

# Socialist Worker



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**HOUSING ... HEALTH ... WATER ...**

# FIGHT FOR YOUR RIGHTS

The contrast could not be more stark. In a country supposed to be in 'recovery', a country with 90,000 millionaires, housing, health and water – the basic necessities of life – are all in a state of crisis.

In September the Government itself admitted that the number of homeless families had risen by 76% since the start of the year.

The Peter McVerry Trust recorded the number of people accessing emergency homeless accommodation in Ireland the week commencing 21st September as 4,999 (3,428 Adults & 1,571 children).

It estimated the number of rough sleepers in Dublin in October 2015 at 150 persons each night. It says the minimum number of people experiencing homelessness in Ireland as of 30th September 2015 is over 5,100. And that 'Homelessness in Dublin has increased each month in the first 9 months of 2015'.

The numbers of patients on trolleys and hospital waiting lists are continuing to rise. In October the monthly report from the HSE showed that over 3,000 patients waited more than 24 hours in an emergency department and over 11,000 patients wait longer than 18 months for an outpatient appointment and more than 1,000 wait longer than 18 months for inpatient or day case procedures – all in breach of official targets.

As a result of this disastrous situation INMO (Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation) plans to take strike action against overcrowding in at least one hospital in each hospital group on Tuesday, December 15, with further action planned in the New Year.

The union said that 92 per cent of Emergency Department nurses backed the call for nationwide industrial action.

Meanwhile Health Minister, Leo Varadkar, has been forced to scrap plans for universal health insurance. He compared the plan to the Irish Water debacle, saying it would have been impossible to impose the extra fees without a backlash from struggling families.

## Water

And speaking of water, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has just reported that raw sewage is being discharged into 45 rivers, lakes and coastal areas around the State. The EPA said failure to properly treat sewage "can pose a risk to human health".

Meanwhile the Government's plans to make us all pay charges for water we already pay for continue to be in complete disarray, with ongoing mass non-payment especially

in working class areas.

But if that's how things stand on our side of the tracks – our most basic human needs and rights under attack – things are very different at the other end of society.

## Greed

The revelations about the salaries at the top of the IFA (Irish Farmers Association) showed that the culture of greed and sleaze, of Charlie, Bertie and the Fianna Fail Galway tent, lives on.

IFA General Secretary, Pat Smith, was paid no less than €445,000 last year and €535,000 the year before, plus €2 million (!) severance pay, while his sidekick, IFA President, Eddie Downey, struggled to get by on only €200,000.

And then a few rungs above that we have the one and only Denis O'Brien with his €5.97 billion and his new €60 million private jet, and a Government that cam-



paigns against Apple having to pay the €19 billion (!) taxes they owe this country.

Enda Kenny calls this state of affairs 'stability' and contrasts it to the 'chaos' represented by any alternative.

For working people it's not stability but catastrophe and if Enda gets away with it things will rapidly get worse again the moment the election is out of the way

movement should unite in another huge demonstration to set the agenda and put the stamp of the mass movement on the election campaign.

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Kieran Allen on Why the Labour Party Should Go Away

## Rights

What has become abundantly clear over the last five years is that if we want our rights – rights to housing, health or water or any sort of a decent future we are going to have to fight for them, at the ballot box and on the streets.

That means in the coming election voting for the fighting left, especially the AAA- People Before Profit Alliance, but also getting back out on the streets.

The moment the election is called the whole anti-water charges and anti-austerity



INMO members have voted 92pc to strike over emergency department overcrowding

## TDs SPEAK OUT:

# No to war – defend Irish Neutrality!

Three TDs, Richard Boyd Barrett, Clare Daly and Mick Wallace addressed a packed meeting of the Irish Anti-War Movement in Dublin on 26 November and made the case against a knee-jerk military reaction to the horrible terrorist attacks in Paris and against the further undermining of Irish Neutrality.

Richard Boyd Barrett, People Before Profit TD for Dun Laoghaire said:



'Bombing and killing more innocent civilians in Syria is not the answer to the terrible atrocity in Paris. It just means more innocent

people will die and make a bad situation worse. There's no way Irish troops should be sent out to re-enforce the French in Mali because this will directly implicate us in the military adventures of an imperial and colonial power both in Africa and in Syria. It will shred what's left of our neutrality.'

Clare Daly, Independent TD for Swords, argued that;



'History has taught that launching bombing attacks will only play into the hands of ISIS, will lead to a further escalation in violence and will be counter productive. The first thing we

should do is to stop the bombing and, here in Ireland, stop making Shannon available to the US military.'

Mick Wallace, Independent TD for Wexford, added:



'For the French to react by bombing Raqqa where there's five hundred thousand civilians living is pure nonsense and would have cheered up ISIS no end. Likewise it is blatantly obvious most Irish people do not want Shannon being used as a military base to inflict mindless destruction elsewhere. It has to be stopped.'

The enthusiastic meeting voted

overwhelmingly to call an anti-war rally at the Dail before it breaks up for Christmas and to prepare for more action in the new year.

## Prison threat

As Socialist Worker goes to press it is being reported that Clare Daly and Mick Wallace are about to be sent to prison for 30 days for their refusal to pay the €2,000 fines imposed on them for so-called 'breach of the peace' at Shannon Airport.

Asked if he was prepared to go to prison, Mick Wallace said: "The decision of myself and Clare Daly to scale the fence at Shannon Airport was designed to help keep the peace, not break it. We do not accept the judge's decision to the contrary, and under no circumstances will we pay the fines. We realise this may mean serving time in prison. It's not something we'd look forward to, but if it happens, so be it."

Enforcement of this order, which has been outstanding since July, at this point would mean Clare and Mick being jailed over Christmas. Socialist Worker congratulates them on their principled stand and wishes them well. We are confident that whole peace and anti-war movement in Ireland and beyond will stand with them.

For more on responses to Paris and the Socialist view see p. 6.

## The Banking Enquiry Fiasco

**B**ack in July it was reported in The Irish Times that the cost of the celebrated Banking Enquiry had risen to €3.5 million or €50,000 a day!

Then in September and October the need to complete the enquiry was cited by politicians, especially labour politicians as a reason not to have a November election.

Now at the end of November they make clear a) that they are only going to publish a truncated version of the report; b) that it's not going to tell us much we didn't know anyway.

Moreover it is evident that it was set with such a narrow frame of reference as to virtually guarantee this farcical outcome.

