

Socialist Worker

Irish Water - tapping you for €300

THE government has drawn up its plans for water charges – but it will not announce the exact charge until after the local and Euro elections in May.

The Labour Party is terrified that huge numbers will make May 23 'pay back day' against their betrayals. And so they try to hide as much detail as possible.

But behind the scenes, there are regular briefings for selected journalists. These, in turn, have leaked the fact that the water charges will amount to somewhere between €250 and €300.

Once the charges are introduced they will be increased. The government will claim that an independent body, the Commission on Energy Regulation (CER), have sanctioned increases.

But there is nothing independent about the CER. One of the three main commissioners, for example, is Garret Blaney who is a former key figure in IBEC, the employers' organisation. IBEC have consistently pushed for water charges on domestic users in order to decrease costs for commercial entities.

The government pretends that water charges are necessary to help conserve water. But the Commission on Energy Regulation has stated that if people use less water, then the charges can be increased.

Hypocrisy

This announcement shows the absolute hypocrisy behind the government's argument.

The government's real aim is to withdraw public funds from water provision in order to transfer the money to paying off bondholders.

They have already cut their investment in Irish Water from €435 million in 2011 to €296 million in 2014.

By 2018, they hope to withdraw all support so that Irish Water is a self-funding body. That is code for saying that they want the water charges to be so high that they can divert all public monies away from this basic service.

However, if we are organised through 'people power' we can beat back these charges.

Elect anti-water tax candidates

The first step is to elect anti-water charges candidates in the forthcoming elections. The main anti-water charges campaigner in the Dublin area is Brid Smith, who was previously jailed for not paying her bin charges.



Brid Smith was a prominent spokesperson for the Campaign Against Household and Water Charges (see page four).

She is standing as part of People Before Profit, which will also be fielding anti-water charges candidates in many constituencies.

A big vote for Brid Smith and other anti-water charges candidates will destroy Labour and will help to de-stabilise this rotten government.

But voting alone will not defeat the charges. There needs to be mass protests on the streets, which escalate to mass civil disobedience.

The water tax is an unjust double tax. Vote People Before Profit in May and then prepare for mass mobilisation to defeat this government.

Irish Rail workers threatened again

WORKERS at Irish rail are being asked to accept another pay cut. The government has cut its funding - and wants to reach into the pockets of workers again.

Irish rail workers have already made huge sacrifices.

They have accepted a separate pay cut in the past and have run the service with 37 percent less staff.

The unions involved - mainly SIPTU and NRBU - are making no recommendations and are allowing the company to call workers into their meetings to sell pay cuts.

Rail workers should throw out this deal - and the union leaders who won't fight it.

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In their own words

“Water is a basic human right that should be paid for out of taxation.

Trying to privatise water forces the poorest to pay for what is a vital resource and results in a stealth form of double taxation.

This was true in the 1990's when Eamon Gilmore used to parade himself as a left winger and it is still true today. Unlike Gilmore however, I intended to stick by my principles and a vote for Brid Smith will be a vote against the turnout politics of the current Labour party and their FG partners.”

■ Brid Smith People Before Profit candidate for Dublin in the upcoming European elections on 23 May.



Dun Laoghaire newsletter
DL Democratic Left 1/1997

Water Rates Abolished:
Democratic Left delivers in Government

The Government has abolished water charges with effect from the 1st January 1997.

Local TD and Minister of State Eamon Gilmore has always opposed water charges and welcomes the decision. "Water rates were a form of double taxation on PAYE workers and an unsatisfactory way of funding local councils" he says. "The Government has made the right decision in abolishing them".

Eamon Gilmore TD
Democratic Left

The Government decision brings a successful end to the 13-year campaign for the abolition of water charges fought by Eamon Gilmore and his colleagues in Democratic Left. During the campaign Eamon Gilmore appeared in the High Court supporting residents whose water had been cut off by the council. Democratic Left has always voted against water charges in Dun Laoghaire Council and the campaign was stepped up when the charges were re-introduced in Dun Laoghaire Borough in 1988 and in the old Dublin County Council area in 1993.

The turning point came when Democratic Left joined the current Government in 1994. The new coalition Government recognized that water charges were unfair and committed itself to reforming local council funding.

The abolition of water charges is part of a package of measures to improve local government. The details of this package, 'Better local government: a programme for change', are available from the Department of the Environment, Customs House, Dublin 1.

1,000 jobs every week:
the Government record on job creation

An average of 1,000 jobs have been created every week in the two years since this Government took office.

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Fortress Europe is killing thousands

By Sinead Kennedy

LAST October, in Lampedusa Italy a boat carrying migrants sank in the Mediterranean, leading to the deaths of more than 350 people.

Predictably, European leaders expressed their shock and sadness; what none of them were prepared to acknowledge was that the tragedy was not merely an accident but the gruesomely inevitable consequence of EU border policies.

Since the Lampedusa tragedy last year, there have been at least five similar incidents but they got little or no media attention.

Criminalisation

Every year tens of thousands of people attempt to enter Europe fleeing poverty, misery and violence.

The response they receive from the European authorities is not one of welcome, understanding or even basic humanity but repression and criminalisation.

Over the course of the past three decades the European Union has constructed a Fortress Europe to keep who they term "unwanted" from entering, spending hundreds of millions of euros on external border controls.

Since 1988 some 20,000 migrants have died trying to enter Europe.

The response of European



governments has only been to continue to strengthen Fortress Europe, even going so far as to charge fishermen who saved drowning migrants with aiding illegal immigration.

The EU has spent the past three decades inventing new ways to keep both legal and 'undocu-

mented' migrants out.

At the forefront of this EU wide strategy was the establishment of Frontex, the European Board Security Agency.

Frontex has undergone almost constant expansion since its establishment in May 2005 and now conducts a military style boarder

protection operation, despite repeated violation of European and international human rights laws.

Frontex

For example recent Frontex patrols around the coast of Greece have been accused of employing strategies that involve pushing

migrants back to Turkish waters, damaging boats, and leaving people to drown (see page seven).

"Frontex is a war machine. They have ships, airplanes, helicopters. They shoot.

They use war tactics against refugees," claims Nasim Mohammadi, from a support

office for immigrants and refugees.

