

Socialist Worker

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THE HORROR OF TUAM

Murder by neglect; religious bigotry; vicious class prejudice - these are the ingredients that lie behind the horrible crimes of Tuam.

Nobody now will dare to defend what was done.

The 'casual' or was it 'routine' disposal of dead infants in a septic tank.

- utterly indefensible - and as we know this is *only the tip of the iceberg*.

How many other baby and child remains lie out there undiscovered? Probably many thousands.

But the questions our rulers won't ask and won't want answering is why this happened - why it was allowed to happen and why it was covered up.

The death rate of infants at the Bon Secours home was once a fortnight! Up to 800 in total.

How was that possible? How was it tolerated?

Collusion

The short answer to these questions is that the Church and the State colluded to allow it to happen and to cover it up - for decades! And the hierarchy of the Church and the hierarchy of the State are two wings of the class who have ruled this state since the defeat of the Irish Revolution in the Civil War.

That is the class of bosses and bankers, land owners and landlords, developers and speculators.

And both these wings, personified then by Eamonn De Valera and Archbishop John McQuaid, saw in each other support for keeping the mass of people, the 'sinful' 'dangerous' people under control.

The people were dangerous and had to



be kept in order because they were born in original sin.

They were born in original sin because Adam was tempted by the wicked Eve who was tempted by Satan.

And what was the temptation? It was sex - the forbidden fruit of carnal knowledge. It all fitted together.

So unmarried mothers were doubly sinful - symbols of wanton out of control lust.

They had to be shamed and hidden away. And their 'illegitimate' babies were

products of the double sin and would have to have their sin beaten or starved out of them.

And if they were working class and poor, as they were? Well that was probably because they were especially lazy and sinful.

And besides it meant they would not have powerful relatives or friends able to make a fuss or ask awkward questions.

So dispose of them in septic tanks and no one will find out or care.

This was the ideology and the mindset

that brought us Tuam and the Magdalene Laundries, and the Christian Brothers and the Industrial Schools and the bans on contraception, divorce and abortion.

Old Ireland

But isn't this all a long time ago - part of the old Ireland that died with McQuaid and Dev, or at least with the great marriage equality referendum.

No! The political and social heirs of these people still run Ireland behind the scenes.

These are the same people who have the nerve to lecture us about abortion and fight tooth and nail to deny women the right to choose.

The same people who smeared Sgt McCabe and covered it up.

And crucially they are the same people who rushed to bail out the bankers, and collude with Apple not paying their taxes while letting the homeless rot on the street and the sick linger on trolleys.

Bon Secours, who ran the Tuam home, are now, as they boast on their website, 'the largest independent (private) hospital group in Ireland with over 2000 staff and 350 leading consultants', catering for the rich while the health service is in crisis.

What should be done? There needs to be posthumous justice of some kind for the victims and for their families and the guilty should be held to account.

But we also have to draw general conclusions because this crime was part of a general culture.

Several things are obvious:

■ **End the church's control of education.**

How can the institution that brought us TUAM, the Magdalene laundries, the industrial schools and mass sexual abuse of children possibly run our schools?

■ **Repeal the 8th Amendment now.** 'Pro-life that's a lie! They don't care if women or children die!'

■ **Separate Church and State.**

Ireland has changed but the backwoodsmen are still clinging to power and blocking progress.

To the Church we say: get out of our schools, get out of our hospitals get out of our wombs.

Just go! And take your political friends and protectors with you!

KENNY AND FINE GAEL- THROW THEM OUT!

The Fine Gael led government is tottering.

It lied through during the McCabe crisis and is trying to hold back the democratic wishes of the people to be rid of water charges. It cuts a pathetic sight.

Looming behind these crises is the long term decline of Ireland's two and a half party system.

Agreement

After the last election, FF and FG did a 'confidence and supply' agreement whereby FF agreed to back the main policies of their supposed rivals.

This was the only way they could maintain a government that excluded Sinn Fein and at the same time avoided an open coalition between themselves.

The establishment do not like Sinn



Fein but know they may eventually have to draw them into office.

But they want more time to ensure they have moved sufficiently to the right.

They also think that a FF-FG coalition would be a dangerous move as it would leave Sinn Fein and the radical left as the main opposition.

Hence the unsatisfactory 'confidence and supply' arrangement.

Weakness

As time months on, though, the weakness of Kenny's government is becoming obvious - even to the wealthy elite that run the country.

Not only do they not have enough votes to command a majority of key issues, but the Fine Gael party itself is unable to dispose of Kenny himself in a

clean coup.

The present government has all the appearance of a bunch of careerists who want Ministerial pensions and the general perks of office. It has no vision or coherence.

So it just stumbles on.

Breathing down their neck though is the prospect of mass anger exploding on the streets again as it did during the water charges revolt.

Rumbling under the surface is an even deeper anger about workers pay and conditions.

These have led to strikes and many more threats of strike.

This anger will, hopefully find a focus that will put the final nail in Kenny's political coffin.

Roll on the day when it does so.

IRISH WOMEN'S LONG STRUGGLE FOR EQUALITY See inside P.4-5

Support Bus Eireann workers and defend bus services



At the time of writing Bus Eireann workers have suspended their strike for negotiations but Bus Eireann management are still trying to push in a cost cutting package which will see huge cuts in workers' pay and savage cuts to services.

While existing workers face a 30% cut in earnings, the company also want flexi-hour contracts for new drivers. They have also announced a swathe of cuts to routes including the scrapping of the Dublin-Derry, Dublin- Clonmel and Westport-Athlone services.

The Government and Transport Minister, Shane Ross, pretend it's got nothing to do with them but the entire so-

called crisis is the outcome of Government policy. The aim is to attack union rates of pay and drive conditions down to the levels of private non-union labour in the transport sector.

Attacking

By attacking Bus Eireann workers they hope to stop the spread of any militancy and enforce low pay levels across the country. Fine Gael appointed Ray Hernan as CEO on over €200,000 a year to launch this attack; Hernan comes with a background of working in companies such as non-union Ryanair and Arnotts where workers faced similar "shock and awe" tactics.

The facts behind the crisis speak for

themselves. Between 2009 and 2015 the state cut funding to Bus Eireann by over 22% falling from €49 million to just €33 million in 2015. It did increase from that low last year but this doesn't correct the damage done from years of underinvestment.

To put this in comparison with other countries, as a percentage of total revenue Bus Eireann's state funding is around 12%. In Belgium the figure is 78%, in Switzerland it's 51.5% and in Holland it's 49%.

Under-funding

As well as under-funding the service, the Government have nurtured private non-union operators. The NTA has li-

censed services on busy intercity routes. It increased seat capacity on Dublin-Cork by 128%, Dublin-Waterford by 55% and Dublin-Limerick by 111%.

Bus Eireann has now announced that it is cutting the Limerick service because of the competition from private operators. These companies pay lower rates of pay and often go express without stopping in smaller towns and villages.

While this cuts their costs it takes passengers from Bus Eireann and increases its losses.

It means Bus Eireann is left to service the unprofitable routes with ever dwindling state support. The Government also give private operators who use the free travel pass for OAPs and others a greater

subsidy. While private operators can get 70% of the cash fare for the free travel scheme, Bus Eireann receives just 30%.

