

# Socialist Worker

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# STRIKE BACK!

**C**ar insurance has shot up. House prices are beyond many people's reach. Rents are due to rise by another 25% in the next two years. Yet this government tells workers that they must not ask for a decent pay rise.

TDs will be awarded an extra €5,400 a year – but ordinary workers are told not to accept tiny increases that will be wiped out by price hikes.

Worse, this government is telling new entrants who join the public sector that they must take less pay than those who were recruited before 2011. It is a blatant case of discrimination.

The ASTI union is leading the fight to change this. They voted to take strike action to achieve a simple demand that every worker should support – equal pay for equal work.

They do not want to work for free any longer. During the economic crash, public sector workers were pressurised into working longer hours for no extra pay. The government used this to impose a recruitment ban and get rid of 35,000 jobs in the public sector.

But the financial emergency is over. Fine Gael politicians never stop talking about 'keep the recovery' going. Yet when it comes to workers, they say there should be no recovery in pay.



ASTI members are fighting for us all. They are following the lead of the LUAS workers the busworkers is standing up for their rights. They are showing that real trade unionism is coming

back and that it is payback time for workers. The media will spread terrible propaganda against teachers, guards and anyone else who dares fight back.

The government is also using emergency legislation to punish ASTI members by depriving them of incremental pay and denying young teachers who are on contract for more than two years a permanent job or 'a contract of indefinite duration'.

The use of the law to intimidate trade unionists is totally unacceptable.

Other trade unionists should not stand aside and let this continue. The days when the leaders of the INTO and TUI, and beyond them SIPTU and IMPACT, act as collaborators with a right wing government should end.

This is why People Before Profit has called on every trade unionist to

■ Support the ASTI pickets. If you are a TUI member, do not cross the pickets on your colleagues.

■ Call emergency conferences in other unions to bring forward the fight for equal pay for equal work.

■ Not wait until after 2018 to restore pay cuts. Strike back now.

For further coverage of the current industrial disputes see *Payback Time* p.2

## JOBSTOWN TRIAL:

# THE SHAMEFUL VERDICT

**T**he guilty verdict on the charge of 'false imprisonment' brought in by the judge against the 17 year old from Jobstown is an obvious injustice.

It is also a serious threat to all protest and resistance. Everyone with any decency, which clearly doesn't include Joan Burton, will be relieved that the young lad did not receive a prison sentence, but a dangerous precedent has been set.

From the point of view of the government and the State they have got the guilty verdict they wanted to be able to use against all the adult Jobstown defendants whose cases will come up in three further trials in April 2017, October and April 2018.

Paul Kiernan, 40, who describes himself as a 'political activist from Brookfield in Tallaght' is among those facing charges next October. He says of the verdict 'I was shocked, but not surprised. From the start I knew the State would push this all the way'.

'This country is run by dictators who have made sure all the wealth goes to the top. They are manipulating the law to protect themselves from mass protest. They are terrified their gravy train will come to a halt and their house



of cards will come crashing down'.

### Serious charges

Paul, who has no criminal convictions and has been active in his community for years, now faces serious charges which could carry a long prison sentence when all he did was react to being assaulted himself.

But this doesn't just affect the Jobstown defendants. Everyone who has ever protested or picketed or may protest or picket in the future could be affected by this if it is not resisted.

Slow marching an Irish Water truck, is that false

imprisonment? Blocking a scab lorry in a strike - is that kidnap? What about blocking the entrance to the Dáil?

This doesn't mean every protester and picket will be arrested.

We shouldn't be intimidated and they can't arrest us all. But this verdict does mean the establishment have a legal precedent up their sleeve for when they need it.

The whole legal system is organised in favour of the rich and powerful and against working class people who stick up for themselves.

As Mary Smith told the Rally for Jobstown, when she was summoned for jury

service in the case of crooked banker, Seanie Fitzpatrick, she was excluded from the jury.

Why? Because she had been 'affected by austerity' and was 'biased against bankers'.

So the jury was effectively being rigged in the banker's favour.

But we have an answer to this – feet on the street and people power.

We are many, they are few! They fear the people when the people mobilise. And this is what must happen in defence of Jobstown.

**AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL!**

IRELAND'S LARGEST LEFT WING CONFERENCE

# MARXISM

2016 THE LEFT ARRIVES

4TH-6TH NOVEMBER  
TEACHERS CLUB, DUBLIN  
36 PARNELL SQUARE WEST

## Marxism Festival – Book Now!

In the context of economic instability, ecological catastrophe and progressive marginalisation of generations of Irish people, something is beginning to stir across Ireland, and globally. The mass movements we have seen against water charges and for women's rights, and the election of socialist TD's and MLA's have acted as a lightning rod for discontent. The Left has arrived, and with it comes a new thirst for socialist politics.

With socialist ideas back on the agenda, Marxism 2016 looks set to be the biggest in years. With topics such as 'Racism and Resistance in the 21st Century' and 'When Governments Lie: The Fight For Truth and Justice', the conference will not only present socialist interpretations of today's political landscapes, but also host lively debates about how best to fight back against the politics of capitalism in today's society. Running from 4th-6th November, with internationally acclaimed speakers, and some of the best orators in their fields, Marxism 2016 is one not to be missed!

See the full time table at <https://www.facebook.com/MarxismFestival/>

Tickets: waged €12/£10 unwaged €6/£5

To book go to: Eventbrite: Marxism Dublin or contact 0867400963 (South) or 07572540489 (North).

# Payback time for workers

## Support the ASTI Strike - equal pay for equal work everywhere.

Owen McCormack

**A**fter years of accepting austerity, recent months have shown that Ireland's workers are waking up and ready to fight.

From teachers to transport workers to nurses, rumblings of discontent are escalating into a major fight against Government imposed pay restraint and attempts to continue with a policy that means low pay, unequal conditions and continuous demands for productivity.

While the Government policy is under threat with more and more groups demanding an end to Femp (Financial Emergency measures) legislation, the strike of the teachers' union ASTI is the most important industrial battle we have seen in many years.

ASTI have balloted to reject the productivity measures of the



ASTI and TUI - unite the struggles!

Lansdowne Road agreement that forced all public sector worker to, among other things, effectively work many hours for free.

But because they are now outside of the restraints of that deal, they have also voted to strike against the pay and conditions of newly qualified teachers.

All across the public service thousands of newly recruited workers have suffered dramatic cuts in

pay and conditions.

Workers doing the exact same job have huge differences in pay because of the deals previously agreed and because of Government imposed cuts in starting salaries.

For some, the difference can add up to several hundred thousand euros during a career.

### Important

This is why the ASTI strike is



so important.

By a margin of 80%, secondary school teachers, the majority of whom are unaffected directly by these cuts, voted to strike in solidarity with their newer colleagues.

The ASTI stance is in stark contrast to the leadership of other unions who have quietly gone along with the Government policy that saw their new members badly discriminated against.

Other teacher unions have also accepted recent marginal improvements based on their acceptance of the overall deal.

But signs are their members are beginning to revolt and demand they take a similar stand to ASTI.

The ASTI fight is also piling pressure on other non-teaching unions to take a stronger stand.

SIPTU officials and the nurses union INMO have also begun talk-

ing about the problems with Femp legislation and the continuation of cuts and productivity that affect their members.

This is why the ASTI strike is so important.

The signs are the Government will try to isolate and smash them to keep the pay deals intact.

They are trying to recruit parents to scab and keep schools open during the strike and are looking for ways to cajole other teachers unions into doing ASTI members work.

Workers in all unions should support this strike.

Invite ASTI members to your branch to discuss the issues and send messages of support to the union.