Those migrants that do manage to make it across borders are treated as "criminals" and immediately imprisoned, often for years on end, in detention centres. EU governments increasingly view migrants and asylum seekers as 'criminals'.

Yet these restrictions will never stop migration; what they do is make the journey much more dangerous and oppressive, by forcing the most vulnerable people in society into relying on smugglers and human traffickers, not to mention the exploitative places where they end up working.

EU complicity

Furthermore, due to the highly securitised nature of European borders there is simply no democratic, safe and legal way to enter Europe.

Migrants must first make it into an EU country by whatever means before making an application for protection.

That is why many people have no choice but to trust the human traffickers with their lives and the lives of their children.

Despite what the media and politicians may claim, packing yourself into a boat 4-5 times its capacity and hoping to cross the vast sea is not a lifestyle choice.

It is a decision fuelled by poverty and desperation.

Free Margaretta D'Arcy – US warplanes out of Shannon

By John Molyneux

ON 15 January Galway anti-war activist, playwright and Aosdana member, Margaretta D'Arcy was jailed for three months.

Her 'crime'? She refused to sign a bond to uphold the law and keep away from unauthorised zones at Shannon.

She was originally in Limerick prison and has now been moved to Mountjoy.

Many comments have been made on the fact that Margaretta is 79 and not in good health, and these facts do show both her great

courage and the callousness of the Irish state.

However, Margaretta herself wants attention to concentrate on the continuing use of Shannon by the US military.

This stands in complete violation of the principle of Irish neutrality, which is enshrined in the Irish constitution and involves the Irish people, without their consent, in direct complicity with America's wars and its many war crimes.

Shannon Airport has been used by the US military on their way to/from Iraq and Afghanistan for over a decade and has played a vital role

in assisting these imperialist wars.

Since 2002 over 2.25 million armed US troops have gone through Shannon Airport.

It has also operated as a stopover point for CIA rendition planes which send people to be tortured.

For Fine Gael and Minister of Injustice, Alan Shatter, this is par for the course.

Their attitude to the US state is the same as their attitude to US multinationals – the most craven accommodation of their every whim.

For Labour it is yet another betrayal of every principle they ever



stood for. In contrast, the working people of Ireland have a proud tradition of

opposition to war and imperialism. This is the tradition that Margaretta is standing for and

we need to support the antiwar movement in its upcoming rally in support of Margaretta.

IRISH ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT
SPEAK AND BE NEUTRALITY ALLIANCE
Supported by Galway Alliance Against War/ Shannonwatch
Richard Boyd Barrett and People Before Profit

National Demonstration

FREE MARGARETTA D'ARCY!

I STAND WITH MARGARETTA D'ARCY
U.S WARPLANES OUT OF SHANNON

Saturday 22 February
2pm @ The Spire
O'Connell St. Dublin.

For information contact:
John 0857356424

People Before Profit: Meet the candidates

SEAMUS O'Boyle is a native of Sligo Town, living in the Forthill area with his wife and four children for the last 30 years.

For more than 20 of these, he has been active in all levels of community work in Sligo from local football coaching, to community schemes and anti-austerity campaigning.

Over the last seven years it has become increasingly obvious that

from the cradle to the grave no-one is safe from the devastating effects of cuts and austerity.

Cuts to maternity benefit, childcare, clothing and children's allowances, school grants, and a host of (stealth) taxes on 3rd level education, property, bins and water have made life almost unbearable for large numbers of Irish people.

The Irish government has signalled its intentions to bail out

the richest members of society, leaving lower and middle incomes families to pick up the pieces.

This cannot go unchallenged and if elected I pledge to fight for a society that puts people before profits and services before the debts of the bankers.

Like most people, I want a society that puts our social resources into good schools and hospitals and treats all of our citizens with dignity and



respect.

The reason I am happy to affiliate and run for People Before Profit is because it is a bottom up (grassroots) organisation that has a track record of fighting against injustice and austerity.

Unlike other political parties PBP is not run by an elite and all of the key decisions will be made by local activists on the ground in Sligo. My promise to the voters is very

simple.

I will not participate in the corrupt culture of junks

I will not vote for budgets/ measures that make ordinary people pay for the crisis

I will represent the people of Sligo not the vested interests of bankers and big business.

I will vote against all measure that privatise our local services.



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WHAT THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY STANDS FOR

Capitalism is wrecking the lives of millions and endangering the planet. A new society can only be constructed when the workers take control of the wealth and plan its production and distribution for human need and not profit.

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

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

greater political and economic democracy.

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

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

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

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

We oppose immigration controls which are always racist.

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

Like great socialist James Connolly, we believe that partition has brought about a 'carnival of reaction'. We want to see an Irish workers republic where all

workers gain. Our flag is neither green nor orange but red!

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

This party needs to argue against right-wing ideas and for overthrowing the system. We call for co-operation between left-wing parties and the formation of a strong socialist bloc.

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

Join the Socialists

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

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Panti's Noble Call The Struggle against LGBTQ oppression in Ireland

Two weeks ago Rory O'Neill (aka Panti) accused John Waters, Breda O'Brien and the Iona Institute of homophobia on The Saturday Night Show. The sequence of events that have happened since O'Neill's appearance, have been a clear display of how power and influence work together in Ireland today. O'Neill's bravery in exposing oppression has started a national debate and here we aim to explain how elite power affects LGBTQ people in terms of the level of oppression we experience, our awareness of it, and our responses to it.

by Inessa Armand and Seán Egan

The story so far

LET'S start with a timeline of events since the interview to give readers a sense of the scale of the repression faced by Rory O'Neill.

First off a series of legal letters were sent to Panti.

Then there was the editing of the segment from the RTE Player online version of the interview.

The prevention of the online circulation of the interview by the enforcement of copyright restrictions on YouTube was also enforced and apologies for any upset or distress caused to Breda O'Brien, the Iona institute, and John Waters were issued.

As if this we not bad enough we have since learned that RTE paid compensation to the Iona Institute and offered them two of the four panel slots on the RTE Radio's Late Debate Show to push their agenda.

Finally we have learned that one John Waters was a committee member of the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI);

Luckily this extensive campaign of silencing the voices of our LGBTQ Community has been met with an equal measure of sustained social media response, in an encouraging display of strength and unity of LGBTQ's and our Allies.