### Waste

Like most such enquiries and tribunals in Ireland the only real outcome will be a huge waste of time and public money and all that will be revealed will be that none of people, from Bertie Aherne to Michael 'Fingers' Fingleton, who caused the worst economic crash in the history of the state and the massive impoverishment of the Irish people are willing to put their hands up and accept responsibility for it.

And we certainly knew that already.



Brian Cowan puts his hands up

# Portugal swings leftward

James O'Toole

**T**he Right wing government of Passos Coelho has become the shortest administration since the Portuguese revolution of 1974. As news of the Right government's fall reached protesters on the streets of Lisbon people shouted 'Victory!'

The Right wing government was imposed by the President, Cavaco Silva, when it looked as though the Left had the majority of seats in the parliament. The President declared, with blatant contempt for democracy, that he wouldn't allow it:

"In 40 years of democracy, no government in Portugal has ever depended on the support of anti-European forces, that is to say forces that campaigned to abrogate the Lisbon Treaty, the Fiscal Compact, the Growth and Stability Pact, as well as to dismantle monetary union and take Portugal out of the euro, in addition to wanting the dissolution of NATO," said Mr Cavaco Silva.

But his Right wing appointees lasted only 11 days before a vote of no confidence from the opposition pulled the plug.

The new government is made up of the Labour Party-style Socialists and supported by the Communist Party and the Left Bloc.

The Socialist Party are like the Irish Labour Party and were responsible for Portugal's bank bailout. They passed laws making it easier to sack workers and implemented neo-liberal policies.



With the growth of the radical left, and with huge abstention from voting, the Socialist Party understood it was necessary to show a 'left face' but statements from leading members show these changes are superficial.

### Contracted

Deputy Mario Centeno, a former Bank of Portugal economist, remarked that they would not 'throw money at the economy' and 'we will stay on the path of fiscal consolidation'.

He also said that they would continue to pay back the debt saying: 'Nobody with any sense thinks of not paying debts they have contracted'.

He has been named the new Finance Minister which will reassure the 'markets' and the Troika. Markets have been unruffled by the

latest developments, with Portugal able to secure a 10-year, billion-euro (\$1.06-billion) loan.

Public debt is 127% of GDP and total debt is 370%, worse than in Greece. The Left Bloc have stated that there must be moves to tackle the debt.

The Socialist Party have promised a package of 55 measures that they say will 'turn the page on austerity' but how can they keep up the debt repayments, stick to EU fiscal rules and end austerity?

### Experience

The experience of Syriza in power shows that you cannot end austerity while pleasing the Troika and the markets.

The Left Bloc have voted for the Socialist Party to form a minority government but are giving that support on the opposition benches.

The radical left has agreed to the list of reforms from the SP.

Considering the track record of the SP it would be better to vote with them on a case by case basis leaving yourself free to mobilise when the Socialists bend to the Troika.

If the Socialist Party break their promises the Left Bloc should pull their support and call major mobilisations against any austerity measures.

The real battle is on the streets where only pressure from below, in the form of protests and strikes, can make sure the parliamentarians stick to their promises of reform.

Without those mobilisations it will be easy for the Socialist Party to revert to form when the Portuguese ruling class and the EU pile on the pressure.

## PFIZER AND ALLERGAN: A MATCH MADE IN A TAX HAVEN



Dave O'Farrell

**T**he US based pharmaceutical giant Pfizer has announced plans to buy Irish based pharmaceutical company Allergan although the structure of the deal - known as a corporate inversion - effectively means that Pfizer will be bought by the smaller Allergan allowing Pfizer to move its HQ to Ireland and avail of our light touch regulation and shamefully low effective corporate tax rate.

If it goes ahead the \$160bn deal will be the largest corporate inversion deal in history.

That moving their HQ - at least on paper - to Ireland is such an attractive prospect for Pfizer is a shocking indictment of government policy which not only sees corporations barely taxed here but also facilitates the same corporations to avoid paying tax in other countries.

# Irish Life Workers show their strength

**I**n an impressive show of strength over 1000 Irish Life workers have been out on strike each Thursday in November.

They have marched out of work at 12noon and formed a powerful rolling picket with their Unite the Union red flags on Lower Abbey St in the centre of Dublin. They have also picketed four other Irish Life sites nearby.

Each week they made a big impact attracting support from passers by and passing traffic.

Unite Shop Steward and Branch Chair, Joe Conroy, told Socialist Worker 'It's about slashing salary scales by 40 percent to cut worker's pay, about scandalously low pay for some of our members, about managements refusal to negotiate and their attempt to set workers against one another and undermine collective bargaining'.

### Disguising

Management are disguising their pay cuts under talk of a median wage calculated in relation to other firms but the effect of this, Joe Conroy, explained 'is that 70% of the



workforce will get no pay increase in the foreseeable future.' At same time says Joe, 'We discover that in Irish Life in Dundalk one third of the workers are on less than

the living wage.' Given that Irish Life is actually owned by Canadian parent company Great-West Lifeco to which it contributed €27.4 million in profits in the third quarter and

has top managers on massive salaries Joe says, 'These poverty wages are unacceptable'. Also unacceptable, he says, 'is management's refusal to negotiate seriously with the

union. They are trying to dictate our terms and conditions rather engage in collective bargaining and we won't accept this'.

There is also a wider issue involved, which is important to all trade unionists, as Michael Taft, the Unite economist, has explained in his Unite's Notes on the Front. <http://notesonthefront.typepad.com/>

What Irish Life are trying to do is treat labour as simply 'a cost' to be reduced and not as a creator of value, and so remove any link between profits made and wages. Obviously establishing this as a precedent would greatly benefit unscrupulous employers every where.

They could ratchet up ever larger profits without any obligation to reward their workers. This is why all trade unionists should support their sisters and brothers in Irish Life.

So far management have refused to meet their demands so the workers, whose confidence and determination have been growing in the face of this intransigence, have decided to escalate their action at some point in the run up to Christmas.

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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

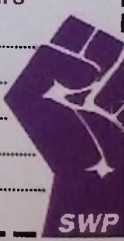
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# The Labour Party – It should go away

Kieran Allen

The Labour Party is making a desperate bid to survive. Labour TDs have met a very hostile response in working class areas and believe they can only win a handful of seats in the next election. They are employing two main strategies to bolster their vote.

The first comes from the SIPTU leader, Jack O'Connor, who fights far harder for Labour's survival than he does for his own members.