People Before Profit branches will be organising public meetings in support of the teachers' demands for equal pay and to counter any media and Government attack.

## Busworkers accept 11.25% pay rise.

**A**fter a series of one and two day strikes bus workers accepted a much improved pay offer that sees them get over 11% in pay increases between 2016 and 2018.

The deal means bus workers' pay will increase by 7.5% by Jan 1<sup>st</sup> next year.

It is significantly more than the Government or the company

offered initially or said they were prepared to pay.

The deal came after workers announced a new series of one and two day strikes for October and November that would have meant no buses in the city for over three days per week.

Despite the tough talk of ministers it was clear the bus strike and its general support among many

workers rattled them and threatened to unravel their general pay plans.

The willingness of bus workers to step up the action and pending strikes on the Rail and in Bus Eireann seems to have moved the Government and company position.

However the deal was not universally accepted, with 43% of SIPTU bus drivers rejecting it

over concerns at unexplained productivity clauses and the dropping of an outstanding claim for 5% dating back to 2008.

Never the less, despite this understandable frustration of many drivers the outcome must be seen as a victory that will give confidence to other groups and show that striking and a willingness to fight can get results.



Bus workers won 11.25%

# No to Private Housing on Public Land

People Before Profit Dublin City Councillor, **Tina MacVeigh**, reports on how the City Council is misusing public land for private profit.

**T**wo years ago a proposal was put to the members of the Dublin City Council Housing Policy Committee.

A number of large sites, vacant, owned by the Council were to be developed for housing.

Management were asking for approval from the Councillors to seek 'Expressions of Interest'.

The reason, they said, was that they wanted to get a sense of who would be interested in developing these sites.

A number of us immediately responded to this proposal suggesting that the Council should develop these lands for council housing.

An obvious counter proposal considering the extent of the housing and homelessness crisis, which we all know has only deepened in the two years since.

Despite opposition, it was agreed that:

a) This was just a feeling exercise, see what's out there, see what comes back;



Cllr Tina MacVeigh (far right) on Right2Housing protest.

b) Nothing would proceed without the full knowledge and consent of the Council;

c) Council Management would prepare a plan for how the Council itself could develop the site;

d) Councillors would have a say in how plans for the sites

developed.

### Later

Some time later, at another Housing Policy Committee we were presented with a document, 'Housing Land Initiative', in which vague plans were put forward for the development of the sites in

question - essentially to sell to private developers who would provide the requisite 10% council housing.

We immediately asked of the request that was made of management to prepare a plan for how the Council could develop these lands. We were given the brush off.

We asked who had expressed interest. We were brushed off again.

We asked what role we would play in shaping this 'Housing Land Initiative' plan. Another brush off.

We put down motions, we asked council questions in an attempt to find out who they were talking to. Nothing. It was commercially sensitive.

We also got wind at the time that one of the larger Approved Housing Bodies had put a proposal in to the Council which would see them developing only 10% of the site for private housing, while still retaining ownership of the land.

They were being ignored.

We have continued to try and get answers from the Management, we have put in FOI requests and got the same response: can't give you the information as it is commercially sensitive!

Disgracefully, a motion was tabled by Sinn Fein calling for 30% of the housing on the site to be ring-fenced as council housing.

We argued that only public housing should be built on public land.

Their argument? That in an ideal world of course we could do that, but we needed to be 'practical'.

This was all we were likely to get.

So what Sinn Fein have done is essentially rubber stamp Council Management's plans for wholesale privatization of public land.

In doing so they are also shaping the future of the city's public housing policy as there could be no public land left to build public housing on.

All in the name of being practical.

Practical? James Connolly described it as selling out.

Those who call for "practical" policies, those who work within the system and are essentially happy to manage capitalism are precisely the ones incapable of making any real change.

Change will come from those who take a radical position, like People Before Profit does.

And most importantly, from those who have principles and who stick to them.

We will continue to work in the Council and with our communities to demand access to public housing for all.

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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 we 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  
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**SWP**

# Abortion – the Arguments

"Abortion" is a word surrounded with stigma and shame, and it's time to change that. We need open factual discussions about abortion; we owe it to every Irish woman denied control over her own reproductive rights. Irish women have abortions; last year 1,017 abortion pills were seized by customs and 3,451 Irish women procured abortions in the UK. Why does Ireland continue to stick its head in the sand? The majority of Irish people want to repeal the 8<sup>th</sup> Amendment which equates the rights of a woman with those of the foetus dependent upon her for survival. Irish women have died because of the 8<sup>th</sup> Amendment.

Linda Kehoe

## Why should we legalise abortion?

Abortion is illegal in Ireland - North and South- yet it is not illegal to travel abroad to get one.

Some women cannot leave Ireland, meaning abortion is accessible only for those with the right and the mobility to travel.

Furthermore the €1000 cost of the trip to the UK for an abortion is too high for many Irish families.

Medically a woman should have a check-up 24 hours after an abortion, but the cost of an extra night in the UK means many women skip this to their own detriment.

Aside from financial cost, they have responsibilities waiting at home. While we ignore and export the issue, they suffer; women should not have to leave Ireland for medical treatment.

## Is it dangerous?

Physical health complications with legal, safe abortions are very rare.

Pregnancy itself is more dangerous; 300,000 women die from pregnancy or delivery-related complications every year worldwide. 14.5% of these 300,000 deaths are due to "backstreet" abortions and could be avoided. S

igmatising women who have had abortions affects their mental health and significantly increases depression.

As with most difficult decisions, it helps to be able to openly talk about it.

## Accessibility?

Abortion, as a personal, medical choice, should be available to any woman who asks for one, without judgment.

The consent of the partner will not be required, nor of the parent in the case of pregnant minors- no one should ever be forced to remain pregnant to comply with parental wishes.

## Concern over late-term abortions?

When abortions are carried out late in



pregnancy it tends to be because of risk to the woman's life or diagnosis of a Fatal Foetal Abnormality.

The vast majority of abortions are carried out in the first 12 weeks.

Abortion pills can be used safely up to 10 weeks; in Sweden 62% of abortions are home abortions using these pills.

66% of UK abortions are at 6-9 weeks, but Irish women get them later than this because they have to make travel and other arrangements. Ready access to safe, legal abortions means fewer late-term abortions.

## Using abortion as a contraceptive?

When people have access to proper sex education and when contraception is widely-available fewer abortions are carried out.

Abortion is equally accessible in Belgium and Russia, yet the abortion rate is much higher in Russia where contraception is expensive and more difficult to obtain.

In developed countries the annual number of abortions dropped from 12m in 1990-94 to 7m a year in 2010-14.

Contraceptives are not 100% effective, and most women who procure abortions in developed countries had been using contraceptives which failed.

The idea that women just don't bother with contraception and use abortion instead is an anti-choice myth.

## Should we allow abortion of fetuses with disabilities

Reiterating the above "Abortion, as a personal, medical choice, should be available to any woman who asks for one, without judgement."

Evidence shows that abortion because of disability is rare.

Only 1% of abortions in the UK were carried out because of disability.

Women should be provided with the relevant information about the condition/disability and trusted to make their own, educated, decision.

If a woman feels unable to raise a child with a disability that is her personal choice.

## Will they regret it?

In 2010 research showed that 87% of Irish women who had an abortion said it was the right decision for them and another recent study supports these findings.

Women "overwhelmingly expressed gratitude and relief" at being able to take the abortion pill.

A tiny minority of women do regret it but their regret is not reason enough to

prevent others from making their own decision.