Although the company and unions are still in talks, a strike at Bus Eireann is still likely and it will be a major battle for all trade unionists and workers. The attack on Bus Eireann workers will be replicated in the future at Dublin Bus.

The NTA is still planning to take Dublin Bus routes and hand them over to private operators. If it gets away with its plans for Bus Eireann it will make further attacks on union conditions and jobs inevitable. That's why support from Rail and Dublin Bus workers will be essential to fight back against these Government sanctioned plans.

Crisis in hospitals: fund services and decent wages

Owen McCormack

STOP PRESS: As we go to press the nurses and midwives planned action has been called off and the union executive are recommending acceptance of what looks like a poor deal. This is unfortunate but it will do nothing to address the fundamental issues outlined in this article.

Over 35,000 nurses were due to start a work to rule this month over the appalling conditions many now forced to work under especially in A&E s.

While the core issue for the nurses' union is retention of staff, the issue goes to the heart of the crisis in the health service and the attack on public sector workers in general.

The INMO estimate that the health service needs another 5000 workers across all grades to meet demand. There are currently 3500 less nurses in public hospitals than in 2008.

Many new graduates are simply emigrating abroad to better pay and conditions. Meanwhile the private sector continues to lure experienced staff, with one report of a private hospital offering €5,000 in a lump sum to nurses to leave the public sector.

In the meantime, under the previous agreement accepted by union leaders, nurses and other public sector workers are expected to accept continued pay and pension reductions, and to work a free shift each month in overcrowded and understaffed hospitals. I

n the last decade as a direct result of cuts and government policy over 1600 beds have been taken out of the



hospital system.

The result is the recurring trolley and waiting list crisis. While the public sector is deliberately run down, its boom time for private clinics and hospitals. No wonder many nurses are forced to leave the public system.

Frustration

The nurses campaign is an expression of the frustration that many workers feel at the continued straight jacket imposed on them by the Lansdowne road agreement. This ensures low pay and the use of emergency legislation (Fempil) to retain cuts imposed during the recession.

Unfortunately union leaders in both SIPTU and the INMO are reluctant to break with this deal. SIPTU leaders, including the Labour party's Paul Bell called off proposed strike by other health workers in return for a deal which essentially gave

nothing to workers.

In response to anger from members a deal accepted by the unions will see a five month advance of a partial restoration of pay worth 1000 euro over the year. This is not a pay rise; it simply restores some of the wages taken from workers since the recession and leaves many of the other conditions imposed on workers intact.

Workers need to break with these agreements. The crisis in the health service is part of an overall attack on public services which the FG led Government intends to continue in any new deal with unions.

Minister Pascal Donohue has made clear that any new deal will focus on attacking the very concept of a pension for workers in the public sector or use it to impose lower rates of pay. This must be resisted. If the nurses do take action it could inspire other workers to do likewise.

INDUSTRIAL ROUND UP:

ASTI workers fight on.

■ Despite a huge campaign from the media and Government intimidation, teachers who are members of the ASTI rejected a deal in January which made little concession on the issue of equal pay for new teachers.

A majority of ASTI members rejected the deal and the union will continue its campaign which looks for cuts to new entrants pay to be reversed.

The Government have now

threatened ASTI members with a form of compulsory redundancy if their action does not end.

This is a huge escalation of the dispute and if the Department of Education follow through on the threat other teachers unions should support the ASTI stand.

The issue of equal pay should dominate the teachers' upcoming union conferences.

Fire fighters protest



■ TD Brid Smith joined the fire fighters protest at the Dolphins Barn station in March.

The protest was against proposed plans by Dublin City Council to take the emergency ambulance service away from Dublin Fire Brigade.

Despite several studies that found the system in Dublin gave a world class service, city manager Owen Keegan is

trying to break the service off from the fire fighters.

He wants to hive off the ambulance service to reduce the Council's costs and, many workers suspect, to try to introduce competition and privatize the fire service itself.

Brid and Councillor John Lyons pledged the support of People before Profit for the workers' campaign.

Trinity staff to ballot on strike action.

■ Non-academic staff at Trinity College are balloting for strike action after the board of management took unilateral decisions that will affect their long term pay and conditions.

Among the measures are steps that would effectively preclude any chance

of permanent or secure employment contracts at the College. The move is part of an overall neoliberal agenda of the TGD management and the workers' actions should be supported by all workers and academic staff at the college.

Water Charges – Still the Issue

As Socialist Worker goes to press the great Anti-Water Charges movement stands on the cusp of victory. The Oireachtas Committee, set up to deal with the matter, has – as this is written – an anti-water charges majority, just.

A couple of days ago Housing Minister Simon Coveney stated that normal water bills would be abolished.

“Water charges are gone, they’re going to be abolished,” said Coveney. “Normal usage for households across the country will be paid for through general taxation.”

This is the same Simon Coveney who just a week ago was acting the hard man, probably for the benefit of his Fine Gael base, and saying he would refuse to countenance such abolition.

And this is the same issue which a week ago was threatening to bring down the government, or rather was being used by Fianna Fail to threaten to bring down the government.

How come? Why has this issue proved so difficult to deal with?

Failure

Why have all their strenuous efforts to put it to bed, or kick it into touch or which metaphor your having yourself, been such a failure?

Why have Fianna Fail, who were always in favour of the charges, after flip-flopping half a dozen times, come out against them?

There is really no mystery to this. It is because of the great mass movement, the greatest in the recent history of the state: the immense resistance of ordinary people the length and breadth of Ireland.

This resistance took three main forms: blocking the installation of meters; mass demonstrations; refusal to pay. Each of these on its own was very effective but together they deadly. And each reinforced the other.

But why was there a mass movement on water charges, rather than other issues, issues just as or even more serious? The establishment politicians, media and the upper middle classes with the Dublin 4



mindset have never been able to get their heads round this.

They think it's because people 'don't want to pay for anything' – as if ordinary people were not already paying for water and practically everything else, from school uniform to bus fares and prescriptions every day of their lives. They think people are greedy and wasteful, the people that is not Denis O'Brien or Dermot Desmond.

The reason they can't grasp is that people fought over water charges because they felt they could. On this issue they believed they could actually do something, in their communities, in their neighbourhoods, and they could win. And they were right.

Many of the worst things that were done under austerity – the bank bailouts, the cuts to health and education and to the most vulnerable – left many people feeling angry but powerless.

Focus

Why didn't people just take to the streets? Some did but not in huge numbers. In fact getting large numbers on the streets at the same time is easier said than done.

Only occasionally does it happen by itself. It needs a focus, organisation, activists.

The household charges saw a mass movement starting to develop but the

Government undercut the campaign by taking the property tax out of people's wages and bank accounts. Many said, 'You'll never beat them'.

Then came the water charges and 'they' had to install a meter outside 'your' front door and you and your neighbours could come out and stop them. And you could refuse to pay and 'they' couldn't stop you.

This was the feeling among working class people that produced the enormous demonstrations of autumn 2014 and after and changed the face of Irish politics. Ever since then the Government and the establishment have been on the back foot, frightened of the people and unsure how

to go forward.

We need to keep them there. If they try to wriggle out of abolishing water charges, and they may, we need to be back on streets on 25 March. We want to bury water charges permanently.