RTE, the Iona Institute and the debate on homophobia

On 1 February the Saturday Night Show hosted a 'debate on homophobia', looking at what constitutes homophobia and who gets to use the word.

It is our view that only the victims of homophobia should be given a platform by RTE to define it, describe it, discuss it, and most importantly denounce it.

This manoeuvre was a blatant attempt by RTE to reconstruct their image as an unbiased broadcaster in the run up to the Referendum on Marriage Equality.

The scandal that has broken since has shown RTE for what it really is.

First off, the 'debate' was a shambles, with homophobe Susan Phillips claiming victimhood and supposedly pro-marriage equality journalist, Noel Whelan, denying LGBTQ people the right to challenge homophobia.

Susan Phillips vigorously denied opposing the decriminalisation of homosexuality; however the following is an excerpt from a letter she wrote to the Irish Times in 1993: "Homosexuality is a highly bizarre state of behaviour.

It is unnatural, unwholesome and a complete threat to stable family life."

It is a disgrace that the national broadcaster would give a platform to bigots with such extreme views.

It is disgusting how homophobic rhetoric is emotionally damaging to LGBTQ people, especially young people.

It is well documented that LGBTQ people have higher rates of substance abuse and suicide.

The proliferation of homophobic and transphobic attitudes in our culture and in people's personal lives contributes to a sense of isolation and alienation.

Bigoted screeds like those of Susan Phillips foster hateful attitudes which lead to homophobic and transphobic bullying found in our schools and workplaces.

The State, through RTE has shamefully displayed more concern for bigots than the LGBTQ community.

Homophobic organisations such as the Iona Institute try to appear reasonable, but their politics are rooted in extremely right-wing, sexist, homophobic and transphobic prejudice.



They rely on subtlety and dishonesty to earn them a place on RTE panels discussing social issues.

On these panels they consistently advocate for the most reactionary hateful positions.

They are a blight on Irish politics, yet they play the victim when confronted about their homophobia.

They invoke the principal of free speech when they're spouting hate speech, yet attempt to silence their critics.

The Noble Call

While RTE was engaged in homophobic apologetics, Rory O'Neill took to the stage of the Abbey Theatre as Panti Bliss, during a performance of "The Risen People" to deliver the Noble Call.

Panti spoke eloquently about the oppression that LGBTQ people experience in Ireland and the very real personal anguish that results from such systemic oppression.

This speech struck a chord with people all over the world as evidenced by the huge number of views the video received and the massive outpouring of

support for Panti which followed.

Panti's speech has given courage to many LGBTQ people and their Allies and has empowered many to speak out against prejudice and hatred.

Panti's bravery has brought LGBTQ struggle in Ireland to global attention, putting scrutiny on the actions of RTE and the Irish Government.

Strategy

Homophobic institutions such as the Iona Institute defend their bigotry within the guise of protecting what they call, traditional marriage.

However, historical evidence in Ireland points to many forms of marriage, permanent, semi-permanent, and transitional.

What the Iona Institute really defends is the concept of a male dominated, catholic nuclear

family.

In fact, Susan Phillips opposed the decriminalisation of homosexuality by saying "in legalising homosexual acts, surely we must ask ourselves



what on earth has happened to common sense, basic instinct, and Christian teaching".

Marriage, like all human relationships, has changed with time, yet homophobes rely on a fixed view of marriage that doesn't correspond with logic and imposes arbitrary restrictions on human sexuality based on religious dogma and gender norms.

We should use this historical variability to challenge the basis of the anti-marriage equality arguments.

Homophobia is rotten to the core but it important to remember that it is part of a capitalist system which relies on hetero-normative (straight dominating) attitudes and on the preservation of the nuclear family, responding viciously to any individual or group who challenges these ideas.

The current limiting of a person's choice to civil partnership is just another example of state discrimination, which also critically excludes the protection, and rights, of children.

There needs to be a remobilisation of emancipatory LGBTQ liberation politics.

We need to focus our efforts on building and supporting a Marriage Equality Campaign that's strong and visible – one that includes Trans rights.

The Labour Party and the Minister for Communications specifically, must be held to account by the LGBTQ movement.

Following the revelation that RTE paid out somewhere between €80,000 - €85,000 of tax payers' money to the homophobes named by Rory O'Neill, pressure needs to be put on Pat Rabbitte to explain why this happened and why Rory O'Neill was, and continues to be censored.

Liberal politics have dominated LGBTQ organising, leading it in a reformist direction, seeking to accommodate LGBTQ people within the framework of the existing capitalist state.

It is important to develop a militant LGBTQ movement that challenges heteronormativity, the gender binary (the restriction of gender expression to a socially constructed idea of man and woman), enforced monogamy and the very logic of capitalism itself.

What Socialists Say

In fighting multiple related oppressions, we must ally on issues and actions, rather than fabricated notions of unity based on ambiguous and socially constructed identity.

The popular anger around the attempts of our State Broadcaster to delete from its footage the defining and denouncing of homophobia by Panti should be channelled towards building a united and sustained campaign of protest.

Collectively, we have tremendous social power which we can use to fight against multiple oppressions which are used against us to fracture our communities, and our class.

Any fight against oppression, if it is to succeed, must be based upon building the strongest possible movement.

This can only happen when a movement unites different groups of activists into a common struggle.

As socialists, we want to destroy oppression and the system that breeds it.

We should not allow the controlling forces behind the scenes to reframe and refocus the discourse on to a debate about what constitutes homophobia and away from a debate about the now exposed structural pillars of oppression within our society.

Smash bigotry, smash capitalism!
The Socialist Workers Party is proud to be #TeamPanti.

Why the Gardaí bugged the Ombudsman

By Kieran Allen

THE Gardaí, or at least some elements within it, bugged the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission (GSOC).

That is the only conclusion that any sensible person would arrive at. Consider only a few of the facts.

The decision to carry out an inspection of the GSOC office arose because a senior Garda inadvertently made reference to a secret report emanating from that office.

GSOC got a British company to carry out a security sweep – and instructed them to do so in the middle of the night to maximise secrecy.

When bugging was discovered, the matter was not reported to Justice Minister Shatter – because, obviously, GSOC did not trust his relationship with senior Gardaí.