## Is it "wrong"?

Anti-choice campaigns draw our focus away from the rights of women and proclaim that abortion is "murder of a baby". This is sensationalist and designed to provoke feelings of disgust.

A foetus is not a baby. Before 6 weeks there is no heartbeat, before 14 weeks there is no brain activity, before 23 weeks a foetus cannot survive outside of the womb (at 28 weeks there is an 80% survival rate).

A foetus does not have a life of its own and depends entirely upon the life of the woman. The law cannot force someone to donate an organ to a dying child, yet it can force a woman to carry a foetus against her will.

Ask yourself if this is contradictory. Some believe life begins at conception, some at birth and others somewhere in-between, indeed once common was the belief that "ensoulment" began at 40 days for male foetuses and 90 days for females; note the blatant sexism!

In 1591, Pope Gregory XIV determined it took place at 166 days of pregnancy, almost 24 weeks!

## What about the Citizen's Assembly?

The Citizen's Assembly is a device by the government to play for time. They hope to be able, through the judge and 'experts', to influence and control its findings, maybe coming up with an 'amendment to the amendment'.

This is not good enough. Because of our Abortion laws the EU, UN, Amnesty and others have lambasted Ireland as cruel, inhuman and degrading to women.

We can't keep ignoring this! Nobody born in the past 50 years has voted on the issue- a referendum is long overdue!

The Citizen's Assembly is keeping the discussion out of the public forum, and the decision out of our hands.

Control over reproductive rights is crucial for women's economic and social independence.

It's time for change. Repeal the 8<sup>th</sup>!

## PEOPLE POWER SHOWS THE WAY IN POLAND

Emma Hendrick

Poland has restrictive laws regarding abortion. Highly influenced by the Catholic Church abortion is only allowed in cases of rape, incest, disability of the foetus and a risk to the health of the mother.

Even with such restrictive laws, a termination can still be refused under these circumstances.

In Poland medical personal can invoke a conscience clause and refuse to carry out a termination for religious or moral reasons.

Under the existing law there is no punishment for women accessing an abortion outside of these terms, but fewer than 2000 legal abortions take place each year. However women's groups estimate a further 100,000 to 150,000 take place illegally or outside the country.

Earlier this year a citizen's initiative called 'Stop Abortion' set out to restrict the law in Poland even further. It was supported by a Christian think-tank Ordo Juris that gathered 450,000 signatures in a country of 38 million.

This ban would have included criminalising miscarriage in "suspicious" circumstances for both the pregnant woman and anybody assisting her.

It would also have led to the prevention of pre natal testing and seen women and doctors jailed for up to five years for accessing or assisting with abortions.

The conservative Law and Justice Party (PiS), which has a majority in parliament, was a strong supporter of



Polish women's protest, Black Monday, 3 October.

the proposal. PiS is closely affiliated with the Catholic Church and are equally vocal in their criticism of homosexuality, their opposition to same-sex marriage and IVF. PiS have even introduced the concept of "family mainstreaming" as central to their policy making.

This is used by conservatives in government to strengthen "traditional" values and nationalist ideals that emphasise the rights of the family over

those of individuals and minorities

## Street Protests

Black Monday October 3<sup>rd</sup> was the pro-choice response. Thousands of women across Poland dressed in black and took to the streets to protest against the proposed abortion ban.

They marched in black as a sign of mourning for their reproductive rights and the future death of women due to an abortion ban.

The protests took place in over 60 cities. Theatres and museums across the country were closed, whilst universities in Warsaw closed departments and cancelled lectures as students boycotted school and college.

Women held signs that said "a government is not like a pregnancy it can be terminated" as they chanted outside government offices that they wanted doctors not missionaries.

Solidarity protests took place across

Europe in Dublin, London, Paris, Brussels and Berlin. PiS had underestimated the level of anger provoked by the legislation and the capacity of the campaign to organise and mobilise so many women.

This show of people power on the streets led to the Polish parliament rejecting the bill outright by 352 votes to 58.

The fight for reproductive rights is by no means over, with new citizen initiatives already being submitted to parliament by the Polish Federation of Movements for the Defence of Life.

Meanwhile, Jaroslaw Kaczynski the leader of PiS has said his politicians will continue to promote legislation to tighten the countries anti-abortion laws.

In a recent interview Kaczynski said "we will strive to ensure that even in pregnancies which are very difficult, when a child is sure to die or strongly deformed, women end up giving birth so that the child can be baptised, buried, and have a name."

This is the barbarity that women still have to put up with but the lessons from Poland are clear – people power forced the government to roll back on their proposed abortion ban. Poland allowed abortion in extremely limited circumstances with attached conditions because of this is was easy to propose laws to start to reverse this.

We in Ireland must continue to fight for full access to free safe and legal abortion without restrictions and we must continue to take to the streets in order to achieve this.

# #socialism 1.01

John Moynaux

## Will the centre hold?

In his speech on the Budget Paschal Donoghue said that it was 'the job of those in the middle ground of Irish politics to show that things won't just fall apart, the centre can hold.'

In the same vein Fianna Fáil's Michael McGrath said how 'vital it is that the centre holds'.

Apart from the reference to W.B. Yeats' poem 'The Second Coming' our two politicians of the 'centre' are also resting on the familiar notions that 'moderates' are always the good guys and that the truth always lies some where between the extremes.

The merest glance at history shows how shallow this conception is. Was it right to be moderately or extremely opposed to Hitler? Was the right position on slavery in the US midway between the extremes of spreading it across the country to the west coast (the aim of the South) and abolishing it altogether i.e.

concrete situation. What Donoghue and McGrath call the centre is in fact the establishment – the two political parties who, with the occasional assistance of Labour, have always ruled this State.

And it is pretty much the same everywhere. Who are the centre in Britain? Blair and Brown and Cameron and May – right wing Labour and mainstream Tories. In France: Hollande and Sarkozy. In Germany: Merkel and the German Social Democrats. In the US it is Clinton, Obama and George Bush.

In every case it means politicians committed to maintaining the status quo, to free market capitalism and to defending the interests of the corporations and the rich.

This should not surprise us: they are all politicians who, in their different countries, operate hand-in-glove with "the 1%" – the ruling class who own

due to a) its failure to make the system work even 'moderately' well and b) its insistence that the failure of the system should be paid for by ordinary working people. Hence Trump and Sanders, UKIP and Corbyn, Podemos and Golden Dawn, and of course the AAA and PBP in Ireland.

Actually whether or not the centre will hold depends very little on the efforts of the likes of Paschal Donoghue or Michael McGrath and overwhelmingly on much bigger factors. First and foremost how is the system, capitalism, going to fare and not just in Ireland but globally?

The signs are that it is going to fare badly. There is a long run decline in rate of profit, a pending banking crisis in China, the Deutsche Bank in trouble in Germany and the Eurozone economy flat lining with difficulties on the way from Brexit.

If, as is possible, there is another global recession in the next



Centre holders

allowing it to continue indefinitely within the Confederacy?

Or on women's suffrage; is the right position neither no votes for women or votes for all women or the middle position of votes for women over 30? (This unequal and undemocratic compromise was actually maintained in Britain between 1918 and 1928).

And if we applied this rule of the golden mean to Irish history there would, of course, have been no Easter Rising and no Independent Ireland only limited 'home rule' under the Empire, courtesy of the 'moderate' John Redmond.

### Establishment

But if 'the centre is always right' is stupid as some general principle what does it mean in this

and control the bulk of the world's wealth. And being the ruling class they get to define, with the aid of the media, which they also control, what counts as 'the centre' and who the 'extremists' are.