We need to make sure that the main lesson from the whole struggle – people power can win – is not forgotten and is applied across the board to housing, health and all the issues facing working people.

And we also need to be there to support the Jobstown Not Guilty campaign because the ridiculous charge of 'imprisoning' Joan Burton is precisely an attempt to attack the right to protest.

Bridgefoot St. – the People Power park

Fergal Butler

On 15 February Dublin 8 got a belated Valentine present when the two and a half acre site at Bridgefoot St. was finally handed over to the Dublin City Council Parks Department from the Dublin City Council Housing department.

Local Councillor Tina McVeigh who has been heavily involved in this campaign said, 'This is an incredible victory for people power because for the past few years there has been an active group of local people devoted to the sole aim of securing green space for a part of Dublin 8.'

The campaign faced resistance from unelected council officials who seemed determined at one point to turn the site over to greedy developers waiting to put high price apartments on the site. This would have assured the end of any green space recreation area in what is described as the most densely



populated area of Dublin.

The story behind all this is one of national and local politics nearly failing a community. Members of the

Bridgefoot Campaign were deeply frustrated with the lack of interest that Council Officials had in developing any green space in Dublin 8.

The area has several sites that could be used for recreation and green space. However because they too are under threat from the council and the Bridgefoot Campaign stands in solidarity with those other community leaders who have supported us in our campaign.

Officials

At one point the campaign was informed by unelected council officials that we were putting valuable social housing needs under threat by our campaign. This was possibly the most cynical attack on the campaign. However it was pointed out to the council by Councillor Tina McVeigh PBP that there were plenty of other semi-derelict sites in the immediate area that could be used to build social housing.

The Bridgefoot Street campaign protesters has been bewildered by the apparent lack of imagination that

Dublin City Council seemed to have on this. It didn't even refer to its own Greening Strategy published in 2015 which refers to the lack of green space in Dublin 8 and the vital need for recreational and green space for the community.

Undaunted they felt as if they were actually doing the council's work for them and pointed out that while the Campaigners are delighted with the result, their work is far from over.

Community consultation is the next stage of the process and the Bridgefoot Street Campaign will be involved. So far there has not been any proper consultation process since the initial consultation workshops were cancelled at short notice by Dublin City Council.

This is an important victory but the fight is not quite over. Anyone who wants to get involved in the campaign should call in to the Mendicity Institute at 7pm any Tuesday night.

Still Waiting Health Campaign

Cyril Brennan

The Irish health care system is in crisis. Each year 350 people die needlessly on waiting lists that seem to grow ever longer.

Despite crocodile tears from successive governments, the cold reality is that over the last thirty years thousands of beds have been stripped from the system. There is a better way. We demand a massive investment programme that would prioritise prevention over cure. Specifically, we advocate a state

run home help service and a much larger capacity of transition beds in community hospitals. We also advocate increasing bed numbers to the EU average and restoring nurses and healthcare workers wages to pre crisis levels.

We also advocate an increase in services such as physiotherapy and occupational therapy to aid the discharge of patients from hospitals in a timely fashion.

Real investment in primary care would facilitate the recycling of acute beds and reduce the need for trolleys

in our Accident and Emergency Departments. Increased emphasis on respite care and home carers would also allow many more people to be treated at home.

Mental health

Mental health is also badly underfunded. Each year up to one million people are defined by the HSE as suffering depression, anxiety or suicidal ideation. This is not remotely acceptable.

The current Minister for Health, Simon Harris, has completely failed,

we therefore call for his resignation.

Finally, we advocate the ending of two-tier medicine in Ireland. The health service must be rationed on the basis of patient need rather than ability to pay. Health care must be free at the point of use and paid for through direct taxation.

The Still Waiting Campaign will be holding Vigils at hospitals across the country on Friday April 14th at

STILL WAITING HEALTH CAMPAIGN



REVERSE THE CUTS NOW!

5pm, For more information or to get involved contact Cyril Brennan on 0858589909

#socialism 1.01

John Moynaux

Learning from Tescos



The magnificent strike by Tesco's workers forced management to back down, at least temporarily and we hope permanently, on their threat to unilaterally impose changes in working conditions.

Following on from the victories by the LUAS drivers and Dublin Bus drivers this proves that strong industrial action works.

The solidarity and commitment of the Tesco workers was outstanding.

They also all low paid workers but they took action on a principle in defense of their fellow workers, understanding that an injury to one is an injury to all.

They knew that if they let the pre-1996 workers, albeit there was only 250 or so of them, it would only be a matter of time before Tesco management came for all of them.

They also came out on indefinite strike – a big advance on just limited one or two day strikes that have been so common in recent years.

An all out, indefinite strike puts the bosses under much more pressure than even rolling one – day strikes and is much more likely to get a quick result.

They proved that 'non-traditional' workers – shop workers and mainly women workers – can not only fight but have tremendous potential economic power, not least because there is a very limited extent to which food, unlike cars or engineering goods etc. can be stockpiled.

Superb solidarity

Also superb was the solidarity from the public, especially in working class areas. Overwhelmingly people were not passing the pickets and it was shown that Tesco's sales fell by 80%.

Even nearby small shops reported a loss of trade of 30%.

All these lessons are hugely important

because working people need to know their own power and neither the media nor even schools and colleges will tell them it.

When the media report on strikes their first instinct is always to try to find individual consumers who have been hit by the strike, so as to make the strikers feel isolated and unpopular.

Even when the reporter or TV journalist is a fellow trade unionist they KNOW that is how you are supposed to report on strikes and they usually go along with what is expected.

They will try to do the same to the Bus Eireann workers and to the nurses.

But in this case the support from the public was so obvious and palpable that it could not really be denied.

And if the strike had continued one more day it would have been interesting to see how many people would have responded to Brid Smith's call in the Dail for everyone to go to the pickets on the Saturday.

We don't know the final outcome yet but at the moment it looks like another victory for people power and workers' power.

Excellent.

Problems

But this is not quite the whole story – there were some problems that should be mentioned and from which it is also possible to learn.

When the strike was called off the decision was taken, immediately, by the union officials without referring the matter back to the rank-and-file to decide.

This was undemocratic.

(Notice that nobody in the media commented on this.

If they think a union is CALLING a strike undemocratically they, and the bosses and their lawyers shout about it from the rooftops.

But calling OFF a strike undemocratically is fine.)

Secondly, to give the strike the best chance of winning the union should have put in a pay claim for ALL Tesco's workers.

This would have given every Tesco worker something to fight for.

Of course a lot of the Tesco's workers came out anyway – on principle – and hats off to them, but some did not.

Some stores voted against action.

A claim for everyone would have helped unify the whole workforce.

These lessons are also worth learning, especially as they are not just accidental mistakes.

The truth is that the whole experience of the trade union and labour movement shows that union leaders have a tendency to vacillate and often do not adopt the best militant strategy to win.

Saying this is not at all being 'anti-trade union'.

On the contrary workers absolutely need unions and EVERY worker should be a union member where possible.

But facts are facts and the fact is that union leaders have been letting down workers ever since the British TUC let down the Dublin Lockout of 1913 and then went on to sell out their own workers in the General Strike of 1926.

And it happened again and again with the leadership of SIPTU who were in social partnership with the government and under the control of the Labour Party.