Moreover, the Gardaí had motive to carry out bugging. They are under pressure because of revelations about the penalty points system and for dropping a charge of drug dealing against Kevin Boylan, who appeared to have a close relationship with some senior Gardaí.

Yet instead of seriously investigating Ireland's Watergate, the government embarked on a strategy of attacking GSOC in order to spin a line that there was no real story.

Kenny even lied about the law, asserting that GSOC had failed in their legal obligation to report matters to the government.



A few days later Shatter hid key details about the affair from the Dail.

State Propaganda

The state propaganda machine – otherwise known as RTE – picked up their cues and David Davin-Power went on television to proclaim that, “the whole controversy seems to have been nothing more than something of a bottle of smoke”.

In reality, the GSOC affair has revealed how Ireland's deep state machine really operates.

The Garda's main role – like similar forces all over the globe – is to protect the property of the rich.

Their other functions, in terms of maintaining basic social order, are conditioned by this imperative.

The political and economic elite need

muscle in order to break strikes, disperse demonstrations and spy on socialist and trade union militants.

They know that the official ideology of ‘respecting the law’ applies only to the powerless. Laws are written to smooth the functioning of capitalism and so they need to be imposed on its victims with some force.

It is a different story with the rich. Even when they transgress their own formal rules, they get to appear before Tribunals, which cannot directly punish them.

They employ accountants and tax planners to find loopholes in laws about tax – and the state will always turn a blind eye.

The police chiefs know all this and so their wider force is socialised into showing respect for their betters.

But drawn largely from upper working class backgrounds, they also resent their



own deference.

They show impatience, for example, that in their view, woolly headed judges make them go through the motions of ‘respecting the law’.

In Ireland, the police have long held a view that they should be allowed a long leash when it comes to respecting the law. For years, they thought it fair game to give a few thumps to working class lads to make them confess.

Their hero figure of Lugs Brannigan, for example, was used to show how practical this was.

Northern conflict

The Northern conflict gave them a freer hand to act with impunity. The Heavy Gang was deployed to beat confessions out of ‘subversives’ and soon spread to others.

The Donegal Gardaí was allowed to

plant evidence – and as long as this was presented as fighting subversives- this was regarded as fair game.

Gardaí often visited workplaces of republican subversives to finger them to their employers.

All of this helps to explain why the very idea of an independent watchdog is an anathema to most senior police officers in Ireland.

They regard it with utter contempt. For their part GSOC are caught in a contradictory situation.

Their aim is to avoid ‘undermining confidence in the Gardaí’.

So they have covered up for the police violence that occurred in Rosspoint – even when video evidence revealed the savagery involved.

But when elements of the police bugged them they were compelled to defend themselves.

However, they could also only do so in a half-hearted manner.

The scandal of all of this is that the Labour Party – whom some joke, is now a barristers party- stand full square behind Shatter in his cover up.

Shatter is a law and order fanatic who has little compunction backing the senior police – even when the legal formalities are breached. But Labour once pretended to jump up and down about civil liberties. Not anymore.

Support Brid Smith - the people's candidate for Dublin MEP in May

Brid Smith has devoted her whole adult life to the struggle for workers' rights, women's rights and the rights of all people against the elites and the 1% super rich. Here are some of the high points of her record:

1981: elected to the National Committee of the Hunger Strike campaign, along with others like Bernadette Devlin, fighting for political status for Bobby Sands and his comrades.

1983: first female shop steward in Dublin Bus and Dublin Branch secretary of the National Bus and Railworkers Union.

1984-87: organised solidarity pickets and collections for the Dunnes Stores strikers against Apartheid

1984-5: involved in the support campaign for the British Miners Strike which raised many thousands of pounds.

1990: worked with Gateaux Bakery strikers who occupied the bakery against job losses for over a year.

1992: played a key role in the struggle for abortion rights around the X Case and all the protests of the pro-choice campaign

Early 2000s: played a leading role in the Anti-Bin Tax campaign and built mass campaign in Ballyfermot/Inchicore.

Jailed in Mountjoy along with other activists for direct action.

2003: key role alongside Richard Boyd Barrett in the Irish Anti War Movement which organized the biggest anti-war pro-



tests in history.

2005-8: worked closely with the local people in Mayo in the magnificent Shell to Sea campaign.

2009: elected to represent Ballyfermot/

Drimnagh on Dublin City Council.

She is vocal on many local and national issues, works closely with the Traveller Community and consistently opposes austerity and cutbacks.

2011-13: played a leading role in Campaigns against the Household Charge and the Property Tax, addressing meetings all over the country and chairing some of the Campaigns largest rallies and demonstrations.

2014: Playing a key role in organising the fight back against unjust water charges including the organisation of a national conference (see box)

Alongside all of this Brid is also a proud member of Unite the Union and an activist

in the Dublin Branch.

This outstanding record shows that Brid Smith not only talks the talk, but walks the walk.

Her policies, principles and experience make her the ideal candidate to defend the interests of ordinary people against the Eurocrats and the Troika.

If elected Brid pledges to take only the average workers' wage as salary and donate the rest of the huge MEP salary to political campaigning for working people.

Find out more:

Brid Smith for Europe at
<http://www.bridsmith.net>
for Brid's website

Brid Smith PBP candidate for Europe
for Brid's Facebook page and
@bridsmith
for Brid's twitter account

Water charges conference – Strategies for resistance

Brid Smith, on behalf of People Before Profit, will host a major conference on the politics and strategies related to resisting water privatisation. Speakers will include activists from Bolivia to Paris – places where mass action succeeded in beating the corporations and winning safe and public water supplies.

Get in contact to book your place
Saturday 5 April, 11.00am to 5.00pm
Gresham Hotel, O'Connell Street Dublin
Contact Brid at: 087 9090166

email: brid.smith@dublincity.ie www.bridsmith.net

Floods – the shape of things to come

By John Molyneux

THE exceptional storms and floods that have hit Ireland over the last month have devastated the homes and livelihoods of thousands of people especially in Cork, Limerick and Galway.

It has been the same in Britain with much of Somerset under water all this year.

As always in these disasters the response of the government and the system is grossly inadequate.

This is because for politicians like Enda Kenny or Phil Hogan, or Cameron in Britain, their priority is profit not the needs of ordinary people.

