms of the Government is much of the same, with a few changes. Unsurprisingly, the DUP and Sinn Fein have been returned as the largest parties, and they were left to divide up the ministerial positions amongst themselves, following the formation of an official opposition, comprised of the SDLP and UUP.

The most striking change to the makeup of the Assembly has been the addition of two revolutionary socialists. The election of People Before Profit's Gerry Carroll in West Belfast, and Eamonn McCann in Foyle is a tremendous breakthrough.

Gerry topped the polls in West Belfast, a traditional Sinn Fein stronghold, with nearly 25 percent of the vote! Eamonn McCann's result in Foyle was equally significant. In a constituency which saw the return of Sinn Fein's Martin McGuinness and the new SDLP leader Colum Eastwood, McCann's vote increased by 1000 votes from 2011.

Fiona Ferguson contested the North Belfast constituency, and received 1300 first preference votes. This vote for a first time candidate shows a growing thirst for left wing politics.

Impressive

There can be no doubt, from the impressive vote, to the discussion of socialist politics on local radio, to the hundreds of people wanting to get involved with People Before Profit that the left has arrived in the North.

While the Green Party, and the Alliance Party have for some time designated 'Other' in the sectarian role call on the first day of Stormont, Gerry Carroll and Eamonn McCann designated as 'Socialist'. And while there are others who define themselves as neither Green nor Orange, People Before Profit candidates in this election went beyond that, defining ourselves as a radical left socialist alternative. This resonated in Belfast and Derry.

One of the most important aspects of the PBP vote was its non-sectarian element. There have been attempts by some commentators to paint our vote as nationalist, but that is to ignore a few things; first that the areas that PBP contested were some of the most deprived working class areas in



The Socialist is arriving together at Stormont



Gerry Carroll joins strong picket at Shankill Leisure Centre

the North. The left vote is rising in working class areas, not because they are nationalist or unionist, but because they have faced an austerity agenda from Stormont and they want change.

Secondly, we knocked tens of thousands of doors, and we saw a social media blast for Gerry Carroll in the days before the election. No one listed the reason for voting PBP as some contrived notion of nationalism.

Finally, it's a fact that we didn't only take votes from 'nationalist areas'. We know from tallies, and many personal anecdotes, that our vote was up in 'unionist' areas.

Long struggle

Of course it will be a long struggle and there will be unevenness in where there is radicalisation in working class areas, but things are starting to shift. And as Brian

Kelly said at the West Belfast victory rally: DUP, we are coming for your voters!

Another important aspect of the PBP campaign was its strong political basis. We were steadfast as always when faced with the national question - we want a socialist Ireland.

Where we faced organised anti-choice campaigns, we remained vehemently pro-choice. And when we were challenged about

the past, we didn't shy away from questions of state repression and the role of the state.

By basing our campaigns on strong politics, we have undermined the notion that the only way to build the left in the North is on a lowest common denominator economic basis.

There wasn't a massive decrease in the DUP/Sinn Fein vote but there is no doubt that the forward march of Sinn Fein has halted. And while the SDLP hoped to make gains from this disillusionment, their seat count dropped.

The SDLP's failure to advance progressive social causes means they have declined. This disillusionment seems set to continue.

Already there has been contention about the choice of ministerial positions taken by Sinn Fein.

Their failure to fight for the ministerial positions in the Department of Education, and the Department of Communities has broken promises to Irish language organisations and opens the door to savage cuts over the next few years, including to Irish language schools.

Instead, Sinn Fein have ministers for Health, Infrastructure and Finance, which will see newly appointed Máirtín Ó Muilleoir oversee the lowering of corporation tax, which has been rejected overwhelmingly by Trade Unions and the left.

While cuts will continue to be made to vital community services, the public sector, unemployment, homelessness and mental health issues are at devastating levels.

But Sinn Fein and the DUP remain in agreement on the reduction of corporation tax, which will remove millions from the block grant every year.

In fact all five of the old parties, opposition or not, accept a neo-liberal agenda.

People Before Profit will use the platform of Stormont to speak out against these cuts and help the fight back against them, but the real work will be on the streets, in workplaces and in working class communities.

The Left has arrived in the North. Now we must throw ourselves into concerted efforts to build cross community campaigns against oncoming austerity.

There will be attempts from Stormont to divide us, but we must remain strong in opposition and recognise that there is a space for a cross community, working class alternative. It will take time, but we're up for the fight.

STOP THE WOODBURN FOREST DRILL!

Goretti Horgan

The drilling in Woodburn Forest just outside Belfast in Co Antrim is relatively conventional, as opposed to being hydraulic fracturing or "fracking". But that doesn't mean that it is not a danger to the environment and to Belfast's drinking water.

Also, everything about how Infrastrata, the company behind the "exploratory drill" ended up allowed to drill is a lesson for those opposed to fracking ever happening on this island.

The drill site in Woodburn forest is less than 400 metres uphill from a major drinking water reservoir. Bizarrely, NI Water gave Infrastrata a 50-year lease for the site, at a rent of only £10,000 a year. Campaigners against the drill obtained a copy of the contract between NI and Infrastrata.

A clause in the contract says that the company "confirms that its proposals involve the

exploration for hydrocarbons in conventional reservoirs in porous sandstone rocks rather than exploration for shale gas using the technique known as hydraulic fracturing ("Fracking"). However, the contract also allows Infrastrata to inject "Petroleum, water and any other fluids into the Site and under the Site"; "any other fluids" are mainly toxic chemicals.

When the drilling is underway, it uses thousands of tonnes of these hazardous chemicals while drilling through a water aquifer vital to providing drinking water. Even before drilling had started, the Northern Ireland Environment Agency confirmed two hydrocarbon spills on site in a two week period. This has increased fears that Infrastrata is unable to carry out the project without polluting the water reservoirs and the public water supply.

Given the reality of climate change - which has been seen in the weird weather patterns of the last year - the biggest question to

ask is why anyone thinks it is a good idea to look for oil on this island anyway?

We need to get away from our reliance on fossil fuels and start investing in renewable energy.

Instead, what's happening in Woodburn Forest should be a warning about how easily fracking could become a reality here if we don't get it banned in law. Woodburn is a saga of incompetence by some environmental agencies and collusion with the company by others.

It has seen local people's voices being ignored and experts' analysis dismissed.

The mess started in 2011 when the Dept of Trade, Enterprise and Investment (DETI), under then Minister Arlene Foster, granted Infrastrata - a new company with no track record - a five year petroleum licence without any public consultation or a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) being carried out.



Stop the Drilling

No one was too worried at this stage as no drilling licence had been granted.

But this is where the incompetence and/or collusion started to emerge. In August 2013, Infrastrata notified the Dept of the

Environment that it intended to carry out "an exploratory borehole" to identify areas of potential "oil or gas deposits".

Under a planning rule called "Permitted Development Rights" (PDR), the Department had to

respond within 30 days or the rights would be granted by default. Guess what happened? The company got the go-ahead for an exploratory drill by default.

The initial licence was due to run out in March of this year but was renewed by DETI in January - even though it hadn't fulfilled the terms of the initial licence including not having obtained the relevant regulatory permissions.

Complaints to planning officials about breaches of the PDR conditions that have already happened, have been ignored. Indeed, a local newspaper published an email from one of the planning officials in Mid and East Antrim Council to Infrastrata asking how he should respond to objections from campaigners!

Without legislation, North and South, that clearly bans fracking, the potential environmental disaster at Woodburn would be just the start as it is clear that the planning process cannot be trusted to protect this part of our planet.