Consequently if there is a conflict in Mongolia about which you know nothing but you hear on RTE or BBC that Faction A are 'moderates' and Faction B are 'extremists' you know immediately that our rulers and almost certainly America's too, favour Faction A.

### Worried

But CAN this establishment 'centre' hold? They are right to be worried because from New York to Athens, from Dublin to Barcelona, the establishment has been coming under increasing pressure from both left and right

year or so, the pressure on 'the centre', in Ireland and everywhere else, will increase enormously and it is most unlikely to be able to 'hold'.

Inevitably, they, the centre, will become more 'extreme' in their imposition of austerity and this will provoke working class resistance.

Much, in a sense everything, depends on the fate of that resistance. If it is defeated or held down by the centre/establishment this increases the danger that people's anger will be deflected into Trump-like or fascist channels.

If you can't beat the system maybe you can take it out on the vulnerable.

This is why building the resistance and a real left is so absolutely vital in the present situation.

# Aleppo, Mo imperialist c



The destruction of Yemen

Memet Uludag

It was the very early hours of a hot August morning in Turkey when I said goodbye to Zeinah, Samir and their three children as they were getting ready for their final push for Europe, the crossing to the Greek island whose light five miles away could be seen from the Turkish coast.

As the tourist town's night clubs were getting ready to close, the Syrian family whom I had met a few days ago were making their final preparations to board the boat that would take them to Europe. Zeinah's last words to me were, "This journey breaks our hearts. We fear what might be ahead of us but the horrors we left behind gave us no choice. Pray for us. We will return some day".

On the way to the harbour to catch my boat that would take me as a tourist to the very same island, I walked by luxury yachts berthed along the concrete water front. The minarets of the mosques started the morning call to prayer, and I did say a prayer for the family, something

I remembered from an anti-war rally back in Dublin: "War and occupation will never bring liberation. That's bullshit! Come off it. This war is for profit". Not knowing any Muslim prayers, somehow it felt cheesy to whisper a slogan. I heard myself saying "Selamün aleyküm" in other words "Peace be upon you".

But there was no peace to be upon us. As my ferry was getting ready to depart, a coast guard boat, towing a semi-deflated dinghy, brought in tens of refugees; all wet, many of them children. Among the passengers were five body bags, two of them no bigger than child size.

It wasn't the group Zeinah and her family were in.

Contrary to my plan I didn't see them on the Greek island. Who knows? Selamün aleyküm...

### Millions

Zeinah and her family were just a few of the millions who found themselves running away from war, bombs and ever harsher conditions in their homeland. In

the beginning, like many refugees, they were hopeful that the uprising in Syria would bring a new, a better life; but it failed. Instead Syrian skies were filled with US, British, Russian, French war planes and the cities were bombed by Assad's army, jihadist groups and sectarian forces supported by various regional powers. Collectively they killed tens of thousands of people and choked the revolution in Syria that Zeinah had so much hoped for.

ISIS had emerged from the destruction of Iraq by the US led war in 2003. The situation in Syria gave them an opportunity to establish themselves as a reactionary sectarian force. Today, ISIS has become a perfect excuse for the US, the Russians, other Western and regional powers such as Turkey, Saudi and Iran, to intervene in Syria and bomb it from the air and the ground. Assad and Russian bombing of Aleppo is just another example of this horror inflicted on the people of Syria, using "terrorism" as an excuse to drop bombs on an already devastated city.

There is a very messy situation in Syria

# Fianna Fáil and water charges

James O'Toole

One day you open the papers and Fianna Fáil are against water charges- the next day they are for the charges and for pursuing people for unpaid bills. Fianna Fáil are playing a game of propping up the Fine Gael government while trying to play at being an 'opposition'.

5 January 2016 Fianna Fáil Environment Spokesperson Barry Cowen says his party plans to suspend water charges yet on 16th January in his Ard

Fheis speech, Micheál Martin says: "We will scrap Irish Water, and the failed, loss-making charge which funds it"

On 5th February in a Fianna Fáil election campaign video, Waterford candidate (and now TD) Mary Butler makes the commitment "We will scrap Irish Water and the loss-making charge that funds it".

The Fianna Fáil election manifesto launched on 11 February 2016 committed to abolishing water charges and Irish Water.

There was no reference to suspension, reintroduction, a timeline or time

limit—However the exact same day, Micheál Martin promoted a policy of suspension: "We will...abolish Irish Water and scrap water charges for the next five years."

On 17 February Micheál Martin appears on RTE's Six One News where he says his party's policy is abolition yet only two days later, on RTE Radio One's Today with Seán O'Rourke, he says Fianna Fáil would suspend water charges for five years, and then reintroduce them.

In March and during April, statements by Fianna Fáil focus on

# Mosul, Yemen: Destruction



The destruction of Aleppo

with different groups fighting with each other but we should remember that these groups are also supported and armed by rival imperialist and regional powers for their own interest in the region. But these are not just simply puppets of imperialism. They have their own interests and agenda, sometimes coming in direct conflict with the interests of the imperialists. Imperialists, be it the US led powers or the Russians, have no total control of the situation. That is the reason why we have seen an ever-changing situation in Syria with various alliances formed and broken in the past five years as the war continued to escalate.

## Invasion

The invasion of Iraq in 2003 destroyed the country and fuelled the sectarian divide. Iraqi governments supported by the US and the West have brutally repressed various rallies by fragilely united sections of the society against economic conditions and the ongoing presence of foreign forces. The crushing of these attempts has given rise to further desperation and deeper sectarian

division. This very sectarian divide is then used as an excuse for further interventions.

Today, as we are told that "Mosul is being liberated", the real danger is the total destruction of the city and the fighting between rival local forces. Already, thousands of people are trapped between ISIS and US-Iraqi led forces bombing Mosul. Another wave of displaced people has already begun.

Then there is the war in Yemen, waged by 10 countries led by the Saudis. Recently the US has also taken part in bombing Yemen. Disturbed by the Iranian supported Houthis control of the country, the Saudis are keen to bomb the country for as long as it takes to have their say in Yemen's future. During the Arab Spring, the Saudi kingdom played a crucial role in quashing the peaceful Yemeni uprisings. Currently, as millions of people are being displaced, facing starvation and death, the country is sinking into further chaos.

## Desperate

The conditions for the people of Iraq, Syria and Yemen are desperate.

Being attacked by all sides,

ordinary people who rose up during Arab Spring have little opportunity immediately to change their conditions but every bombing campaign, every foreign intervention, further reduces their chances of freeing themselves from dictatorial regimes and sectarian forces.

But, as the Arab Spring showed, no country is isolated from the rest.

Despite the defeat of the Arab Spring revolutions, people will rise up again.

Even in Iraq, various groups still try to come together to protest against not just the war but also against austerity and lack of democracy.

Arab revolutions re-emerging in Egypt and other places are the key for people's freedom in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and other countries.

But, will it happen? It took Western imperialism more than 13 years to destroy Iraq. Yes, given the chance, people will rise up against the dictators, the sectarian forces and the imperialist powers.

And Zeinah will return home...

## Water: the record

a position of favouring a five-year suspension.

When Fianna Fáil's submission to the expert commission on water services was leaked to the media the party was found proposing the permanent abolition (not suspension) of water charges, and the retention of Irish Water.

## Making sense

How are we to make sense of these twists and turns?

We have to understand that Fianna Fáil are a Tory Party but with a peculiar history- their radical reputation after

the Civil War meant they could use nationalist rhetoric and the promise of economic advance to secure a working class base- everytime the economy was bad they blamed the 'Brits'; anytime it was good they claimed it was because of Fianna Fáil.

This meant that although Fianna Fáil are a party of the 1% they are experts at winning over ordinary people- they talk out of both sides of their mouths.