The Irish government has announced a fund of €70 million to deal with flood damage which can sound a lot until you remember that this is roughly one thousandth of the money they raised for the bank bailouts and less than one fiftieth of the personal fortune of Denis O'Brien.

Meanwhile thousands will be left with damaged and uninsurable houses, because insurance companies also put profit before people.



Climate Change

But actually the situation is even more disastrous than this.

This is because the storms and floods that have hit Ireland and Britain are

symptoms of the deeper problem of global climate change and the deadly threat of climate chaos.

It is not a coincidence that they have come as America experienced both an ultra-cold 'polar vortex' and record

drought and heat in California, while there was the terrible Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines and temperatures over 50 degrees Celsius in Australia.

This is exactly what climate change means: not just gradual warming but

more and more extreme weather events – more storms, floods, fires and disasters.

Some people will say there is no direct link between climate change and a particular disaster but this misses the point.

The point is that climate change, especially warmer oceans, increases both the frequency and the intensity of weather catastrophes.

That is why these floods are the shape of things to come – as Bob Dylan put it 'A hard rain's a-gonna fall'.

Our rulers and the giant corporations like Exxon, Shell and BP, know this only too well but they do nothing because they and the capitalist system as a whole have a huge vested interest in the use of fossil fuels which cause climate change.

As always they put profit first and literally 'fiddle while Rome burns' doing nothing to reduce global carbon emissions.

Unless, in the years and decades to come, we seriously challenge the priorities of capitalism the future for humanity will be bleak indeed.

State hypocrisy over charity scandal

By Michael Wallace

AN ugly web of cronyism, greed and corruption has been exposed among senior bosses at the Central Remedial Clinic (CRC).

Large sums of money have been paid to executives while vulnerable patients go without, raising serious questions about a State that prefers to pass responsibility for providing vital services for the elderly, disabled or homeless to unaccountable and undemocratic semi-state Quangos.

In January, former CRC Chief Executive Paul Kiely admitted to the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) that he received an obscene pension package totaling €742,000 on retiring from his position last year.

The bulk of this golden handshake, €700,000, was shamefully diverted from monies raised for charitable purposes by the fundraising wing of the CRC, the Friends and Supporters of the Remedial Clinic and registered as a 'donation' in its internal accounts.

The decision to award Kiely this mammoth pension was taken by the CRC Board of Directors, with documents relating to this decision apparently 'gone missing.'

The board at the Clinic was forced to step down after the scandal broke, while the Board of the Friends & Supporters, including many of the same characters that sat on the board of CRC, also resigned.

Some of these individuals included Kiely himself, Vincent Brady and Jim Nugent; all with strong links to Fianna Fail and former Taoiseach Bertie Ahern in particular.

Kiely is a lifelong friend of the former Taoiseach and a one-time Director of Elections to Ahern. Once an ally of Charles Haughey, Vincent Brady is a retired FF Minister while Nugent once told the Mahon Tribunal he gave Ahern £2,500 as part of a 'whip around.'

In another bizarre twist, Kiely also revealed to PAC a 30-year arrangement whereby CRC pays the Mater Hospital €666,000 a year to administer a pension fund that doesn't exist!

These cosy connections enabled Friends & Supporters to give CRC a



€3 million loan to 'shore up pension arrangements' and led to the existence of a slush fund enjoyed by senior management in the organisation.

Parents

Parents of the 4,000 disabled children who rely on the Clinic's services have generally been supportive of the dedicated frontline staff there. However, they are enraged at senior bosses who disgracefully moved funds raised by the public away from services cut to the bone in order to enjoy inflated salaries, pensions and lifestyles for themselves.

One parent, Lorraine from Waterford, summed up the anger:

"To see young children receiving basic services or none at all, children falling out of wheelchairs that are way too small for them or years old, to hear day after day, week after week parents fighting for therapy or equipment for their children all because of 'lack of funding'... It's disgusting."

Fine Gael and Labour's condemnation of these events is blatant hypocrisy.

While the Friends & Supporters of the Remedial Clinic hoarded €14 million in funds at the end of 2011, this government were busy heaping misery on vulnerable children, the disabled and elderly with brutal austerity cuts of their own.

And claims by Enda Kenny that the culture of patronage and corruption tied into the Irish establishment was 'a thing of the past' have been brutally exposed by the scandals at Irish Water.

Socialists strongly believe that the act of charity is often an act of solidarity and completely recognise the invaluable services and resources some charitable organisations provide for working class people.

Unfortunately, as with CRC, these resources are too often diverted from their intended cause, legally or corruptly, to benefit a small clique of fat cats at the top of these organisations.

Instead of cutbacks, the allocation of adequate state resources for services would remove the need for charities and would be funded by a redistribution of the wealth of society.

More state hypocrisy – The case of Louise O'Keefe

ON 28 January the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled in favour of abuse victim Louise O'Keefe making the state responsible for compensation.

Louise O'Keefe was abused by her school principal Leo Hickey in a national school in Cork in 1973 when she was 8 years old.

He was sentenced to only three years in prison in 1998 for the abuse of several girls in the 1970's.

For 15 years the state has denied responsibility and fought the case in the High Court and Supreme Court.

It even looked for a while like Louise would lose her house to pay legal costs. Consecutive governments have contested the state's responsibility claiming that responsibility lied with the board of management.

But once the case was lost in the ECHR, Enda Kenny was quick to come out with an apology saying: "Sadly, it's one that's indicative of a long litany of cases in Ireland. And for that reason,

"I just think that while this judgment is exceptionally complex and will be studied by Government, I would like to say to Louise



O'Keefe that I apologise for what happened to her."

While the apology was accepted by Louise O'Keefe, it shows the hypocrisy of the state which has fought her for 15 years with no sign of an apology.

It also shows the strong links that still remain between the state and the Catholic Church.

The state was willing to put Louise through a tremendous ordeal in order to prevent precedent for similar cases.

This was done primarily to save the state money but also to ensure

that other victims of abuse in national schools, would not be able to challenge the role of the Church in schools and call for the Church to pay compensation.

The systemic nature of child abuse in institutions run by the Catholic Church should be proof enough that there is a need to separate church and state.