In a recent article in the union's magazine, *Liberty*, he argued that 'we are on the way to electing a monopoly, single-party, Fine Gael government – unless a significantly greater number of voters decide to support Labour.'

In other words, vote Labour to protect ourselves from Fine Gael.

However the Labour Party has never acted as a shield against right wing policies. Its whole history has been to act as a prop for right wing parties.

When the British Labour Party was creating a National Health Service, the Irish Labour Party was blocking a free health service for mothers and teenagers under 18.

The architect of the scheme, Noel Browne, later wrote that the Labour leader, William Norton, was his worst enemy in the cabinet, urging acceptance of the Bishop's dictat that there should be no 'communist' health service in Ireland.

Labour has always been comfortable with the two and a half party system – as long as its lead-



Jack and Joan

ers get to occupy Ministerial seats every few years.

This is why it has gone along with Fine Gael right wing policies. Incredibly, it even supported the introduction of emergency legislation.

## Legislative Decree

The Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act allowed the state to cut workers' wages in the public sector – by legislative decree.

It instituted age discrimination against young people by cutting their social welfare to €100 and reducing the salaries of new entrants to teaching and nursing by 10%. And, of course, the Labour Party has done everything in its power to impose water charges.

A vote for Labour, therefore, is a vote for another Fine Gael led

government.

The second strategy of the Labour Party has been to try to refurbish its liberal image.

It recognises that a large youth vote has emerged after the Marriage Equality referendum and hopes it can attract some of this.

But the reality is that Labour's cowardice extends to the liberal agenda as well. Two issues in particular indicate this.

Labour voted for the Protection of Life and Pregnancy Act which provided for long prison sentences for those taking an abortion pill.

It voted down Clare Daly's attempt to call a referendum on Repeal the 8th Amendment. It even voted against measures to provide for abortion in the case of fatal foetal abnormalities.

The Labour Minister Ruairi

Quinn refused to take schools out of the hands of church authorities and instead promised to speed up the transfer of church run schools to multi-denominational bodies.

By the time he left office just one – yes, one – Catholic Church run school had been handed over.

Labour has also done nothing to end discrimination against teachers on the grounds of their sexuality, or religious or political views.

For example Section 37 of the Employment Equality Act 1998-2011, states that no charge of discrimination can be brought where an institution acts 'to prevent an employee or a prospective employee from undermining the religious ethos of the institution'.

A forthcoming School Admission Bill also refuses to outlaw schools which discriminate against children

who are not Catholics.

At present, non-Catholic children must wait at the end of the queue to gain admissions to church run schools.

Even on 'the liberal agenda' therefore, Labour's strategy amounts to making promises about what it will do after an election. Its record before the election shows that it is a cowardly party that will sacrifice our rights to prop up its conservative allies in Fine Gael.

## Left Formation

At the moment, Ireland is undergoing a huge political transition and all parties are making desperate efforts to shift ground. The crash of 2008 and the austerity measures which followed are breaking apart the two and a half party system. The Irish Labour Party is set to

follow the path of its counterpart in Greece, Pasok, and be replaced with a more genuine left formation. Few people outside its ranks will be upset at that prospect.

Worse, the niche that Labour Party has occupied of propping up right wing parties and betraying its own supporters means that there is no longer a viable left wing inside it.

Groupings like Liaison of the Left and Militant Labour and left wingers in Labour Youth have long since disappeared.

Even relatively moderate social democrats like Roisín Shortall could not stick the party any longer. And there is no prospect of a Jeremy Corbyn type figure emerging after defeat.

The Labour Party is therefore dying and simply needs a proper burial.



Joan standing up to Enda.

# Nice little Recovery for Politicians and Billionaires

Michael Wallace

Fine Gael and Labour keep telling us we've never had it so good and that we're the fastest growing economy in the EU.

So why is it that most ordinary working people haven't been touched by any of this? Perhaps it's because this recovery is based on a race to the bottom for tens of thousands of workers, appalling levels of poverty, widening inequality and a chronic health and housing crisis.

Economic growth figures parroted by ministers and the media are heavily inflated by multinational profits, accountancy tricks and tax evasion.

Even outgoing Central Bank governor Patrick Honohan has now warned the government that "the rate of economic growth in being exaggerated" with activities of multinationals "distorting figures."

One feature of this recovery has been the widening gulf between rich and poor, made worse by Budget 2016. Ireland's inequality rivals that of the US with the top 20% of households owning 73% of the country's wealth and the poorest 20% owning just 0.2%.

According to Tasc, more than a third of all income is in the hands of the top 10% of high earners and booming stock markets and property bubbles have enabled Ireland's richest 300 people increase their wealth to more than €70 billion; up €7 billion on the previous year.

Meanwhile 1.4 million are living in enforced poverty; 211,000 children are in consistent poverty and one in five go to school or bed hungry.

In all, food poverty is experienced by more than



Denis O'Brien's new toy The Gulfstream G650 with a list price of €60 million

470,000 people: one in ten of the population. According to Saint Vincent de Paul, the numbers of people seeking help with basic needs like food and fuel remain at record levels - its volunteers will visit about 140,000 people between now and Christmas.

Then there are the twin emergencies in the health service and housing. FG/Labour has cut €3 billion from the health budget and 10,000 front-line staff from the service in recent years.

## Overcrowding

According to the INMO, last month was the worst October on record for emergency department overcrowding with 7,971 patients on trolleys. It's the fifteenth month in a row that an increase was recorded. Medics are now calling on the government to declare a national emergency in our hospitals.

The housing and homeless emergency is also worsening as latest data shows 1,500 homeless children in 738 families, up 81% since January. Overall, there are 5,000 homeless people.

If the current rate of families becoming homeless continues, there will be more than 6,000 children in emergency accommodation by 2017. There are now 130,000 applicants on social housing waiting lists and 60,000 families in long-term mortgage arrears facing threats of repossession from the banks we bailed out.

What about a recovery in employment and wages? Unemployment is still hovering around 10%. It rises to 21% (one in five workers or between 330,000 and 475,000) when you include the under-employed.

The numbers part-time and on zero-hour contracts has risen to 128,000, one of the highest in the EU. According to Eurostat, there are still 20 jobseekers for every one vacancy, with youth unemployment at 21%. There are 88,000 on labour activation schemes.

According to Revenue data, the top 1% of income earners averaged €373,000 compared to more than half the population earning less than €28,500 a year with one in five workers

classified as low-paid and living in poverty. And with low wages rife and no accommodation available, there's little sign of the nearly 475,000 who emigrated since 2008 returning soon.