Why does it happen? It happens because union leaders are quite privileged in relation to the people they represent and they get used to being comfy negotiators rather than fighters.

In a strike THEIR pay and conditions are not on the line.

So what is the lesson to learn from this.

Definitely not to leave the unions but for grassroots workers to organise themselves within their unions and hold their officials to account.

Mary Smith

Modern Irish society and women's role in it has been shaped by events in the mid 19th century. The famine wiped out half the population in twenty years.

To rebuild society and ensure survival, new ways of organising the land and family life were introduced.

The Catholic Church came to dominate and its power was further entrenched with the establishment of the newly independent Republic.

The virgin mother became the role-model for Irish women!

The 'women's question' in Ireland, as elsewhere, began by focusing on the vote.

Women's suffrage was first taken up in 1866, and by 1911 there were some 24 women's suffragist groups agitating.

Between 1912 and 1914 there were 35 convictions of women for suffrage activities.

James Connolly got the Irish Transport & General Workers Union to protect the suffragist meetings and insisted that women were entitled to fight for their demands in whatever way they chose.

Inghinidhe

The first solely women's organisation in Ireland was Inghinidhe na hEireann (Daughters of Ireland).

They morphed into Cumann na mBan who were the main women's grouping in the 1916 Rising.

Inghinidhe, though founded by quite privileged women was, according to founding member Ella Young, 'composed of girls who work hard all day in shops and offices owned for the most part by pro-British masters, who may at any moment discharge them for treasonable activities'.

Some of these women would later become heroines of the Easter Rising, and senior figures in the subsequent struggle.

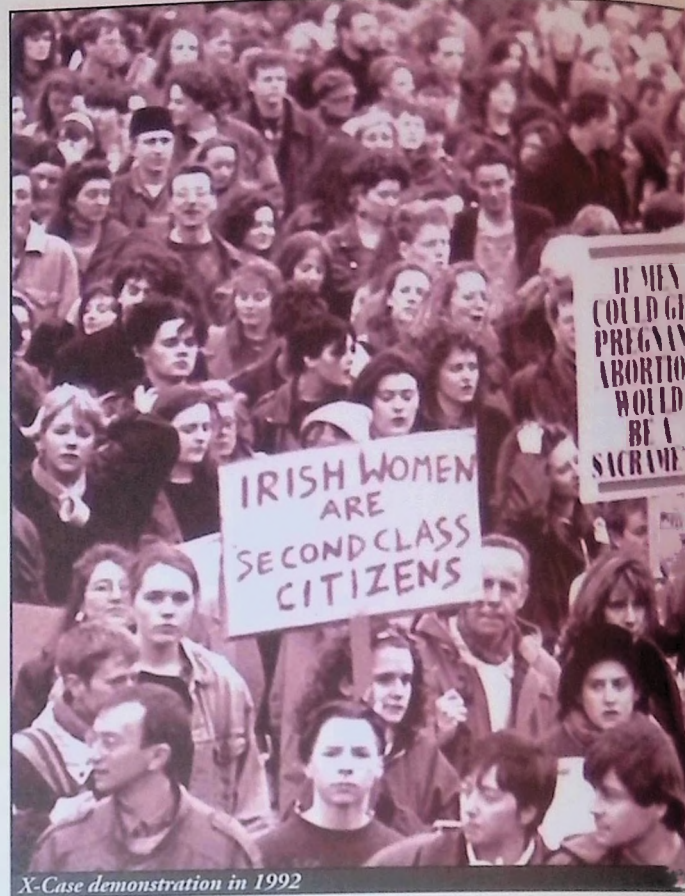
There was a tension between the suffragists and nationalist women.

The suffragists said there was no point in fighting for an independent state that refused to guarantee equal rights for women, and the nationalists said all other political questions had to be set aside till independence had been achieved.

In fact, many of the women fought for both their rights as women and for national independence, and when Cumann na mBan was formed in 1914, all but one of its executive members were active suffragists.

About 90 women out of around 1500 volunteers took part in 1916.

But it was in the War of Independence, that is the Irish Revolution, that women



X-Case demonstration in 1992

participated in the struggle as never before, and the gains for them as women, began to be felt.

They won the vote and Constance Markievicz in 1918 became the first woman ever elected to the British House of Commons.

Later she became the second woman in the world (after Alexandra Kollontai in the Russian Revolution) to hold cabinet rank in government.

Republic

For many ordinary women, their fight was ensuring the gains of the newly independent State worked for them, and they participated in building and administering the fledgling Republic in ways few would have dreamed of.

Most active women, and their organisations, opposed the Treaty.

But the pro-treaty forces, backed by British guns and money won the day and these counter-revolutionary forces eventually pushed back the gains of the revolution, including the new-found status of women in society.

The 'Free State' welcomed the Catholic

Church's endorsement, and with it the bishops' view of the appropriate position of women in society.

Slowly but surely, the women were deterred from continuing in their dissident activities as greater numbers were arrested and interned.

The government of the Free State banned Cumann na mBan in January 1923 and opened up Kilmainham Jail as a detention prison for 'suspect' women.

The gains women had made were rolled back with a series of Acts by the new government, restricting their access to work, removing them from civic roles (jury duty), targeting unmarried mothers and creating a framework for punishment of 'errant' women in the Magdalene laundries and the like.

Finally the constitution of 1937 extinguished the last light of freedom for women when it copper-fastened their traditional role as homemakers and mothers.

The rights they had won twenty years earlier in the Revolution were wiped out. From the mid 1920s to the 1970s

How International W

Linda Kehoe

International Women's Day has always been a day of action, not a day for flowers and passivity!

This year on the 8th March we are being called upon to #BeBoldForChange and to #StrikeForRepeal.

Every year, for over a century, women have had cause to march because our society values women less than men.

We are paid less, promoted less often, less likely to hold office, more likely to be unemployed and more likely to be in low-paid or crappy jobs.

Half the working women of Ireland earn less than €20,000 per annum and despite last year's #PledgeForParity, research shows that globally equal pay isn't expected until 2168!

Globally we struggle against gender discrimination, have less access to education and suffer more from domestic and sexual violence.

In Ireland we have no say over our reproductive rights.

The union-organised 'Uprising of the 20,000' garment workers in New York in 1909 for better pay and working conditions was the first Women's Day march and the tragic Triangle Factory fire in Manhattan 1911 proved to the world exactly how right they were to protest.

The textile factory caught fire with its workers locked inside (so they couldn't take unauthorised breaks) and 146 people (123 women) were killed.

For most women in the Western world things have improved but globally the same desperate working conditions still exist; look at the 2013 Savar building collapse in Bangladesh



Clara Zetkin, early German socialist.

g fight for equality



paigned for full access to contraception and free, safe and legal abortion in Ireland.

Months later, SPUC – the Society for the Unborn Child – was set up and then the Pro-Life Amendment Campaign (PLAC) started the ultimately successful campaign to insert the 8th Amendment into the constitution, copper fastening the ban on abortion.

Socialists and radical women, although having set up AAC, found themselves marginalised by more respectable and moderate campaigners who wanted to be all things to all people.

It was not unlike the debates today about removing the 8th where some who want it gone are still reluctant to simply say 'Repeal the 8th now'.