In addition, the Catholic Church (one of the richest institutions in the country) must be forced to pay compensation to victims of abuse, including those in the Magdalene laundries and national schools.

Putin's war on the LGBTQ community

By Seán Egan

IN the run up to the Sochi Winter Olympics the virulent state-sanctioned bigotry against the LGBTQ community has received widespread international attention.

Many nations and organisations have condemned Russia for its homophobic policies but few if any have taken a substantial stand against them.

In Russia there exists a myriad of organisations and institutions that oppress legally, ideologically and physically.

In June of last year Putin's parliament unanimously passed a bill banning "homosexual propaganda".

The bill banned any speech or literature equating straight and gay relationships as well as any material promoting LGBTQ rights.

But because of liberal interpretations of this bill any display of homosexuality is punishable by law.

The same day a law was passed banning blasphemy.

This law essentially bans people questioning the homophobic, sexist and nationalist proclamations of the Russian Orthodox Church.

"Offending religious feeling" is punishable by up to three years in prison.

This is a clear attack on the marginalised Russian Left and LGBTQ community.

Putin's Alliances

Putin's alliance with the Russian Orthodox Church is deep-seated.

The Patriarch of the church has even described Putin as "an act of God".

Putin's alliance with the Church and his advocacy of extremist anti-gay policies can be seen as an attempt to distract Russian voters from his unfulfilled campaign promises, growing economic inequality and rising prices.

The scapegoating of the LGBTQ community by the Russian political class has bred violence and misery.

Specifically, the homophobic rhetoric of the Church and government has emboldened fringe anti-gay hate groups such as God's Will and Occupy Paedophilia to enact violence against LGBTQ individuals and gay rights protesters.

These groups assert that homosexuality is connected to paedophilia and is a threat to Russian sovereignty.

These ridiculous statements only serve



LGBT people on an opposition rally in Moscow in 2012 (Pic: Sergey Kukota)

Olympic construction workers beaten in Russia

THE Sochi Olympics have been a real fillip for Putin's cronies at the top of Russian society.

Meanwhile, many of the people who worked to prepare for the Winter Olympics have been subjected to beatings, intimidation and little pay.

Moderas Durmachan, a construction worker who

complained to his supervisor about long hours and lack of pay, said the police then "beat me unconscious."

"They took away my trousers and raped me with an iron bar, told me to confess," he said.

After beating him, the police told him to drop his claims of back pay and his boss would get him

out of jail.

An estimated 95,000 workers prepared for the Olympics.

Up to 90 percent say wages haven't been paid or have been significantly delayed.

Workers had their passports removed and immigration raids carried out on them in the run-up to the games.

to foster more bigotry.

Putin has claimed that LGBTQ visitors to Sochi will be safe but that they should stay away from children.

That the president would connect homosexuality to paedophilia with the same lies and hatred of the murderous right wing extremist groups is deeply disturbing.

State sanctioned violence

These groups often engage in acts of extreme violence and sexual assault against LGBTQ people and post videos of their actions on social media sites.

Violence against LGBTQ people is not considered a hate crime by Russian authorities and little action is taken.

Victims are discouraged from report-

ing the attacks and very few perpetrators are investigated or prosecuted.

LGBTQ people in Russia live their lives under the constant threat of state-sanctioned homophobic violence.

LGBTQ protests in Russia are regularly attacked and quashed by both the police and right-wing counter-protestors.

LGBTQ activism is becoming increasingly difficult.

This is due to the ban on "Gay Propaganda" as well as the violence faced by activists.

Activists are outed by the viciously bigoted state media, subjected to police harassment and intimidation or targeted for assault by the far-right.

Dmitry Chizhevsky a prominent gay activist was assaulted with baseball bats

and had his eye destroyed by an air pistol after being outed on state television.

He was called a foreign agent when money was raised for him to go abroad for a procedure that would save his eye.

He stayed in Russia and lost sight in his damaged eye.

LGBTQ organisations and events are also the targets of right wing terrorism.

Side by Side a LGBTQ film festival held in Saint Petersburg was disrupted several times due to bomb threats and homophobic protests.

Other organisations have had their premises damaged or defaced and their activists assaulted or intimidated.

These organisations are regularly raided by the state.

The disruption of these vital services

Francois Hollande's retreats have given the bigots a boost in France

by Dave Sewell

FRANCE'S centre-left president Francois Hollande has given a chilling glimpse of what could be in store for Britain under a future Labour government.

Hollande capitulated to reactionary protests against his government's tame pro-LGBTQ reforms last week.

He dashed any suggestion that same sex couples could have the right to procedures such as IVF to help them have children.

His proposed family law was postponed and stripped of some of its more progressive elements.

A number of rights for gay and lesbian couples were removed last year.

Hollande's coalition partners accused him of "betrayal".

An opinion poll on Thursday of last week found that just 19 percent of people backed him—a record low.

Protests against gay marriage last year have developed into a sustained movement of intense homophobia and transphobia.

Marches have brought tens of thousands onto the streets, with fascist groups at the centre.

A second day of school stayaways called by the far right affected a tiny minority of schools on Monday of this week.

Orientation

Far right bigots have claimed that children are taught to masturbate, or to change their sexual orientation or



Francois Hollande (Pic: Lucas Desiles)

gender in schools.

The reality is a new "ABC of Equality" to promote respect in schools, which most parents back.

France has not become a country of bigots.

Only a minority think the law should defend "the traditional family model". A majority support gay marriage and help for lesbians to have children.

Hundreds of people demonstrated against a fascist Front National meeting in Rennes last week.

But Hollande has demobilised and demoralised the supporters he had galvanised with promises to take on the rich.

Unemployment has risen and the economy has sunk deeper into crisis. Hollande has responded with cuts

endangers and isolates the most vulnerable LGBTQ Russians.

Western Complicity

Despite their condemnations of Russia's homophobic policies, Western governments have failed to protect and provide for LGBTQ asylum seekers fleeing oppression.

Many countries still have punitive anti-gay legislation.

Western governments have destroyed the lives of many gay asylum seekers by deporting them back to the dangerous places they attempted to escape from.

Western governments must stop paying lip-service to human rights while condemning people to suffer dire human rights abuses through their cruel, restrictive immigration and asylum policies.

As socialists we denounce all immigration controls as racist and oppressive.