A more accurate reflection of who is really enjoying the recovery is the recent sight of Denis O'Brien's new €60 million luxury jet showcased at Dublin Airport with an Isle of Man registration and Irish tricolour on the tail.

O'Brien saw his wealth increase by €1.5 billion in 2014 thanks to debt write-downs worth \$450 million and is now worth €5.97 billion.

No wonder so many people are left unimpressed and angry at all this recovery talk while a 'frustrated' Enda Kenny and 'baffled' Joan Burton think we're all being irrational and ungrateful.

To prove the point, FG/Labour TDs just voted themselves a salary increase by lifting a pay freeze off public servants who earn in excess of €70,000 a year. A nice little recovery if you're a politician or a billionaire.

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# #socialism 1.01

John Molyneux

## Who are the working class?

Left wing and socialist literature is full of talk about 'the working class'.. or sometimes, 'the working people'

For example, Ireland's greatest socialist, James Connolly, wrote, 'only the Irish working class remain as the incorruptible inheritors of the fight for freedom in Ireland' [a line worth remembering as we head towards the centenary of 1916].

And Karl Marx wrote that 'The emancipation of the working class must be conquered by the working class itself'. But who is this

middle class. And even if you study sociology at university you are unlikely to get much clarity on the subject.

### Wage labour

But when socialists use the term it has a very definite meaning. It refers, first and foremost, to those who earn their living by selling their ability to work, also known as their 'labour power'.

This is key because those who sell their labour power are selling it to a boss, a capitalist, who exploits it to make a profit (why else would they buy it?). Consequently, they not only have a rough

they have different interests from the workers.

The middle class are a layer between the capitalists and the workers; at the top end they merge with capitalist ruling class, at the bottom end can sometimes be won over to the workers' side.

Second, there is a substantial number of people who do not themselves sell their labour for a wage but who are part of the working class. These are people who are linked to and depend



working class? Who does this category include and who does it exclude? And why should it matter?

Readers are to be forgiven for not being clear about these questions. Use of the term 'working class' by the media, by pundits and by politicians is confused and confusing. Some use it to refer to a person's background or parents so that a millionaire businessman or a top manager may claim to be working class if their parents were. But the businessman or manager will ACT as a businessman or manager not as a worker.

For others it's a matter of where you live - in Dublin, Tallaght and Ballyfermot are seen as working class and Dublin 4 as middle class. For many it's a question of the type of work people do with white collar work, such as teaching or social work, seen as middle class and only manual workers counting as working class.

In America politicians avoid the term altogether and describe what the rest of the world calls the working class as the

time at work and in their lives as a whole, but are also day in and day out in a relationship of conflict with the bosses. This is why workers need and form trade unions and why they are the main force for change in society.

It doesn't matter whether people are manual or non-manual workers, factory workers or teachers, public sector or private sector, Greyhound workers or Dunnes workers, nurses or Irish Life workers, they are all part of the working class because they have a common interest in resisting the boss in their workplace and the ruling class (the capitalists and their politicians) across the board.

### Qualification

Defining the working class as those who live by selling their labour power needs two qualifications. First, there is a layer of people who are paid wages and seem to be selling their labour but are really being paid to control the labour of others. These people are managers not workers and are part of the middle class. They are not part of the working class because

on those who are directly wage workers e.g. wives, husbands, partners and children of workers, and the unemployed and pensioners who would be workers if they had a job. They are part of the working class because they share not only the same social conditions but also the same fundamental economic interests.

### Socialist view

The socialist definition of the working class affects the whole way society is seen. If only manual workers are considered then the working class is a shrinking minority but if white collar workers are included the working class make up the large majority in Ireland and all advanced countries and about 50% of the whole world.

Even more importantly, as Connolly and Marx both understood, they are the social force that has the potential to change the world. The working class has always been at the heart of the struggle for social change and it will be so on in the future.

It is the mobilization of the working class that is the first priority of socialists.

# Paris climate won't stop cli

Owen McCormack

It seems likely that the Paris COP 21 climate conference will agree to a treaty that commits the world's governments to reducing Co2 levels. However, despite the rhetoric and speeches from the presidents and premiers, no deal agreed there will even begin to implement the kind of cuts in Co2 emissions needed to avert dramatic climate change.

The best case scenario is a Paris treaty that would see emissions of Co2 at a level that will still guarantee a three degree rise in global temperatures. This is based on the targets governments have submitted ahead of the conference. These targets are called "Intended Nationally Determined Contributions" (INDCs). The chances of governments actually delivering on these are slim and many reports including a recent World Bank one believe that the planet is facing a four degree plus temperature rise based on current trends in fossil fuel use.

The earth has not experienced such temperatures in over 3 million years, and as scientist James Hansen has stated it would mean a very different planet with large scale extinctions of many species along with ice free poles and the near certain collapse of the Amazon rainforest triggering even further runaway Co2 levels.

### Warmest year

2015 is set to be the warmest year on record with average global temperatures now a full degree above the pre-industrial average. Recent years have continued to break all climate records as the level of Co2 in the atmosphere passes the 400 parts per million mark. The world's strongest ever hurricane was recorded in July, while heat waves claimed thousands in India, and California had its worst drought in recorded history.

The failure of this and previous COP (Conference of Parties) gatherings to reduce Co2 levels will result in more extreme weather events and in accelerating levels of species extinction globally while the risk of unforeseen "positive feedbacks" such as the melting of the arctic permafrost could trigger catastrophic warming in the next few decades.

Another World Bank report has forecast that over 100 million people would be pushed into extreme poverty by 2030 as a result of climate change. Yet since the first COP meeting in 1995, Co2 levels



have risen by almost 50%, with 2013 recording the highest Co2 emissions rates in history.

### Multinationals

The failure is caused both by the power and influence of the global fossil fuel multinationals and the reliance on so called market mechanisms to try to curb Co2 emissions.

In Europe, the Emission Trading Scheme (ETS) was heralded as a way of reducing Co2 levels by using the "magic of the market". In fact the scheme has been a disaster with widespread fraud, over allocation of permits to big companies, and a collapse of the market price of a tonne of carbon, thus making it cheaper

to pollute than reduce emission levels.