In the last few years this strategy has broken down as more and more people turn away from the establishment parties.

Fianna Fáil realise how popular the

water movement is and faced with mass protests and a mass boycott of 73% they feel they have to relate to that movement to rebuild their base.

But if Fianna Fáil manage to build a working class base they only do so to blind that base to their real agenda-serving the developers and bankers.

After all it was Fianna Fáil who bailed out the banks and who first came up with water charges.

We need to expose them at every turn explaining to other workers that these people are not our friends but silver tongued enemies of working people.



**Eamonn McCann asks**

## Who is Hillary Clinton?

Hillary Clinton isn't so much the lesser of two evils as the evil of two lesser. Neither she nor Trump nor the two of them together would capture the imagination of a semi-aware audience.

This is not to sneer at Americans. There is no reason to believe they are any more ignorant of the nuances of electoral politics than, say, the Irish. Despite the bumbling betrayals, cowardice and monumental incompetence of Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, according to the polls, they still command majority support. So a little less laughing at Americans, please.

Street in return for bungs from bankers and hedge-fund hooligans, her kill-crazy approach to America's wars, and attacks on the victims of sexual assault by people she approves of.

Her true self came through in her grinning response to Gadaffi being sodomised with a bayonet at the side of a road and then beaten and knifed to death. Whatever anyone thinks of Gadaffi, this was a war crime, brazenly televised for all to see.

## Clapping

Clapping her hands and laughing for the cameras, Clinton chortled, "We came, we saw, he died." Interesting



Clinton with Goldman Sachs boss, Lloyd Blankfein.

In the US, the most common observation on the presidential campaign is that each of the front-runners is heartily hated by a majority of the people, Clinton as a liar and a greed-fuelled fraud, Trump as a toxic clown.

## Bill

Clinton is hugely popular in the Republic and in Nationalist areas of the North. Her husband, pudgy sax-abuser Bill, convincingly accused of groping and rape, is credited with a crucial role in the "peace process."

Clinton herself has repeatedly lied about her own role. Campaigning against Obama in 2008, she claimed at every stop on the campaign trail that during a visit to Belfast she had brought together Catholic and Protestant women had never previously spoken to one another. Against all the odds, she had pointed the way to a non-sectarian future.

The yarn was false from start to finish. The women concerned were part of the same cross-community group, had been working together for years.

The gathering Clinton was referring to was a regular meeting of the group to which Clinton had invited herself.

The most significant fact about this episode was that, far from denouncing her for using the "peace process" for personal political advantage, Nationalist parties fell over one another to insist that she had merely misremembered. Self-evident balderdash. But not a single mainstream newspaper or commentator in Ireland called attention to her contemptible behaviour.

She has been and will be "good for Ireland" is all the excuse they offer, as if this outweighed her obeisance to Wall

phraseology. At the time, the Obama administration was vehemently denying that American troops had set foot in Libya.

Odd that the Provos who had eagerly grabbed all the guns that Gadaffi would give them, didn't have a word to say about this. Or maybe not so odd.

On the eve of the Arab Spring, Clinton described Egyptian dictator and torturer Hosni Mubarak as "a family friend." For once she was telling the truth.

A Right-wing neo-liberal war-monger in hock to the one percent, she's has largely gotten away with, partly because there is no party to her left with a chance of winning and breaking the dominance of the Republican-Democrat duopoly. A vote for the Green Party's Jill Stein, they say, would really be a vote for Trump. That's her strongest card.

The other main factor is the betrayals of "alternative" parties and their delivery of votes to candidates they had previously vigorously attacked.

Bernie Sanders is now out on the stump appealing to his supporters to back Clinton.

Clinton will get money out of politics, he says by way of excuse, either the stupidest remark in US politics since the last time Trump opened his mouth or, alternatively, a deliberate untruth.

The underlying truth is that if you don't break definitively with capitalism, you'll end up in the camp of whichever capitalist gang seems the least offensive. Thus is the system sustained. If she wins, working class people will continue to bear the brunt of the capitalist crisis, while US wars around the world are likely to escalate. This is not a reason to vote for Trump. But it's a reason not to vote for Clinton.

# The Cruelty of Direct Provision



Mosney Direct Provision Centre

**Stacey Wren, a student at Trinity and member of United Against Racism, recently visited the Direct Provision centre at Mosney. This is her report.**

I went to Mosney to visit 'Naomi'. I cannot give her real name, the Direct Provision (DP) centre in Mosney has a habit of starving people who dare to question their methods, which was made clear when a young mother was banned from the canteen for asking for more food for her two children.

Naomi is 20 and has been in the DP system for five years now.

She cannot get a grant for Third Level till her application is accepted. Her application is 'pending'.

The duration of this process is but one of many problems with the DP system in this country, many of which I encountered during my recent visit.

My journey to the centre began with being dropped at the side of a road in heavy rain, I walked down the road passing mansion after mansion for about twenty minutes before I reached the centre. I was reminded how wide the gap between the haves and the have-nots is in this country.

At the end of the driveway lay a field of caravans meticulously lined up.

They were caged in by a high metal fence with a security desk checking everyone who came and went.

When I signed in I wasn't asked who I was visiting, I was told to give the apartment number.

The message was I was not visiting a person but a storage unit.

After the manager took Naomi's mother to the side to announce the staff would meet with the residents in half an hour, I told her that I was feeling uncomfortable - like I was being watched. She whispered, "You are."

## Injustice

Naomi was waiting for us in the sitting room, which consisted of a square foot for walking space, a couch, and an armchair.

When I first saw her I assumed she was younger than me with her small frame, but the system appears to keep one young by restricting the nutrition in the diet.

In the interview the injustice of the system is laid bare.

She sat her Leaving Cert in Killarney

two years ago. For these two years she has been continuously accepted into courses ranging from Process and Chemical Engineering in UCC to Computer Applications in DCU.

However, with her application still pending she cannot access third level without paying Non-EU fees, an impossibility.

When Naomi and her mother arrived in Mosney two years ago it was called the best centre in Ireland.

The residents' committee believes otherwise. The centre has recently taken on new management, the children of multi-millionaire owner, Phelim McCloskey. Naomi says they are very arrogant and enter people's accommodation without consent.

One of Naomi's ways to pass the time is to go to the library in Drogheda, but the last bus is back for 4.30pm, and only runs three times a day. There is no choice but to spend time wandering aimlessly around the lot.

I went with Naomi to the launderette. It's like an abandoned warehouse with wash-

ing machines on top of each other. She led me to a machine with a blue post-it note on it.

Again there was no name, just the apartment number with two times on it, 9.30am and 12.30pm, her allotted time.

Everything is timed in Mosney. They make no effort to hide the fact that it is nearer to a prison than the holiday destination it used to be.

She poured the cup of Lidl detergent into the machine, all they are given to clean their clothes. It's common for young children in DP to develop rashes and eczema as there are only 40 washing machines for over 600 people.

## Prohibited

A woman in a blue apron crept up behind us as I discreetly took photos — all forms of media are prohibited on the premises — and proceeded to instruct Naomi on how to use a washing machine. This is a girl that found Higher Level Maths an easy subject!

Naomi's mother joined us. She had

returned from witnessing management refuse entry to three visitors who were known anti-racism activists.

The owner, McCloskey, was there and he was shaken. In an attempt to appeal to him she said "We are your customers, and you are treating us badly." His cynical reply, "I know, and I don't want to lose this business".