Ironically the homophobic legislation associated with right-wing Russian nationalism is built on the rhetoric and illegitimate research of far-right think tanks in the United States and elsewhere.

Organisations like the Family Research Council and Concerned Women for America use faulty statistics to espouse "traditional values" (racism, sexism and homophobia). This "research" is used by opponents of equality to justify bigotry.

Ireland's very own Iona Institute is one of these hate groups disguised as a think-tank.

Russia is an extreme example of when bigots dominate the political system and the left is brutally silenced.

Similar anti-equality messages will be broadcast in the run-up to the referendum on marriage equality.

Socialists need to combat this hateful narrative wherever it is found.

Socialists

It is vital that we as socialists are involved in building and sustaining an international campaign to challenge Russia's homophobia epidemic by pressuring western governments to penalise the Russian state and standing in solidarity with Russia's left-wing and LGBTQ movements.

Socialists are dedicated to the dismantling of all oppression including homophobia and transphobia.

To do this we need a revolutionary mass movement to combat bigotry and to overthrow the source of oppression, the capitalist system itself.

while union leaders have helped keep a lid on workers' anger.

This created a political vacuum on the left at a time of rising discontent.

And mass deportations of Roma people have boosted the right.

Hollande's government was supposed to celebrate a "pact of responsibility" with bosses this week.

It means €30 billion of tax exemptions for them, and €60 billion of cuts to services and benefits. Yet many politicians were critical while the bosses' organisation Medef said it wasn't enough.

Stopping France's drift to the right will take systematic opposition to the Nazis.

But it will also take real resistance to Hollande's austerity.

Concessions fail to stem the crisis in Ukraine

Oligarchs are exerting their power but protests continue, writes Simon Basketter

UKRAINE'S president Viktor Yanukovich is locked in talks with the three main opposition political leaders as Socialist Worker goes to press.

The talks represent the wings of Ukraine's establishment trying to resolve a crisis that has gripped the country since last November.

Ukraine's Prime Minister Mykola Azarov resigned at the start of a parliamentary debate on Tuesday of last week. The government also repealed new anti-protest laws.

The long-running crisis was sparked when the government rejected a deal with the European Union.

Splits between the pro-Western and pro-Russian sections of the ruling class, and widespread anger at the government sparked mass protests and occupations of government buildings.

The opposition may secure constitutional changes this week that significantly weaken Yanukovich.

Yanukovich said an amnesty for dozens of protesters arrested during demonstrations would only be implemented if protesters leave the streets and occupied buildings.

Oligarchs

The key to understanding his position may lie in a secret meeting of Ukraine's powerful oligarchs. This took place on Saturday 8 February—and the president was not invited.

Those present included Rinat Akhmetov, Ukraine's richest man. Dmitry Firtash, Vadim Novinsky and representatives of Igor Kolomoisky and Gennadiy Bogolyubov were also present.

All five are billionaires—and control



Barricade with the protesters at Hrushevskogo street, Kiev on Sunday of last week (Pic: Sasha Maksymenko)

at least 100 of Ukraine's 447 MPs.

Most but not all of those MPs are aligned behind the governing Party of Regions. It defeated an attempted no confidence vote last December by a margin of 40 votes.

The bosses put out a statement condemning the use of force by those involved in both street riots and attempts to curb

them".

That evening Yanukovich made his first concessions.

Violent clashes in the capital Kiev the week before last left at least four people dead.

Planned protests in Kiev over 7-9 February were cancelled for talks and for the funeral of a protester. But demonstra-

tions have since spread across the country.

Yanukovich offered to make Arseniy Yatsenyuk—acting leader of the Fatherland party—prime minister. He proposed that Vitali Klitschko, the former world heavyweight boxing champion, be deputy prime minister.

So far both have rejected the offer. Activists from one group stormed a

justice ministry building in Kiev last Sunday, despite opposition leaders telling them not to. This exposed the limits of the protest leaders' authority.

Activists continue to occupy Kiev's central square and government buildings in a number of Ukrainian cities.

The protests are on a huge scale. But so far the movement remains trapped as a bargaining chip for the interests of the West, Russia and Ukrainian bosses.

Who's who in Ukraine

The groups manoeuvring to shape Ukraine's future include:

■ **Party of the Regions:** Pro-Russian ruling party led by President Viktor Yanukovich.

■ **All-Ukrainian Union 'Fatherland':** Holds about 20 percent of parliamentary seats. Led by Arseniy Yatsenyuk. Essentially a pro-Western, neoliberal party.

■ **Ukrainian Democratic Alliance for Reform:** Led by boxing champion Vitali Klitschko. Another pro-Western, neoliberal party.

■ **Svoboda 'Freedom':** Fascist group led by Oleh Tyahnybok.

■ **Right sector:** Far right networks are at the core of street fighting in Kiev. They oppose integration with Russia and the EU. But they don't account for the tens of thousands on the protests.

■ **Trade unions:** Tied to either the ruling party or the opposition. There are moves towards calls for strikes from those backing the opposition.

Thousands of textile workers stage a sit-in in Mahalla

by Judith Orr

OVER 10,000 workers at state-owned textile factories in Egypt's industrial city Mahalla struck and staged a sit-in on Monday 10 February.

They are demanding the payment of promised bonuses and the new government sanctioned monthly minimum wage of €120. The monthly wage of thousands of Mahalla workers is currently only €50.

Workers also called for the sacking of Fouad Abdel-Alim, the boss of the firm that oversees all state-owned textile factories.

They face a state clampdown on protests. The military regime has declared that a new presidential election will be held before April. Left nationalist Hamdeen Sabahi has announced he will stand.

Sabahi stood for president in 2012 in the first election after the fall of former dictator Hosni Mubarak.

He came third behind the eventual winner, Mohamed Mursi, and Ahmed Shafiq, who was prime minister under Mubarak.

The newly promoted Field Marshal Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, leader of the present regime, is also expected to stand.



Textile workers in Mahalla, Egypt during a previous strike (Pic: Nasser Nouri)

NEWS IN BRIEF

Strike escalates in South Africa after more workers walk out

A strike across South Africa's platinum mines escalated after metalworkers in the Numsa union at the mines came out alongside miners.

Miners in the AMCU union are striking over pay.