They fret about 'something to replace it with', and loosing the support of Fine Gael feminists.

X-Case

But the X case in 1992 changed everything.

News emerged that a fourteen year old rape victim was effectively interned, rather than the State allowing her to go to the UK for an abortion.

A howl of rage ascended from the streets; tens of thousands marched, school-girls abandoned their classrooms to join the protests; the demand was LET HER GO!

The government was in disarray.

The Supreme Court was terrified into overturning the previous ruling restraining Miss X, and thus drove a coach and horses through the existing legislation. It was a fundamental shift.

A series of referendums followed, further liberalising access to UK abortion clinics, and Irish society in general.

Liberal values were 'on a roll'; and homosexuality was decriminalised in 1995 and divorce was won – though it took until 1996!

The tragic death of Savita Halappanavar in 2012 was another turning point.

And now the campaign to repeal the 8th amendment, without which there can be no progress towards free, safe and legal abortion is the main focus for political activism for many young women.

Just as the water charges movement brought thousands of women into political awareness, so too equality issues are being taken up by young people, especially since the marriage equality referendum.

Socialists have been and are to the fore in all of these struggles and our job is to fight for every possible step forward in the here and now while also understanding that full equality and liberation will require a fundamental change in society.

Ireland was a tough place for women. Between the Catholic bishops and DeValera's Fianna Fáil (his was the only garrison in 1916 that excluded women) there were few choices for women outside of religion, child-bearing or emigration.

Nuns made up one of the largest groups of women workers in Ireland till the 1970s.

Contraception was illegal, so was divorce.

And yet women workers fought back. The Irish Women Workers Union (IWWU) challenged the notorious Conditions of Employment Act of 1935, which legitimised discrimination against women.

Women workers led the struggle for paid holidays and in 1945 laundresses won the right to two weeks paid leave – a 'privilege' hitherto unheard of for any workers, male or female.

It wasn't until the 1970s that Ireland's 'second wave feminism' emerged with the founding of the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM), in 1971.

The membership were mostly professional women, some of whom were socialists.

They were influenced by the emerging WLM in the US and Britain, and the civil rights movement in the North.

Their demands were:

- Equal rights in law.
- Equal pay and the removal of the marriage bar.
- Justice for widows, single mothers and deserted wives.
- Equal educational opportunities.
- The right to contraception.
- One family, one house.

The WLM spawned a series of initiatives campaigning on access to contraception, notably the 'Contraception Train' where, in defiance of the law, women brought condoms back from Belfast, challenging the authorities to arrest them.

Amazingly it was not until 1985 that the sale of condoms without prescription became legal.

In 1980, the Women's Right to Choose Group was founded to cam-

Women's Day began



which killed 1129 people, mainly women, in an unsafe garment factory who were forced to go to work or to lose a month's pay!

International

In 1910 over 100 women from 17 countries attended the 2nd International Conference of Working Women.

A Marxist and socialist, Clara Zetkin, tabled the idea of an International Women's Day which was unanimously accepted.

She proposed that every year in every country there should be a celebration on the same day - a Woman's Day - to press for their demands: the right to vote, the right to work, and the right to hold office.

From inception it was a day for women to demand their rights, and in 1911 it brought over a million women and men to rallies for exactly that.

In 1917 Russian women's strike for "bread and peace" began on International Women's Day.

It started the Russian Revolution and forced the Tsar to abdicate and the Provisional Government to grant women the right to vote.

Many countries have marked the day annually since 1910, but it's become globally recognised since the UN in 1977 declared 8th March as International Women's Day.

IWD was forged from anger, struggle, oppression and the realisation, amidst war and starvation, that equality for women is a vital step in the struggle towards equality for all.

2017 has brought women on their feet with the powerful Million Woman March against a sexist bigoted President.

Now on the 8 March we 'Strike for Repeal'!

Brid Smith says



Build on Traveller Ethnicity

It was a great privilege to be there in the Dail on 1 March when Traveller Ethnicity was finally recognised by the State and it was a delight to witness the joy and excitement among so many in the Traveller Community.

Of course this was long overdue but the fact that it has now been achieved is down to decades of brave and persistent campaigning by the Traveller Organisations and by their allies.

It's a big step forward because it acknowledges what is an established scientific and social fact; namely that Travellers are both Irish and also a distinct ethnic minority, going back over many centuries, within the Irish population.

It was essential because the only reasons for not doing it were racist reasons. But it is an advance that now has to be built on.

Facts

The facts are that Travellers have for decades been marginalised and disadvantaged in this society. As a result Traveller children are more than three and a half times more likely to die

the behaviour of individuals in much the same prejudiced way as used to be done to the Irish. As in 'the Irish are all terrorists' or 'all mad' or 'all drunks'.

But just as anti-Irish racism came from the top, the top of the British empire and was then spread by politicians and the media, to justify British rule, so Anti-Traveller racism comes from the top of Irish society.

It comes from the affluent who have put their concern for private property and 'property values' far higher than human rights and from business owners, hoteliers and publicans who refuse to serve Travellers and Gardaí who collude in this.

Politicians

It comes from politicians who have so often played the 'anti-Traveller card' in the form of 'nimbyism' (Not in my back yard). When Enda Kenny announced the recognition of Traveller ethnicity there were a standing ovation in the Dail and not a few of the 'standing' politicians were ones who have issued anti-Traveller leaflets at elections to court the anti-Traveller vote.

It comes from local authorities, city managers and state officials who,



Travellers at the Dail

in infancy than non-Travellers. Traveller children leave school an average of five years earlier than settled children. Nearly six out of ten Travellers live in overcrowded accommodation and many in mobile or temporary accommodation have no access to water and sanitation.

All these disadvantages combine and reinforce each other and the outcome is that Travellers have significantly shorter life expectancy than non-Travellers.

Life expectancy at birth for male Travellers has remained at the 1987 level of 61.7 years, which is 15 years less than men in the general population. Life expectancy for females is now 70 which is 11.5 years less than women in the general population.

And the suicide rate among Travellers is seven times that in the general population.

These terrible statistics haven't fallen from the sky. They are the result of deeply entrenched racist attitudes towards Travellers in this country.

These attitudes are expressed in the casual or deliberately offensive use of abusive K----- word, often to children. And in the way the whole Traveller community is stigmatised for

quietly, but systematically discriminate. Before I was elected to the Dail, I was chair of the Traveller Accommodation on Dublin City Council and we were always locked in battle with the state bureaucracy to get the slightest improvement.

In 2013 it was revealed that local authorities had failed to spend €14 million allocated for Traveller accommodation. That's not an accident.

And it came from the government which cut the Traveller education programme by over 80%.

These are kind of things, both the policies and the behaviour, that have to change if anything is going to be done about the terrible marginalisation shown by the facts quoted above.

Recognising Traveller Ethnicity was an important symbolic step but in itself it won't solve these problems any more that giving women the vote ended sexism or unequal pay.

Real social change is what needed and full equality for Travellers is probably only going to be won in a society that is much more equal across the board.

The fight will continue.