It allows companies to continue to emit Co2 and claim credit for dubious projects in developing countries under the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). One side effect of the attempt to use the market has been a virtual land grab in developing countries with devastating consequences for poorer peasants who have been driven off their land. A new treaty agreement in Paris is likely to see further attempts to use such market mechanisms, which despite all the rhetoric will simply allow for the big fossil fuel corporations to continue to Co2 and profit from it.

While some of the big companies like ExxonMobile and General Electric have funded climate change deniers and

## Climate change and the refu

Maeve McGrath

Climate change is set to overtake factors such as wars, unemployment or human rights abuses in provoking mass migration.

The International Red Cross estimates that there are more environmental refugees than political refugees fleeing from wars and other conflicts.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that 36 million people were displaced by so-called natural disasters in 2009. This was the last year that such a report was taken.

Scientists predict this number will rise. Conservative estimates suggest at least 50 million by 2050, whilst others say it could be as many as 200 million.

### Sea levels

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) predicts that

sea levels will rise a total of 0.18 to 0.6 meters (7 inches to 2 feet) between 1990 and 2100.

Rising sea levels are already causing problems in low-lying coastal areas of the world. For example in 1995, Bangladesh's Bhola Island was half-submerged by rising sea levels.

This made 500,000 people homeless. Scientists predict Bangladesh will lose 17% of its land by 2050 due to flooding caused by climate change.

The loss of land could lead to as many as 20 million climate refugees from this part of the world alone.

The border between India and Bangladesh is already an area of conflict and the Indian government recently erected a 3000 kilometre fence to keep climate refugees from migrating to India.

### Drought

When land becomes barren, farmers are forced to move elsewhere. The Gobi

Desert in China expands more than 3,600 square kilometers (1,390 square miles) every year.

This displaces many crop growers to China's urban centres.

A drought which lasted from 2006 - 2010 played a significant role in provoking the 2011 uprising in Syria.

The affected area was formerly a particularly fertile one.

There can be no doubt that climate change played a significant role in exacerbating, if not causing the deterioration of this habitat.

Because of this people are faced with no choice, but to move.

Climate change is already making more and more parts of the world, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, uninhabitable.

### Environmental refugees

Environmental refugees are people who are forced to emigrate as a result of natural disasters such as volcanoes

# conference climate change



tried to refute the scientific consensus on climate change, others have tried "green-washing" their image and pretending they are switching to renewable sources.

In fact, the level of investment in renewables by the giant corporations continues to be minuscule when compared to their continued efforts to find new reserves of oil, gas and massive investments in new forms of fossil fuels extraction such as tar sands and fracking for shale gas.

One report by the Carbon Tracker think tank estimates that big oil and gas companies have proven reserves yet to be drilled that amount to over 2.8 trillion tonnes of carbon. This is five times the amount of Co2 that scientists cal-

culate we could burn between now and 2050 and still have a reasonable chance of limiting global temperature rises to two degrees! It is the massive profits that these reserves guarantee that means the continued use of oil and gas regardless of its consequences. In 2013 alone the "Big Five" oil corporations amassed over \$93 billion in profits, while BP and Exxon alone generated over \$300 billion in revenues each.

## Capitalism

Despite the rhetoric and the search for various technical "fixes" such as carbon sequestration, capitalism has proven incapable of limiting Co2 emissions. Based on competition between companies and

nations and the need to constantly expand and increase profits, the system is destroying the future habitability of the planet.

This realisation has forced many climate scientists to take stances that are increasingly more radical than much of the mainstream environmental movement. Kevin Anderson of the renowned Tyndall climate centre has said recently "Today, after two decades of bluff and lies, the remaining 2°C budget demands revolutionary change to the political and economic hegemony."

Much of the media coverage will focus on the rise in emissions from developing nations and the likes of China and India. The western nations will point out that their levels of Co2 have peaked and the problem is really the rest of the world. In reality this is a scam. Much of the west's Co2 emissions are effectively "outsourced" to other parts of the world. While Europe and the US have recently heralded their reduced levels of Co2 emissions, the reality exposes the lies at the heart of the global system.

The US is busy using its massive reserves of shale gas, which emit slightly less Co2 while exporting its coal reserves to China. Meanwhile a recent study shows that both Germany and Britain effectively import larger amounts of Co2 from goods produced in developing countries. Any claimed reductions are more than cancelled out when this is taken into account.

Meanwhile, the environment minister Alan Kelly has admitted Ireland will not reach its own pathetic targets. Kelly earlier this year tried to scrap new building regulations that would force builders to ensure the latest energy efficient methods where used in new buildings.

Such move would be essential in any attempt to significantly reduce Co2 emission. In Ireland the profits of building developers, as well as the beef barons and energy multinationals, come ahead of any concern with catastrophic climate change.

The climate crisis is beginning to trigger the growth of a new radical environmental movement that identifies capitalism as the source, not the solution to climate change. In the past many NGOs placed their hopes in Governments reaching deals that meant leaving the logic of capitalism unchallenged. Global scale protests around Paris show that this new climate movement will no longer bought off with rhetoric or the false promise of "market" solutions.

## refugee crisis

erupting or tsunamis or desertification..

They are not protected by international laws.

As difficult as it is for political refugees to have their status recognised, it is almost impossible for environmental refugees to have a state validate their status.

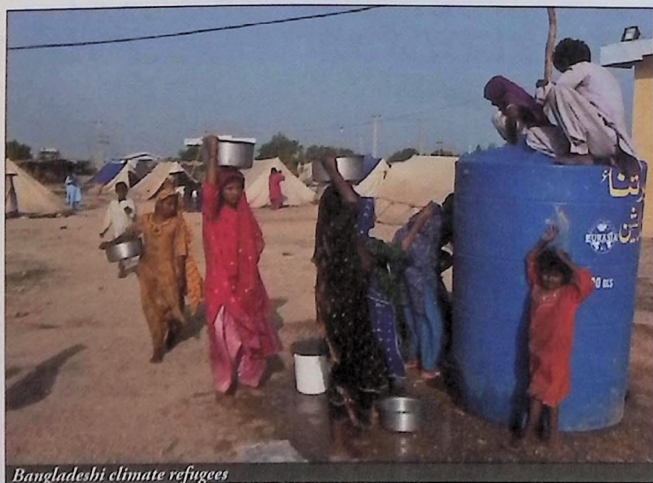
They are usually detained in camps or sent back to their place of origin.

If they migrate within their home country, they also face issues such as skill sets like farming which are no longer applicable in an urban centre.