Phelim McCloskey currently has a net-worth of €46 million, and has received over €101 million in support from the government



■ *United Against Racism is organizing a public rally on Saturday, 12 November, 13:30 at The Spire, Dublin as part of its campaign to End the Direct Provision System*

## Something rotten in the state of Ireland

Dave O'Farrell explores the contradictions in the Irish state.

The state in capitalist society is not some neutral entity for resolving conflict in society.

It represents the interests of the ruling class, the capitalists, the bankers, the speculators - the 1%. The state is not some abstract entity but is made up of a large number of different parts including the government, parliament, the civil service, the courts, the police, the army and any number of state or even semi state agencies - all with their own various responsibilities and roles.

Most of the time these different elements work with common purpose but from time to time the various arms of the state can find themselves in conflict with each other. At the moment the Irish state is witnessing many such conflicts.

There are the usual troubles of coalition fighting, but also some much more serious disputes involving NAMA and the Gardaí.

Given the weak nature of the government and the vulnerability of the Irish economy to any shocks in the global economy these conflicts have the potential to destabilise the state.

### Nama v C&AG

The Project Eagle sell off of NAMAs



Conflicts in the State

northern portfolio - swimming in allegations of corruption - has seen the states 'bad bank', backed by the Department of Finance, come into conflict with the states spending watchdog, the Comptroller and Auditor General. The recent report which suggests the state lost millions on the sale has heaped fresh attention on not just the dirty dealings

of the Project Eagle sale but on NAMA itself.

While NAMA, the Department of Finance and the Comptroller and Auditor General argue over sale prices and discount rates more questions are being asked of what exactly is NAMA's role. Why is it that many of the bankrupt developers whose loans NAMA took from the

banks were not just paid to manage their own failed investments but have now reappeared fronting up developments on behalf of major international property funds?

### The Gardaí

The Gardaí are facing conflict from many directions. The ongoing saga of corruption in An Garda Síochána and the management orchestrated discrimination against whistleblowers has already resulted in the departure of a Minister for Justice and a Garda Commissioner and the revelations continue on a regular basis.

The Gardaí have found themselves in conflict with the Ombudsman, who has repeatedly complained of the lack of cooperation from the Gardaí, and also the newly formed Policing Authority.

These conflicts are complicated by the fact that the Gardaí have voted to take industrial action over pay — despite a legal ban on such action. As in all public pay disputes the government are worried that restoring pay to one group will open the flood gates for pay claims from other public sector workers.

### How socialists respond

Whenever the state finds itself in such difficulties we must look for ways to turn them to our advantage. While not having any illusions in the various arms of the

state we should aim to use the conflicts where we can.

In the case of NAMA their defence of Project Eagle, behind all the technicalities, lies on claiming that this is just how business is done 'in the real world'. While the Comptroller and Auditor General's report shows this has clearly failed on their own terms we should use the report as a starting point to question NAMA's entire reason for existence.

With the Gardaí we have a golden opportunity to use the corruption coming to light to underline the role played by the Gardaí in society but also the threat of industrial action over pay can serve to put pressure on the government for wider public sector pay restoration. Coming hot on the heels of the Dublin Bus dispute and with ASTI teachers set to follow suite, public sector pay is going to be a serious issue for the state.

The disorganisation of the state also leaves the government — particularly in its current weak form — open to pressure on other fronts. It is worth remembering that the referendum to insert the 8<sup>th</sup> amendment into the constitution in 1983 only came about against the backdrop of three general elections in 18 months. When governments feel weak they are more amenable to external pressure. We should take advantage of this and push hard to remove it.

# Taking a knee – an inspirational protest

Becca Bor

This autumn the protests for black lives in the US continued in an inspiring way: it took a knee. Colin Kaepernick, the backup quarterback for the San Francisco 49ers American Football team, sat down during the National Anthem at the beginning of a preseason game.

In a post-game interview, he explained “I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of colour. To me, this is bigger than football and it would be selfish on my part to look the other way. “There are bodies in the street and people getting paid leave and getting away with murder.”

There was immediate backlash from the right-wing.

Talk radio, politicians, NFL coaches and pundits went after Kaepernick for being un-American, disrespectful and that sports players should not be political.

Yet, on opening day of the NFL season, on September 11 no less, a number of players around the league took a knee or raised their fist during the National Anthem in solidarity with Kaepernick's protest and with the black lives matter movement.

It is particularly significant that this protest emerged from the NFL, which is a sport practically synonymous with US war.

## Fighter jets

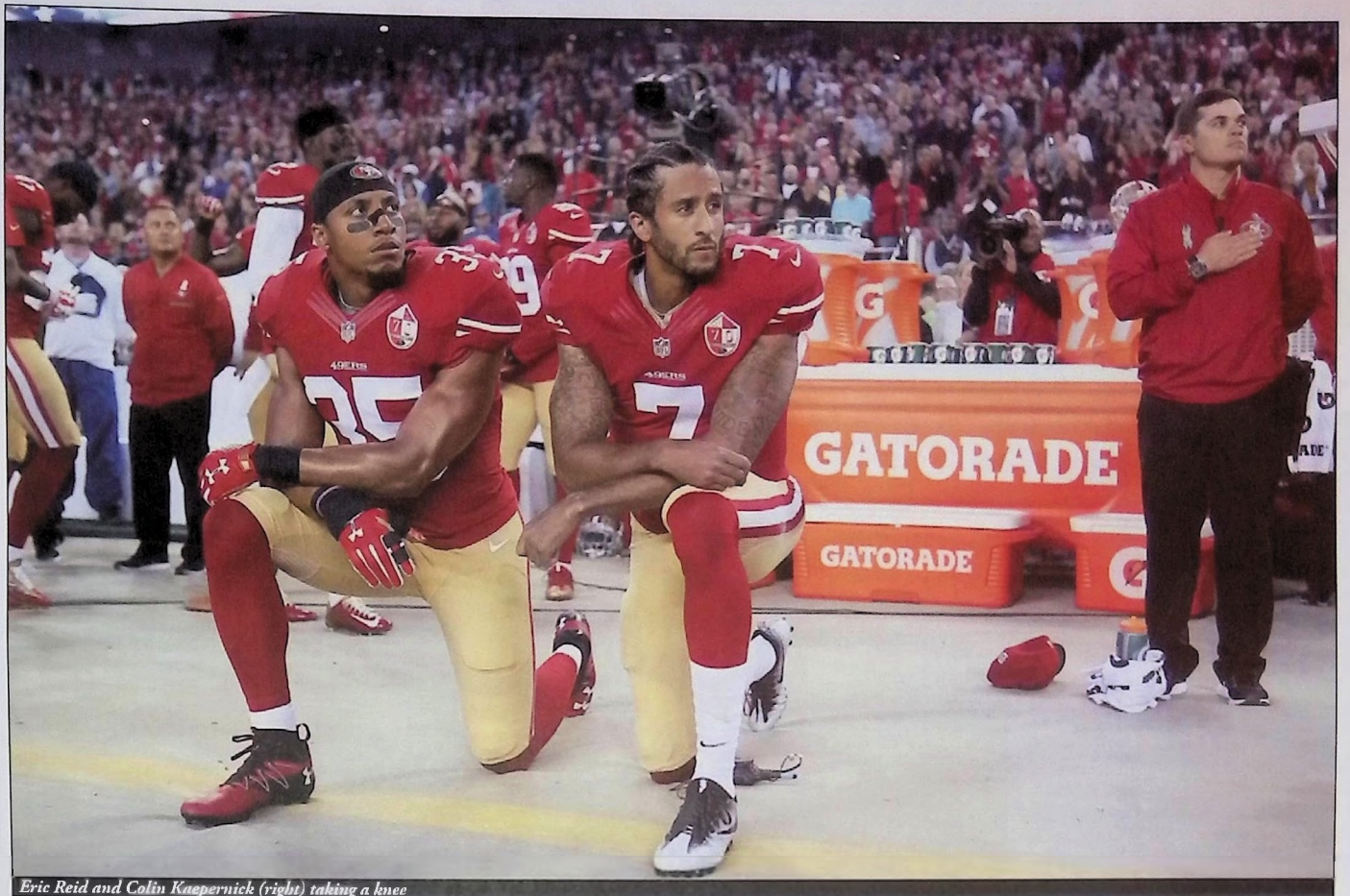
Every pre-game show involves military personnel coming onto the field, a wash of red, white and blue, often fighter jets fly over the field and there is always the singing of the National Anthem.