Combating racism in Ireland

Memet Uludag, Convenor of United Against Racism

As part of its struggle to combat racism in Ireland United Against Racism will be holding a Rally and March in Dublin on Saturday 11 March. It will assemble at 2pm at the Garden of Remembrance and march to the Central Bank Plaza. It is also part of an international week of action against racism in many different countries. Similar events will be held elsewhere in Cork and Galway.

This rally and demonstration will have three themes:

■ **Dump Trump.** Trump is a racist, sexist, homophobic bigot who has made a speciality of attacking immigrants and Muslims, demeaning women, and stirring up hatred.

The Irish community like other migrants in the US are now living in fear. Enda Kenny should not be going to Washington to present a bowl of Shamrock to Trump. The idea that he will be going to challenge Trump over his policies is laughable.

If he wants to go somewhere on St. Patrick's Day let him visit a homeless hostel or a Direct Provision centre. United Against Racism says to Kenny 'Don't go - not in our name!'

■ **End Direct Provision.** Direct Provision - the system our State places asylum seekers in - is a shame and a disgrace. Asylum seekers are not allowed to work and forced to live on €19.10 a week. They are deprived of support for third level education.

People fleeing oppression find themselves and their children trapped in centres that are close to being prisons and which segregate and isolate them from wider society. In many cases asylum seekers are kept in DP for years and years - it



is inhumane and racist.

United Against Racism has an ongoing campaign against Direct Provision and Brid Smith and other sympathetic TDs will soon be presenting a bill to the Dáil to abolish it. 'End Direct Provision - give asylum seekers the right to work!'

■ **Traveller Equality.** United Against Racism has always supported the recognition of Traveller ethnicity and we are

delighted this has now been achieved. But this is only a first step towards full equality.

Travellers continue to be the most oppressed, deprived and discriminated against group in Irish society in terms of health, education, jobs and every other measure.

As part of the general housing crisis there is a specific acute crisis in Traveller accommodation. We say 'Continue the

struggle against anti-Traveller racism - full equality now!'

Speakers on all these issues will take part in the Rally. Ireland is lucky not to have a far right or fascist organisation like so many other European countries do. Let's keep it that way.

The Rally on 11 March is an important next step in fighting racism in Ireland today.



Inequality Ireland: the rich get richer

John Molyneux

Two recent reports cast a revealing light on what's really happening with inequality in Ireland - its getting wider.

The first was from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) published on 28 February. It showed that the pay gap between men and women in Ireland is now 6.5 percentage points wider than it was in 2012, according to new figures. In 2015 Ireland had a 14.8 per cent difference in median pay between men and women. This compares to 8.3 per cent in 2012.

This is part of a global picture of course; women are paid less than men everywhere. But Ireland is doing poorly international standards, coming in below the OECD average and ranking only 25th in an international league table of female economic empowerment.

And this is despite the fact that girls and women now do better than boys and men in second and third level education so it's NOT about ability.

In contrast to the worsening relative position of women, the Irish super-rich are doing splendidly. The Sunday Times Rich List, published 5 March, shows that the combined wealth of Ireland's richest 300 has risen to €77 billion - an historic



Denis O'Brien: down to his last super-yacht. Yours to hire at €326,000 a week.

record, beating anything during the Celtic Tiger. And there are now 15 billionaires - also an all time record.

So now we know what Enda Kenny meant by 'the recovery'; the super-rich have 'recovered' to become super-rich.

The Rich List itself is a kind of wealth pornography full of articles gushing over

the obscenely opulent. Nevertheless it does provide some insights into the lives of the 0.01%.

For example biggest rise in the last year is the €926 million increase in the fortune of the Collison brothers from Limerick who now live, not in Ireland, but in San Francisco.

In case you were wondering how

they made their money, it was by setting up an online payments company called Stripe - current valuation €8.2 billion - which helped companies such as Apple, Facebook and Twitter process payments more efficiently. So a real benefit to society there.

The Rich List reports 'they are unlikely to return home anytime soon'.

Then there is the very top of the list, the Weston family (owners among much else of Brown Thomas) with 'only' €12.4 billion, whose matriarch Hilary Weston is a leading socialite in Canada. No gender pay gap there.

And how do they spend their money? The Rich List tells us:

"The super-rich have been splurging it big time. Ireland's wealthiest people have been buying up the haubles of success at a ferocious rate, from spectacular mansions - both here and abroad - to superyachts, high performance cars and champion race horses. Denis O'Brien's steamer Nero was a bargain at €40 million."

Of particular comfort to readers of Socialist Worker will be the fact that Michael O'Leary, owner of non-union Ryanair, has joined the rank of billionaire for the first time, along with the news that U2, up €4 million, to €645 million remain Ireland's richest entertainers.

Rumour has it that Bono is planning to make a special plea for famine relief in the Sudan shortly, possibly alongside Donald Trump.

There is, however, one small crumb of comfort in all this: Denis O'Brien is DOWN to only €4.7 billion. He lost €44 million last year. Maybe the water charges movement spoiled his plans - wherein lies a lesson for us all. People power is what we need - along with a healthy dose of raxing the rich.

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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.

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

Name _____
Address _____
Email _____
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Save South Dublin forests

By Dr Peadar O'Grady

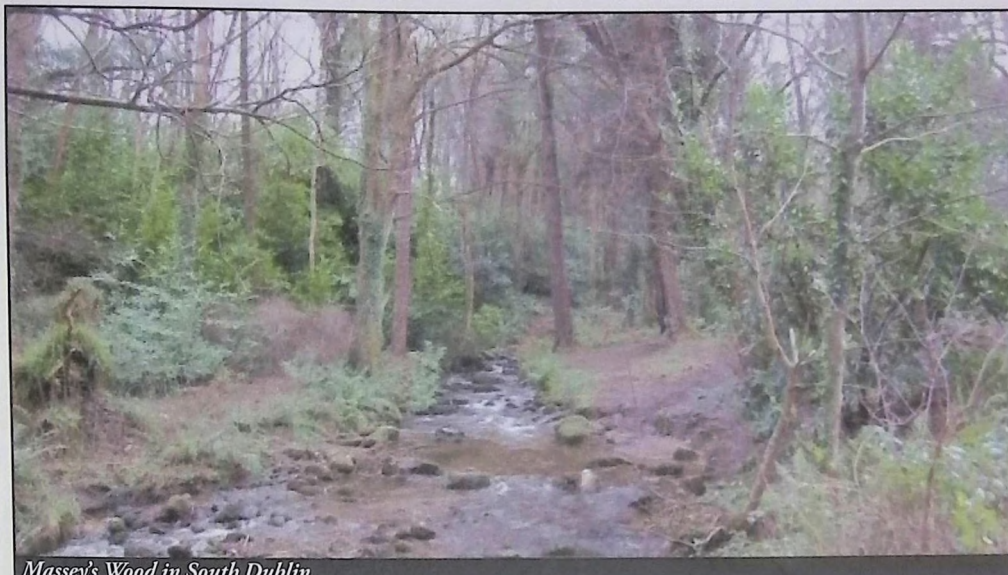
Dublin Rathdown People Before Profit recently held a well-attended meeting in Rathfarnham on Council development plans for developing a wooded area in the Dublin Mountains.