In some countries there are devastating restrictions like China's hukou system, which effectively makes migrants second class citizens compared to locals.

Notably a reference to climate refugees was removed from the latest draft of various state submissions for the Cop21 conference in Paris.

Wealth can act as a buffer in these situations, for example with the



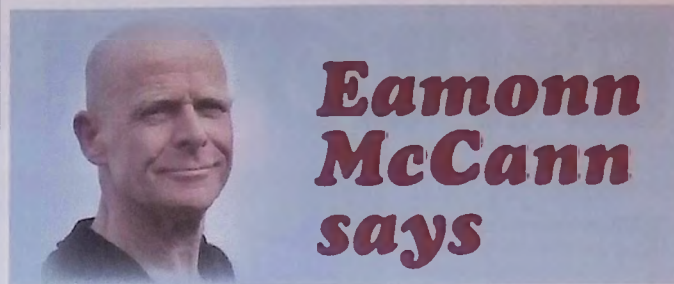
provision of insurance if your home is destroyed.

The poorest in society inevitably will suffer the worst effects of climate change.

Given the incredibly restrictive immigration policies of the west, and

the current crisis, we need a mass movement demanding that the state opens its borders and stops robbing asylum seekers of dignity.

Acclaimed writer Naomi Klein argues that "science is telling us to revolt."



**Eamonn McCann says**

## Sinn Féin's zig-zag to nowhere

Sinn Féin and the Democratic Unionist Party agreed last month on a "welfare reform" package. The agreement, published in the document "Fresh Start", will cut benefits to thousands of working-class families. This despite pledges from Sinn Féin as late as September that the party would never sign up to any such deal.

This isn't the first time SF and the DUP announced agreement on welfare reform. Back in 2013, they declared that they'd extracted concessions from the Treasury and on this basis were willing to give the welfare proposals the go-ahead. The arrangement was scuppered when SF withdrew support. Party leaders in the South were nervous that acceptance of a deal which, despite the "concessions," would lead to a lessening of the living standards of a section of the working class in the North, would compromise the "anti-austerity" message being pushed in working-class areas of the Republic.

Move on from 2013 to December 2014. SF accepted a revamped deal contained in the new Stormont

some of them present as a semi-formal alignment.

In keeping with this new relationship, SF, for the second time in a year, walked away from a deal which they had recently endorsed. The DUP complained about SF switching its position. Thus, deadlock. Talks to bridge the gap dragged on, amid speculation that the Stormont institutions themselves might not survive.

If a deal wasn't done, Northern Ireland Secretary Theresa Villiers threatened. Westminster would take control of welfare back. SF responded – "Over our dead bodies."

## Sweetener that wasn't

This crisis, too, was averted when SF, to the bewilderment of some of its own supporters, agreed to welfare powers being handed back. The sweetener was a "mitigation fund" of £94 million to ease the impact of the measures. SF insisted that it was because they had held out that this "new money" had been offered.



House Agreement. Again, this involved welfare cuts. So union leaders, bending to rank and file pressure, called a series of anti-austerity rallies. Tens of thousands of leaflets headed "No Deal!" were distributed, rightly making no distinction between the Stormont parties and the Westminster Tories.

## Military Two-Step

The rallies, on February 15th, were huge. Many well-known SF figures attended. (One was suggested they were demonstrating one of the most difficult of Strictly routines, the Military Two-Step.) Standing in the crowds, they had to listen to their party being denounced by union representatives.

Enraged at being included alongside the Tories and the DUP, SF organised a meeting with ICTU leaders at which an "understanding" was reached, under which the party would liaise with union officials on economic policy and, specifically, would thwart any plans to extend the Tories' latest tranche of anti-union laws to the North.

Armed with this pact, SF constituency organisations have been inviting trades councils to meet with them to discuss the way ahead. A number of meetings have been held. SFers are cock-a-hoop at what

Except that the new money was a mirage. The Green Party MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) Steven Agnew elicited the fact that the £94 million included £80 million already being paid every year via the Social Security Agency's "discretionary fund".

This covered community care grants, budgeting loans and crisis payments. So, in order to find the "mitigation money" to offset Tory cuts to tax credits which would drastically reduce the incomes of low-paid workers, the discretionary fund and the services it supports have to take the hit.

What's more - the £94 million had been offered without strings in the Stormont House Agreement a year previously but had been rejected by SF as totally inadequate.

Then, British Chancellor George Osborne, faced with threats of rebellion by a number of Tory MPs and outright rejection by the House of Lords, climbed down and abandoned the proposed tax credit cuts. SF had ditched a central element of its opposition to Tory cuts in return for nothing at all.

In the process, it had handed back to the British government powers it had taken credit for wresting away. Zig-zag politics have taken the party nowhere.

# EXPLOITING PARIS

John Molyneux

Ever since the terrible and tragic events in Paris on 13 November all the main governments have rushed to exploit them to further their various imperialist agendas.

Using the cry 'Something must be done!' and trading on fear and anger they move to do what they wanted to do any way to bolster and increase their power.

They do this despite knowing that what they are doing doesn't stop terrorism but feeds it and increases the likelihood of attacks in Europe and globally.

America was already bombing Syria, now they are bombing it more. This is on foot of 14 years of bombing and occupying Afghanistan and 12 years of bombing and occupying Iraq. Not to mention drone attacks in Pakistan and support for Israel and Saudi Arabia.

France's Hollande is also bombing Syria and promising 'pitiless war' - which presumably means a war that doesn't spare civilians or respect human rights.

At the same time they have banned all demonstrations in Paris for three months including anti-climate change demonstrations planned for the global climate change conference.

## Russia too

Russia is using attacking ISIS as an excuse to bomb all rebel groups in Syria and support its ally, the brutal Assad, who has killed far more Syrians than anyone else, thus hoping to strengthen its hold in the area.

When America bombed ISIS



Hollande and Putin - blood on their hands

earlier in the year, Turkey used it as cover to bomb the Kurds and resume their war with the PKK (the Kurdish nationalists) who were actually fighting ISIS on the ground. Now Turkey has shot down a Russian fighter plane creating further dangers and complications.

In Britain David Cameron is exploiting Paris to try to reverse the defeat he suffered in the House of Commons in 2013 over bombing Syria - then he wanted to bomb Assad - to show that he and British imperialism are still able to bomb places. And the Blairites and other British Labour right-wingers are using it to try to destroy Jeremy Corbyn.