This is not by accident. Last year it was disclosed that the US Department of Defence had spent \$5.4 million in contracts with 14 NFL teams from 2011 to 2014 for their nationalistic and jingoistic ceremonies.

So, it is no surprise that after Kaepernick took a knee, the media attacked him for not supporting veterans.

However, such a smear campaign failed when veteran Army Ranger and Socialist Rory Fanning started the hashtag #veteransforKaepernick and it went viral with thousands of veterans standing in solidarity with the protest.

Kaepernick was clear about his role: “I have family, I have friends that have gone and fought for this country.



Eric Reid and Colin Kaepernick (right) taking a knee

“And they fight for freedom, they fight for the people, they fight for liberty and justice, for everyone.

“That's not happening. People are dying in vain because this country isn't holding their end of the bargain up, as far as giving freedom and justice, liberty to everybody.

“That's something that's not happening. “I've seen videos, I've seen circumstances where men and women that have been in the military have come back and been treated unjustly by the country they have fought for, and have been murdered by the country they fought for, on our land. That's not right.”

Since this protest erupted on the NFL stage, hundreds of other athletes - in different sports and at different levels, have taken a knee during the national anthem before games.

Some have been disciplined and some have had their whole seasons cancelled; but the protests continue to spread.

Marching bands have played while taking a knee, and cheerleaders have come out, taken a knee and raised their fists.

In the viciously right-wing and stifling political atmosphere of the US elections, this protest keeps the spotlight on Black Lives and the systematic and institutional racism in the US.

## Incarceration

In the face of this movement, Trump has sided with law and order and a ramping up of the police and incarceration.

While Clinton's rhetoric has incorporated the language of BLM, her track record and that of her party include massive funding to police, increased incarceration

and no evidence of holding police accountable for murder.

With 776 people killed by the police so far in 2016, and a continued litany of officers getting off without being charged, the defiance of the “taking a knee” protest has to be understood.

Though so simple, it has been such an effective tool to continue the protest for black lives.

It squarely takes aim at the supposed “liberty” of the US government, by being a protest against the national anthem.

And, it builds upon the best traditions of protests by black athletes against racism in the US, from Muhammad Ali to Tommie Smith and John Carlos.

Sports writer and socialist Dave Zirin commented, “The first thing that makes Kaepernick different, though, isn't the

taking the knee at the anthem, but the political content of what he's doing.

He's saying, “No justice no peace.” Kaepernick is violating this unspoken social contract between the team owners and majority white fan base that says Black athletes are to be seen, but not heard.

They are here for entertainment, but you don't have to really care what they think about the world.”

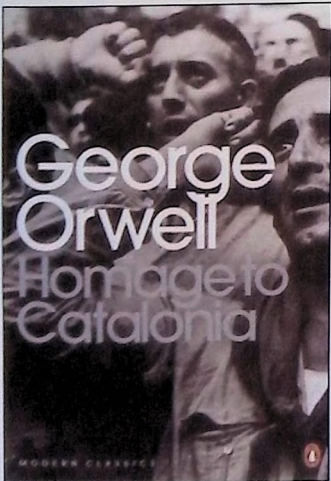
As for Kaepernick, he is clear about what he is going to do: “I'll continue to sit.

“I'm going to continue to stand with the people that are being oppressed. To me, this is something that has to change.

“When there's significant change and I feel like that flag represents what it's supposed to represent, this country is representing people the way that it's supposed to, I'll stand.”

## The Spanish Revolution betrayed

James Grannell reviews George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia*, his classic account of his experience of the Spanish Civil War.



George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* was first published in 1938.

In it Orwell recounts his time fighting in the Spanish Civil War between December 1936 and June 1937.

During the war Orwell served in the POUM (the Workers' Party of Marxist Unification), an anti-Stalinist communist party.

POUM had been formed in 1935 after the merging of the Trotskyist Communist Left in Spain and the Workers' and Peasants' Bloc, and although the new

party was not directly linked to Trotsky, it was heavily influenced by his thinking; particularly by the theory of Permanent Revolution.

In writing *Homage to Catalonia* Orwell sought to set down what happened in Spain during this time as he saw it.

In doing so he provides a vivid picture of the realities of war and divisive politics.

However, there is something tragic about this work, which, above all, narrates the unravelling of revolutionary potential and the suppression of the workers by both Franco and his Fascists, and the Stalinist Communist Party and Republican government.

## Excitement

Orwell relates his excitement on arriving in Barcelona to witness a town where 'the working class was in the saddle.' He presents the reader with the image of a city bedecked in the symbols of revolution (the red and black flag of the anarchists, and the hammer and sickle scrawled on every wall); where people addressed one another as comrade and class divisions were being obliterated.

Above all, he says, 'there was a belief in the revolution and the future, a feeling of having suddenly emerged into an era of equality and freedom.

Human beings were trying to behave as human beings and not as cogs in the capitalist machine.' But this was a revolution in its genesis, and one that was to fail with awful consequences.

His account of the fighting conveys the misery of warfare – the lice, the cold, the rats, the sludge. His experiences at the front fighting against the Fascists make the second half of the book all the more

bitter. Here Orwell gives an eye-witness perspective of the street fighting that took place in Barcelona in May 1937 after the Government Assault Guards tried to take the Telephone Exchange from the Anarchist CNT workers who controlled it. Orwell stated: 'when I see an actual flesh-and-blood worker in conflict with his natural enemy, the policeman, I do not have to ask myself which side I am on.'

He goes on to detail how the international press misconstrued these events and he attempts to correct many of the misconceptions about what exactly took place.

Following the events of May 1937 the Communists declared POUM to be a disguised Fascist organisation – a common claim made by Stalinists against Trotskyist organisations at the time.

## Arrest and execution

This resulted in the arrest, and execution, of party members and affiliated militia returning from the front and the murder of POUM leader and veteran revolutionary, Andrés Nin. It also necessitated Orwell's leaving Spain.

Orwell declares in *Homage to Catalonia* that he wished he could convey the atmosphere of that time. He has surely achieved this.

The reader cannot help but be wrapped up in the excitement felt by the author on encountering revolutionary Barcelona; to urge him on in the trenches; and to despair at the pro-Stalinist betrayal of a people attempting to throw off the shackles of international capitalism.

There have been many great accounts of war and revolution, but this is surely one of the greatest.

## New Ken Loach film – an indictment of the system



Ken Loach's new film *I, Daniel Blake* is now showing in Dublin. This film won the Palme D'Or at the Cannes Film Festival this year.

It is the second time in his career, the first being for *The Wind that Shakes the Barley*, his brilliant film about the Irish Revolution, that Loach has received European cinema's most prestigious award.

*I, Daniel Blake* is a passionate indictment of the cruel benefits system in Britain that was initiated by New Labour and intensified by the Tories.