Last year South Dublin County Council and Coillte in conjunction with Fáilte Ireland published a plan to turn the grounds of both Massey's Estate and the Hellfire Club into a major tourist attraction, including a large 'interpretive centre' with a restaurant and shop; a sky-bridge that extends over the road between the two wooded areas and a car park for 300 cars; all in a part of South Dublin forest of great natural beauty and with huge local and national heritage value for its flora and fauna, recreational value and archaeological sites.

The woods are one of the largest broad-leaf forests in Europe.

Wilderness

David McGunn of HCAG on local radio said of the area: "It is, in the proper, real sense of the word, a wilderness...It has a lot of rare wildlife so close to an urban



Massey's Wood in South Dublin

area" such as red squirrel, woodpeckers and hen harriers.

"The entire area is managed in a way that allows wildlife to use wildlife corridors... so foxes and badgers can go

backwards and forwards (from urban areas to this wilderness)".

Campaigning groups have drawn attention to the prominence of commercial tourism interests and a lack of consultation

with local residents, users of the woods and those with wildlife and heritage concerns.

PBP Election Candidate Dr Peadar O'Grady said:

"PBP want to see the sustainable de-

velopment of trails and transport links so that more people can enjoy a natural amenity while protecting this fragile environment from the overdevelopment that can come with commercial exploitation.

Tragedy

If we allow commercial development here it may well open up other wooded areas of the South Dublin Mountains, such as Ticknock, to commercial development or building projects, which would be a tragedy.

We can learn a lot from other campaigns like the Save Our Seaford campaign and how they used People Power to stop privatisation and improve the quality of their environment."

Following an Environmental Impact Study an application for planning will go directly to An Bord Pleanála in April, bypassing local SDCC elected councillors, and campaigners will have to lodge appeals at that stage.

Dublin Rathdown PBP are having another public meeting on March 25th with Richard Boyd Barrett TD to discuss how to progress the campaign for sustainable non-commercial development of South Dublin Forests and for proper consultation with non-commercial interest groups.

No Country for People!



Dave O'Farrell reviews the 'Humans Need Not Apply' exhibition in the Science Gallery, Trinity College.

Exhibitions which try to combine art and science can often come up short on both the art and the science. Add a political theme to the work and the potential pitfalls are legion. Unfortunately the current exhibition at the Science Gallery in Trinity College generally falls short on all fronts.

Humans Need Not Apply aims to investigate how increased automation and artificial intelligence are changing the world of work and asks provocative questions like "Are we hurtling together towards a leisure-time utopia or robot-tended human zoos?" Unfortunately the response is underwhelming.

From an artistic standpoint observing how visitors engage with various exhibitions, such as a robotic desk lamp called Pinokio which reacts to people in its vicinity in ways that could be interpreted as 'lifelike', does raise questions around our interaction with machines and ability to grant human or animal characteristics to inanimate objects - but it hardly breaks new ground in doing so.

Many of the exhibitions are technologically impressive, such as three robotic torsos which mimic a user's movements with varying degrees of improvisation, but if the goal was to communicate the science behind them they fall flat.

A recurring failure in much science writing and in many exhibitions in the Science Gallery is to sacrifice the scientific content in favour of entertainment value and *Humans Need Not Apply* turns what are technologically interesting installations into mere amusements. Even a cursory

attempt to explain the algorithms involved in some installations would go a long way toward meeting the Science Gallery's goal of "opening science up to passionate debate".

From the point of view of answering the question of how technology is transforming work the exhibition is an abject failure. The deeply political questions surrounding these topics are completely ignored. A piece including a disassembled MacBook, with the pieces of tape used by the worker attaching it labelled as "human traces", and small towers of iPhone screens, more tape and solder.

It represents the number of components an average worker will use in a day assembling iPhones. It makes passing reference to the labour cost involved in building an iPhone being only \$11 or 2% of the sale price but totally neglects the appalling conditions in the Foxconn factories where they are made. Conditions so bad nets had to be installed to prevent workers jumping off the buildings!

Surely if the curators were really trying to answer the questions they posed then they would have looked for works that address the glaring contradictions of a society where technology can simultaneously make a worker in one part of the world redundant while another worker operates under slave like conditions reminiscent of the industrial revolution to produce the same piece of technology.

Such questions are however unlikely to sit well with corporate funders since the answer is a profoundly political one which must ultimately challenge the fundamental structure of the capitalist system that produces such contradictions.

Humans Need Not Apply runs until May 21".

Clondalkin Equine Club opens

Gino Kenny TD

Clondalkin Equine Club opened its doors on 2 February 2017. The new facility on the Fonthill Rd in Clondalkin will stable twenty horses giving security to young local teenagers that their horses are safe.

For many years there has been an ongoing conflict between local horse owners and the council.

Responsible horse owners regularly faced the heartache of the council impounding their horse, and if they could not pay €800 their pet would be euthanized.

South Dublin County Council have spent a half a million euros over the past four years impounding and euthanizing horses.

For horses that are neglected or abused there is a need for the council or animal rescue to intervene.

However, for the most part the horses impounded were in good health.

Punished

Responsible horse owners were punished for the actions of a minority.

In 2012 horse owners along with then Councillor Gino Kenny came together to form Clondalkin Equine Club.

They were seeking land off the council to home their horses safely.

The main obstacle they faced was the stigmatization and stereotyping of what many people call urban cowboys.

In reality this was ultimately a belief that working class youths are not entitled to have horses, and a lack of understanding of the positivity for young people to have a horse.

South Dublin County Council had an equine problem that was costing them about €125,000 annually.

They knew this was unsustainable, and to address this issue it was up to them to change their policies.

Clondalkin Equine Club had the solution; this involved changing attitudes of many council officials.

Speaking to Socialist Worker, club member Derek Denton said

"We are so delighted that the club has finally secured the premises and we are up and running as a horse project.

We have worked tirelessly for four and a half years as local horse owners who wanted to stop the state criminalising our young people because they want to continue the tradition of keeping horses.

We want to provide a place to



Clondalkin Equine Club trainees.

belong for our young people, we want our tradition of horse owning to be not only acknowledged but recognised for the positive role it plays in the lives of young people in our community.

We are open 4 weeks this week, and already we can see the positive impact the project is having on the young people attending.

Grow

We can grow from strength to strength and our main focus will be on securing resources/ funding going forward to develop all our plans and ideas."

Roisin Kearney said "Its amazing to see a dream become a reality I believe this club will be

serving the community of Clondalkin long after we are gone.

This club is creating spaces where members can learn through their passion and it gives a sense of belonging and community.

From the beginning of the club coming together we took a multi-agency approach working with all community groups and services.

It has made us strongly community minded and we can refer members to other services within the community."

Clondalkin Equine Club is hoping to assist any other local groups or campaigns across Ireland to achieve a horse project like in Clondalkin.

To donate or contact club email clondalkinequineclub@gmail.com

AND IN LABRE PARK...

February's South Central Area Committee meeting passed unanimously, People Before Profit Councillor Hazel de Nortuin's motion, which stated: "To ask the Area Manager to support the redevelopment of Labre Park and recognising Traveller Ethnicity. I am asking that this Area Committee allocate some of the land between the canal and Labre Park for the development of a horse project. This will enable the horses currently in Labre Park and critical to Traveller culture, to be accommodated during and post redevelopment."