One striker was killed and another seriously injured when police opened fire outside an Amplats' mine near Northam in Limpopo province.

Workers have been out since 23 January in the first official dispute led by the AMCU. It overtook the NUM union after the 2012 Marikana massacre.

Fury in Greece as police tow migrants out to drown



Anger in Athens last week (Pic: Workers' Solidarity)

by Yorgos Pittas

AROUND 2,000 people—including many Syrian, Afghan and Pakistani immigrants—marched on European Union (EU) offices in Athens on Thursday 6 February.

They demanded that the EU opens its borders and that police officers are prosecuted after 12 women and children drowned last month.

A boat carrying 28 Afghan and Syrian refugees had got within 100 metres of the island

of Farmakonisi.

But a police patrol intercepted it and pulled it back out to sea towards Turkey, according to survivors.

Abdul Sabur, whose wife and child were among the drowned, told Workers Solidarity newspaper, "When we tried to climb onto the police boat saying we were going to drown, they laughed and swore and said they didn't care if we died. They tried to kick us so we couldn't climb in."

The government said the migrants caused the boat to sink themselves.

Now survivors demand the government finds the bodies so they can be buried, and the wreckage to prove what happened.

"I want to find my wife and my child," said Abdul.

"I want to know why they did these things. And to stop them doing it again to other people."

Thousands protest in Spain against plan to ban abortion



Protests in Madrid (Pic: Xtina Garcia on Flickr)

TENS of thousands of protesters from all over the Spanish state marched in Madrid on Saturday 8 February against government attacks on the right to abortion.

Justice minister Alberto Ruiz-Gallardon wants to ban abortion except in cases of rape or risks to the woman's health.

Since 2010, abortion is

available on demand up to 14 weeks of pregnancy.

The new proposals have been met with outrage, with even some politicians in Ruiz-Gallardon's own conservative PP party speaking out.

Solidarity protests took place in London and Edinburgh. More than 5,000 marched in Paris—the day before the latest massive homophobic march in the city.

Swiss vote against migrant workers gives boost to racists

SOME 50.3 percent of voters rejected freedom of movement for workers from European Union (EU) countries in a Swiss referendum last week.

Switzerland, which is not part of the EU, will now abandon its border treaty and return to a system of quotas for migrants.

The right wing Swiss People's Party led a campaign based on myths that migrants undermine pay, and take jobs and homes.

Right wingers across Europe have seized on this as reversing the trend to more open borders within Europe.

Socialist Worker

Stormont is failing us Time for Change!

In their own words



The cuts are now literally killing people. For too long the failed politics of Stormont have been an excuse to impose cuts on ordinary workers from both sides of the community. Protestants and Catholics have the same problems in their daily lives and I would appeal to all working people to get involved in a grassroots movement that wants to put peoples needs before the bosses and the bankers.
■ Gerry Carroll People Before Profit Candidate in West Belfast for election to Belfast City Council in the Upper Falls/Black Mountain Ward.

WHAT are Sinn Féin and the DUP currently up to in Stormont?

Since the start of the year, we have seen the extent to which the cuts they have made to A&E departments in hospitals are putting patient's safety at risk.

At least five people have died in Belfast's Royal Victoria waiting too long to be treated.

Poos

Other people die at home as waiting lists for tests and operations get longer and longer.

Meanwhile, Health Minister, Edwin Poos, not satisfied at making the lives of LGBT people a misery, wants to attack older people and people with learning disabilities - moving towards the closure of all residential homes for older people and most of the Day Centres for learning disabled people.

While we don't expect much from a DUP minister, we would have hoped for better from Sinn Féin, given their anti-cuts rhetoric in the South.

Yet the Department of Education, under SF's John O'Dowd, is closing schools across the six counties.

He argues that this makes sense because numbers of children of school age are dropping - the 'empty desk' argument.

It is true that numbers at the schools being closed are dropping.

But the response of a left-wing party would not be to close the schools but to reduce class sizes in order to improve the educational outcomes for the more disadvantaged students.

O'Dowd is not even looking after those who would be seen as SF's "own"; he shows no commitment to Irish language education.

Despite years of assurances, there is still no Meanscoil in Derry.

Children educated through Irish at primary school in one of several Bunscoileanna across the city are forced into English language second level education.

Meanwhile, the SF Minister in charge of Culture Caral Ni Chuilin shows no sign of bringing forward the Irish Act that was promised as part of the St Andrews' Agreement.

And she agreed to cuts to Irish language organisations North of the border that could see some of them disappear.

On this basis, Sinn Féin would be a disaster in coalition in the South, seemingly unable to stand up to their coalition partners.

Housing

This is best seen in relation to housing.

The DUP's Nelson McCausland is in charge of housing and he is set to abolish the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE).

The NIHE was established as a result of the Civil Rights Movement.

As well as doing all the things that Councils usually do with regard to public housing - acting as landlord - it ensures that housing is allocated fairly, on the basis of need rather than religion or political influence.

As recently as 2010, a Price Waterhouse Cooper report said that



Minister for Privatisation Nelson McCausland

"NIHE is one of the success stories from Northern Ireland's recent history.

Since its introduction nearly 40 years ago it has delivered significant social benefits throughout Northern Ireland with the quality of the housing stock having moved from one of the worst in Western Europe to what is now regarded as best quality stock.

It is rightly regarded nationally and internationally as a leading authority on 'best practice' on both housing management and community building."

So why is the NIHE being abolished?

Why are socialists and trade unionists having to campaign against the sell-off of all NIHE houses to Housing Associations - an effective privatisation, leaving the North as the only part of



these islands to have no publicly owned housing and destroying the legacy of the civil rights movement?

There is no answer to this question

that reflects well on any of the Stormont political parties.

The need for political change in the North is obvious.

Sinn Féin is telling people to vote to make them the biggest party in Stormont, so they will be in the driving seat and able to make change.

But even if SF were the largest party, the DUP will continue to have a veto over everything that happens in Stormont.

That is why we need people on the streets, putting pressure on all the parties to stop whipping up sectarianism on issues like flags and emblems and instead to end their collaboration in neo-liberal policies of cuts, privatisation and job losses.

SOCIALISM 2014

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Inside:

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Fortress Europe killing Thousands

Page 5:



Floods warn of impending climate chaos