This involves setting the bar for invalidity and disability benefits so high that seriously ill and impaired

people are regularly deemed 'fit for work' and thus threatened by starvation to force them back to work.

As Loach has said in interviews there is 'conscious cruelty' involved in this.

In this, as in many of his films going back to his legendary *Cathy Come Home* in the sixties, Loach is able to dramatise and bring a major social issue to life through the story of individuals.

He shows the horror of what the system does to people but, at the same time, also portrays the resilience, humour and solidarity that exists in working class communities.

**STRONGLY RECOMMENDED.**

# Socialist Worker

## Resistance is key to opposing Austerity and Hard Border

Shaun Harkin

In response to a motion brought forward by the SDLP and supported by Sinn Fein in the Stormont Assembly to give Northern Ireland 'special status' in Brexit negotiations, Raymond McCartney, Foyle MLA for Sinn Fein, hypocritically claimed People Before Profit MLAs, Eamonn McCann and Gerry Carroll, were aligning themselves with 'Tory right-wingers' for abstaining on the vote.

The irony of this claim was not lost on many and Eamonn McCann's response summed it up: "Sinn Fein has a hard cheek accusing People Before Profit of taking the same view on E.U. as British Tories."

This is the party which, after months of play-acting and prevarication, implemented the Tories' "Welfare Reform" policies which will have a devastating effect on working-class people in Foyle and in every other constituency.

In contrast, People Before Profit called for determined opposition to the welfare cuts, including if necessary civil disobedience. But then, Sinn Fein's days of disobedience are long gone."

British Prime Minister Theresa May has announced she will trigger Article 50 in March next year to set in motion the United Kingdom's formal exit from the European Union by 2019.

The June Brexit vote continues to generate tremendous uncertainty across the Great Britain and the North compounded by the British government's inability to provide clarification on many of the issues the referendum outcome will impact.

### Relentless austerity

The North voted 56 per cent to remain in the EU with areas like Derry and West Belfast voting overwhelmingly to remain.



With relentless austerity hitting vital public services and benefits in highly deprived areas there are fears the loss of EU funding will only exacerbate the problems working class people from all communities are facing.

Added to this are genuine concerns at the spectre of a return to a hard border, checkpoints and immigration controls.

In response to this, the DUP have been hosting champagne parties at the Conservative Party conference and insisting Brexit will create great opportunities. 'Remain' parties, Sinn Fein and the SDLP, have deepened concerns about Brexit by fearmongering about the prospects of a hard border, the loss of investment and a

return to the days of 'the Troubles'.

Although Sinn Fein and the SDLP face each other as government and 'official' opposition, they both insist the key to future prosperity for the North is remaining in the EU.

Sinn Fein in government and the SDLP in opposition have failed to lead opposition to austerity. Instead, they have justified it, legitimised it and implemented it. As a result, inequality is growing across the North. Nevertheless, Sinn Fein have made it clear they are fully committed to doubling down on a neoliberal strategy for economic growth.

After prevaricating on whether or not Sinn Fein would support reducing

the North's corporate tax rate, Martin McGuinness speaking at the Northern Ireland Economic Conference 2016 held recently in Derry announced "We remain committed to a reduced rate of corporation tax, it will help boost foreign and local investment."

The reality is that corporation tax cuts will rob public services like hospitals, schools and transportation of hundreds of millions of pounds in desperately needed funding.

### Border

When it comes to the border, there is no support across the North for a return to any kind of hard border or customs regime. The key issue in determining what

happens will be the resolve of people in the North and South to mobilise against border checkpoints, not what is decided in London or Brussels.

The same is true when it comes to opposing austerity.

It is absolute nonsense to think the EU will safeguard the North from cuts and poverty.

Brussels unelected and unaccountable leaders are committed to imposing austerity in defiance to the wishes of people in its member states as we have witnessed in Greece and in the South of Ireland.

Many in the North have been encouraged to view the EU as a benign force because of its perceived role in undergirding the Peace Process.

But the EU's interest in the North is to create enough political stability to allow corporations to flourish and generate profits.

Its institutions are not committed to defending public services like the NHS but to undermining them by introducing 'market competition'.

When it comes to creating the type of society the vast majority need and deserve, we cannot depend on Brussels, Westminster or Stormont.

Tremendous wealth and resources already exist in our society.

To ensure they go towards our priorities we need a determined resistance from below that will not take no for an answer.

This is why every campaign opposing cuts, defending jobs and fighting for justice and dignity is crucial.

Our movement in the North will be all the stronger if it is linked to resistance and disobedience across the South, across Britain and across the Europe.

This is how we can fight for an Ireland and Europe of Equals.

## IRISH STUDENTS GET POLITICAL

Padraigin Mervyn

As third-level students settled back into their campuses this year it has quickly become obvious that students are certainly more politically engaged.

There has been a significant wave of socialist student activity on campuses across the North; the most significant success has been on the Queens University campus! The Socialist Workers' Student Society kick-started the semester with a public meeting entitled, 'Building a Socialism for the 21st century,' with guest speakers MLA Gerry Carroll and Fiona Ferguson. There was a large turn out with a crowd of 100 people in attendance. This suggests that there is a demand for a real viable alternative to the system in place.

It not only proves that there is huge momentum on Queen's campus but in the wider context of the North and beyond. The meeting gave students a perspective on the type of socialism that People Before Profit and the Socialist Workers Party promote, which involves grassroots activism and challenging the current system of capitalism. This was followed up by a Marxist education discussion series that would involve six different sessions over a course of six consecutive weeks. In the first session, 'an introduction to Marxism,' the room was full with over 30 students attending. The weeks to follow would see a continuously large turn out!

The purpose of this course was



Group work going well in packed Marxism discussion session at Queens

to allow students a more in depth understanding of Marxist theory, to widen their vocabulary and political knowledge, and to also aid those students who would be studying the theory in their chosen degrees. The recruitment process on Queens University has been immensely successful with a significant number of new recruits interested in socialist politics.

### Campaigns

This was aided by the Freshers' Fair where the Socialist Workers' Student Society had three stalls,

The society on the Queens University campus will continue to host public meetings and educational discussions, as well as involving themselves in many campaigns on campus, such as 'Take back Queens,' a campaign organised by the Student Union, to stop single honours Sociology being cut by university executives, as well as building their own campaigns.

On the wider context of student activity beyond Queens University, students in Ulster University, St.

Mary's Teaching College, secondary school students and so on, have all been mobilising on their respective campuses,

where they promote socialist and Marxist ideas.

### Demonstration

The streets of Dublin have already seen two impressive mobilisations of students in the few months that colleges have been back.

On the 24th of September 40,000 took to the streets to demand a woman's right to choose.

This huge demonstration included a large proportion of students, many of whom learned from the Marriage Equality campaign of the power of activism.

The issue of abortion rights is one now being pushed on campuses North and South as young people fight for progressive changes that would have been unimaginable in previous decades.

### Marched

The second major mobilisation was on the 19th of October as thousands of students marched through Dublin streets to protest against the idea of a student loan system.

This demonstration was a response to the publication of the Cassells Report on the funding for third-level education.

The report suggests three possible funding methods, one of which is to make education free and accessible to all regardless of income.

There was a clear adherence to the principle that education is a right not a privilege for those who can afford it.

Importantly People Before Profit Students and Socialist Workers Student Societies are at the heart of all these struggles.

Now active in many colleges, North and South, and growing in numbers we must continue to intervene in politics on campus and promote a socialist alternative.

There is an audience now for radical left-wing politics on campuses we must focus on building activism where it is possible, and to expand on all campuses.

There has been significant success already in the first weeks of the semester, and a great momentum for this success to further continue and grow.