Councillor de Nortuin said "This will be a great development for the area. This piece of land in question has been left idle and with no developmental potential. This will be the best solution for everyone. Any horse project on site, will be visible from the road side and I look forward to working with the residents of Labre Park to see this project through."

People Before Profit have worked along side Ballyfermot Traveller Action Project in fighting for the redevelopment of Labre Park for some years now and welcome the construction works due to start in 2018.

Socialist Worker

Northern election: Unionism in Crisis

Shaun Harkin

For the first time in the history of the NI Assembly, Unionists have lost their overall majority following the 2 March snap election.

With the reduction of MLA seats from 108 to 90, the DUP's 28 seat hold is only one ahead of Sinn Fein and it has lost its ability to veto legislation through the Petition of Concern mechanism.

A massive turnout for Sinn Fein has given the party a mandate to challenge the 'status quo'. This is a dramatic turnaround from May 2016 when the DUP were viewed as the primary winners of Assembly elections.

The DUP and First Minister Arlene Foster's responsibility for and handling of the Renewable Heating Incentive (RHI) debacle forced Sinn Fein to collapse the NI Assembly triggering a highly polarised snap election fought along traditional sectarian lines.

Mass anger

Mass anger at Foster's arrogance and the waste of hundreds of millions of pounds after years of cuts to public services made sure this scandal couldn't be swept under the carpet as had been the case with Red Sky, Research Services Ireland, NAMA, the Mobuoy dump and others.

To deflect from their own culpability Foster claimed the RHI crisis was a Sinn Fein/IRA plot to weaken Unionism. In fact, Sinn Fein, the DUP's partners in government for more than a decade, trailed behind public outrage and only acted when disgust began to eat deep into its own support base.

The entirety of the DUP's election message amounted to sectarian scaremongering: 'vote for us to stop them'. Traditional



Arlene Foster at Omagh the court

Unionist voters who were angered and shocked by the RHI fiasco were bombarded with the message they had to vote DUP to stop the radical Republican agenda of Gerry Adams and Sinn Fein. Intent on whipping up a sectarian frenzy Foster described Irish language speakers as crocodiles. Every utterance of Foster and the DUP

mobilised tens of thousands to strike back against their open bigotry, arrogance and corruption. Essentially, Foster became a recruiting agent for Sinn Fein.

Sinn Fein transformed itself from an establishment party implementing austerity along with the DUP to a party committed to opposing the 'status quo'. Sinn Fein

made scaremongering over the implementation of a 'hard border' a central theme even though the EU, the Irish and British governments and a majority of political parties in the North have all declared their opposition to it.

More and more of Sinn Fein's supporters have been increasingly critical and frustrated

at the party's implementation of austerity and failure to hold the DUP accountable for scandal after scandal. Sinn Fein have been rewarded for standing up to the DUP but their adoption of anti-establishment politics can only further expose contradictions in their strategy. They will now be expected to follow through on their mandate to challenge the 'status quo'.

Their loss of seats means the DUP no longer has a majority to block Equal Marriage and progressive legislation in the Assembly.

Sinn Fein surge

Despite Sinn Fein's surge People Before Profit MLA Gerry Carroll retained his seat in West Belfast. Eamonn McCann narrowly missed out on retaining his seat in Foyle even though the campaign increased its first preference votes from 4176 to 4760.

Negotiations have started on creating a new NI government and if that fails direct rule from Westminster could be triggered.

What will happen next is far from certain. Sinn Fein say they will not accept Arlene Foster as First Minister before a public inquiry is held into the RHI fiasco. With a weakened DUP and a mandate to challenge the establishment status quo expectations are running high for action on corruption, bigotry, austerity and equality for women and LGBT rights.

Negotiations will not deliver an end to austerity, the resolution of legacy issues, a women's right to choose or Equal Marriage. People Before Profit and others will not be waiting to be told what's possible or when it should happen.

The mobilisation of people power will be key in winning genuine equality, abolishing the Bedroom Tax and anti-trade union laws and reversing the running down of public services.

Fighting for trade union freedom

Becca Bor

Trade unions have been under sustained attack globally, and in the North are fettered by a litany of anti-union laws colloquially as the "Thatcher anti-union laws", these labour restrictions are actually Stormont's anti-union laws since they are a devolved matter.

Unsurprisingly, only when two socialist MLAs entered the arena were these anti-labour laws challenged. Former People Before Profit MLA Eamonn McCann introduced a private members bill to the NI Assembly: The Trade Union Freedom Bill. This legislation was launched and entered consultation before the Assembly collapsed this year. The Trade Union Freedom Bill has received enthusiastic support from many trade



unions and activists across the board.

The legislation would remove the most restrictive aspects of labour law, including obstacles unions face in order to take industrial action and work stoppages. People Before Profit believes strong workplace representation, the right to take collective action and to express solidarity are fundamental rights for working people to challenge poverty wages, defend our public services and fight for a fairer distribution of wealth.

Right time

Eamonn McCann explained the time is right for a full overhaul of the anti-union laws.

"At a time when the gap between the rich and the poor is relentlessly widening in the North my hope is that this bill will pass, and that it will enhance the ability

of people in the bottom half of society to seek redress through collective action."

Though Eamonn McCann lost his seat in Foyle, fellow People Before Profit MLA Gerry Carroll will reintroduce this private member's bill in the new assembly.

The Bill will incorporate the ideas of labour union members and leaders across the North through the consultation process in order to reflect the needs and real difficulties that unions have in organising their members against the onslaught of austerity, characterised by low-wages, zero-hour contracts, privatisation and an erosion of rights at the workplace.

Strong unions willing to take militant action and mobilise people power are needed to effectively challenge poverty and fight for the redistribution of wealth.

Save Foyle Haven

Gavin Campbell

Foyle Haven is a frontline day service providing accommodation, food and support to vulnerable people including street drinkers and the homeless.

A rescue package was organised last year after Big Lottery funding ended, but fears have been expressed over the Haven's long-term future.

Haven workers were put on protective notice and informed funding was only guaranteed through to March 31st creating tremendous anxiety for those who depend on its services, for their families and for its dedicated workforce.

Without doubt, the Haven is one of the organisations keeping the fabric of our society together providing sanctuary for many across

the city who depend on the services it provides. In the six months since the 2016 rescue package, there have been around 4,000 visits, and around 100 people using the facility.

Foyle Haven workers and volunteers distributed more than 3,500 meals. Foyle Haven provides advice and help to service users about benefits and housing. Additionally, the centre offers classes in maths, English, IT and help with personal hygiene and harm reduction.

Response

In response, UNISON Community and Voluntary branch launched a campaign to secure long-term core funding for the Haven. UNISON called on the Derry City and Strabane District Council to support the campaign and organised a support rally.

Backing the campaign Eamonn McCann argues:

"There is a very evident failure of administration at Stormont regarding funding right across the community sector. Workers are systematically undervalued and those relying on support are falling between the cracks whilst CEO pay rises and corporations dictate to establishment parties. We do not accept the mantra 'there is no money' that has come relentlessly from Executive parties when hundreds of millions are wasted on RHI and other rackets.

We call on people to mobilise in defence of vital services whenever they are threatened. This is the key way we can defend workers rights, the needs of service users and create a society fit for all of us to thrive in'.



Local people mobilise to defend Foyle Haven