Meanwhile here in Ireland the government is using Paris to drive another nail into the coffin of what's left of Irish neutrality by continuing to let US military use Shannon and

by talking of sending Irish troops to the former French colony of Mali to 'assist' the French army operation there.

And all the governments together are exploiting Paris as the ideal opportunity to do what they wanted to do all along - namely turn their back on the refugees and strengthen 'Fortress Europe'.

This despite the fact that the Paris atrocity was committed by French and Belgian citizens not refugees and that many of the refugees are fleeing precisely the kind of terrorism inflicted on Paris, only on a much larger scale.

## We say

In opposition to all this Socialist Worker says learn the lessons of Afghanistan and Iraq: stop pretending air strikes can stop terrorism or

won't slaughter civilians. No war and no to bombing Syria by the US, France, Russia or Britain! End the US military use of Shannon, don't send Irish troops to Mali and reinstate and defend Irish Neutrality.

Stop supporting and arming Saudi Arabia, who are bombing Yemen and funding various jihadi factions. Stop supporting Israel whose oppression of the Palestinians continues to fuel conflict in the Middle East.

Encourage and support the ordinary people of the Middle East to rise up and deal with their dictators and oppressors as they started to do in the Arab Spring.

But then that's our agenda: to work for a world in which people unite and live in peace free of hatred and sectarian conflict and the exploitation for profit which lies at the root of the whole mess.

# Who are ISIS and how did they emerge?

Rory O'Neill

Since the Paris terror attacks in November, there has been renewed clamour for 'something to be done' about ISIS. Since early 2014, ISIS has grown dramatically, capturing massive swathes of territory in Iraq and Syria. Its territory has receded from its peak, but events in Paris demonstrate their ability to mount attacks in Western Europe.

The war with ISIS has been presented in the media as an historic clash of civilisations; as Western liberal democracy being under attack from Islamists who hate our values. This is a narrative which ascribes responsibility for ISIS to Islam and therefore Muslims in general, and is designed

to govern the new post-Saddam Iraqi state, whilst Shia paramilitaries were encouraged to join the police and security forces.

Unsurprisingly, armed (and equally sectarian) Sunni groups sprang up in opposition to the new regime. This drove a wedge in any potential resistance movement that might have been able to challenge the US occupation.

Following the victory of Shia forces in the 2006-7 Civil War, Nouri al-Maliki ruled Iraq, supported by the U.S. His bitterly sectarian regime was hated by the Sunni population, and the country even had its own 'Iraqi Spring' throughout 2013 as Sunnis protested peacefully against the regime of al-Maliki.

The government responded with



to fuel support for war and bombing campaigns in the Middle East. It does not seem to matter that one of the West's key allies in the region is Saudi Arabia, a theocratic monarchy which beheads people by the dozen every month.

## War and occupation

The origins of ISIS cannot be explained by a theological examination of the Islamic religion, or as the result of a centuries-old conflict between Shia and Sunni any more than the conflict in Northern Ireland derived from the Catholic-Protestant split in the Reformation.

Rather it is a product of the war and destruction which has ravaged the Middle East for 25 years, driven by the United States. Instead of blaming religion we must ask why ISIS has arisen where and when it has, and why it has been able to gain such support.

Although sectarian divisions between Sunni and Shia Muslims did exist in the region before the invasion of Iraq in 2003, there was nothing like the violence that we saw in the 2006-7 Iraq civil war or now under ISIS.

When the US invaded Iraq, they deployed the time-honoured colonial strategy of divide and rule.

Imperialism always tries to protect its position in an occupied territory by playing one group off against one another. In Iraq, the US was happy to encourage sectarian divisions between Sunnis and Shias to alleviate the threat of united resistance.

Sectarian Shia parties were recruited

mass arrests and attacks on Sunni neighbourhoods. In such desperation and the absence of any progressive revolutionary movement, sectarian Sunni groups like ISIS were again able to grow in strength.

## Mosul

The Western media only became interested when ISIS captured Mosul, Iraq's second largest city and crucial for controlling local oil fields. When the U.S invaded Afghanistan and Iraq, the central plank of their strategy was to install pro-U.S regimes in the Middle East, allowing them to control oil reserves.

The near collapse of the U.S.-backed Iraqi state and the rise of groups such as ISIS demonstrate the inability of the U.S. to exert its hegemonic power without tearing these societies apart.

The attacks in Paris, however, would not have been possible without ISIS's ability to attract isolated young Muslims in the heart of Western Europe itself. It is believed nine people carried out the various terror attacks.

Of these at least six have been confirmed as French or Belgian. It is clear that the alienation experienced by Muslims in Europe has created the conditions where it is possible for French citizens to carry out such attacks in their own country.

The racism now being pushed by the far-right and governments against Muslims and refugees is precisely a feature of the climate in which groups such as ISIS can grow and recruit.

## THE HUMAN COST OF BOMBING

When 130 innocent civilians were slaughtered in Paris on the evening of 13 November the news flashed round the world in minutes.

But when similar or higher death tolls are recorded in the Middle East or at the hands of Western bombing there is no such media attention.

Here Memet Uludag presents figures on the human cost of bombing SYRIA/IRAQ

■ US coalition strikes in Syria killed 250 civilians (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights SOHR | September 2014 - November 2015)

■ The Russian air force kill 403 civilians, including 166 women and children (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights SOHR | September 2014 - November 2015)

■ Current Total Death Count in Syria: 250,000+, Children: 30,000 (am Syria, November 2015)

■ At least 3,952 people have been killed in the US-led coalition's campaign against the

Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) group in Syria, according to a monitoring group.

■ Both Iraqis and Syrians claim that over the past two years U.S. airstrikes have killed civilians during its campaign to take out ISIS. A recent report published by Airwars, a project aimed at tracking the international air strikes, suggests 57 airstrikes resulted in 459 civilian deaths. (The Guardian)

■ Syrians in Raqqa tell of 'insane nights' of air strikes... Activists say French air strikes hit abandoned suburbs with no ISIS fighters.

■ Monitors report 'hundreds' of civilian deaths from coalition strikes: ■ A year after the United States started bombing Islamic State (IS) group targets in Iraq, a monitoring group has expressed concern over the rising number of civilians killed by coalition airstrikes.

<http://www.france24.com/en/20150803-coalition-air-strikes-civilian-casualties-monitoring-report-death-toll>



US drone strike in Pakistan.

## AFGHANISTAN

■ US Kunduz Hospital Airstrike - Saturday 3 October 2015, the MSF Trauma centre in Kunduz was hit several times during sustained bombing by coalition forces, and was very badly damaged. The total number of dead is known to be at least 30, including: 10 known patients, 13 known staff, and 7 unrecognisable bodies that were in the wreck of the hospital and that have not been identified so far.

## YEMEN

■ Fifteen people were killed in

Yemen when a drone strike hit a wedding convoy, which was mistaken for an al Qaeda convoy. A Human Rights Watch report said 12 men were killed and 15 people were wounded, including the bride. Local Yemenis blamed the U.S., but the Obama administration has refused to acknowledge the strike despite its massive drone campaign against al Qaeda in the country. (Guardian)

Source: <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/2015/09/02/monthly-drone-report-august-2015-32-us-strikes-hit-afghanistan-alone/>

RECORDED US DRONE STRIKES TO DATE:				
	Pakistan (June 2004 to date)	Yemen (Nov 2002 to date)*	Somalia (Jan 2007 to date)*	Afghanistan (Jan 2015 to date)
US drone strikes	420	105-125	15-19	43
Total reported killed	2,471-3,983	485-714	25-108	393-561
Civilians reported killed	423-965	65-97	0-5	14-42
Children reported killed	172-207	8-9	0	0-18
Reported injured	1,154-1,734	92-221	2-7	18-22

RECORDED US AIR AND CRUISE MISSILE STRIKES TO DATE:				
	Pakistan (June 2004 to date)**	Yemen (Nov 2002 to date)*	Somalia (Jan 2007 to date)*	Afghanistan (Jan 2015 to date)
US air & cruise missile strikes	N/A	15-72	8-11	23
Total reported killed	N/A	156-365	40-141	76-86
Civilians reported killed	N/A	68-99	7-47	0-30
Children reported killed	N/A	26-28	0-2	0
People reported injured	N/A	15-102	11-21	5-6

[http://www.buffingtonpost.com/entry/drone-papers\\_561ed361e4b0c5a1ce6114632v4w019k9](http://www.buffingtonpost.com/entry/drone-papers_561ed361e4b0c5a1ce6114632v4w019k9)

\* The Bureau's estimates are based predominantly on open sources information like media reports. Sometimes it is not

possible to reconcile details in different reports. This is why we use ranges for our record of casualties and, in the case of Yemen and Somalia, our strike tallies.

# Feminists Wake the Abbey

Sinead Kennedy

Theatre practitioners from across Ireland recently packed the Abbey Theatre in Dublin to debate female participation in theatre and the arts. The movement calling themselves 'Waking the Feminists' (WTF) began on social media following the Abbey Theatre's announcement of its 2016 programme on 28 October. *Waking the Nation*. Only one of the ten plays on the programme was written by a woman. Ali White, and is a "specially commissioned monologue for children", and women will direct just three of the ten plays.

The hashtag #WakingTheFeminists generated huge attention -- both on social media and in the national and international media -- attracting support from actors including Cherry Jones, Brian F O'Byrne, Mona Eltahawy, Debra Messing, Christine Baranski and Meryl Streep. Over 1500 people signed an online petition in its first 20 hours.

In their brochure for *Waking the Nation* the Abbey states that its "intention is to interrogate rather than celebrate the past. For over 110 years now the Abbey stage has been a platform for the reflection of Irish society through theatre. Plays have the power to ask questions that resonate for generations."

Yet how can they claim that a programme that excludes the stories and experiences of women is an accurate reflection of Irish society?

In a welcome act of engagement



the Abbey's director Fiach Mac Conghail took to Twitter to respond to questions and criticisms. He argued that the Abbey has produced nine plays by women since 2008, and

that plays aren't programmed on a gender basis. "I'm sorry that I have no female playwrights next season. But I'm not going to produce a play that is not ready and undermine the

writer," Mac Conghail tweeted. While that may be a fair point it fails to address the question of why so many men made the cut and women didn't? Women have long been excluded

from the Abbey repertoire. Women have written only 14% of the plays produced by the Abbey in its long history and the majority of those were actually produced in the 1920s. In the

past 10 years only two women writers have seen their work performed on the main stage; Elaine Murphy (1) and Marina Carr (3).

It is unfair to lay the entire blame at the feet of the Mac Conghail. The Abbey of Mac Conghail actually has one of the best records of producing plays by women and the work of the Abbey's literary director Aileen Howard deserves recognition here too. Over a quarter of their new plays produced were by women but mostly on the Peacock stage.

Questions about women's exclusion from cultural life have much deeper historical roots exemplified by the way in which the fierce battles that women fought for Irish Independence were deliberately and extensively erased from Irish history, not least by the 1937 Constitution. While much has changed today this erasure is still evident. The 'Decade of Commemorations' announced by a variety of programmes again almost entirely excludes women scholars, artists and participants, while the flagship UCD/RIA co-sponsored series on 'Easter 1916 as a Global Event' comprises six talks by six men. The recognition of women's intellectual and creative work in Ireland's artistic and scholarly institutions is not about tokenism, it is about engaging with multiple perspectives not just a male one.

Perhaps, as Una Mullally recently suggested, given the fact that O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars* features so prominently in next year's Abbey programme, the time has come again for another riot.

## More Racism – More Resistance

Becca Bor, an American activist and socialist now living in Derry, reports on the ongoing struggle against police murder and racism in the US.

In an unprecedented move, a police officer in Chicago has been charged with first-degree murder for executing Laquan McDonald, a 17-year-old African American teenager.

The city fought hard to hide evidence and withhold the dashboard video of the murder, but they were ordered by a judge last week to release it to the public after 13 months.

The city sat on footage that showed Laquan McDonald walking with a knife in his hand away from the police car, as he is riddled with 16 bullets in just 3 seconds.

The footage flies in the face of the bold faced lies that the police department told justifying the murder – that McDonald lunged at the police officer, Jason Van Dyke, who had to use lethal force to protect himself. Not only that,



but it has been documented that the police did not take statements from witnesses, whose reports to the media were a lot closer to the video evidence than the police account.

The police also went so far as to go to the nearby Burger King and delete the surveillance video in order to hide any evidence of the clearly illegal, brutal execution.

The day the video was released hundreds of protesters took to the streets in Chicago chanting for

justice for Laquan McDonald, the resignation of Garry McCarthy, chief of police, Rahm Emmanuel, mayor of Chicago and Anita Alvarez, the States Attorney for Cook County. They came out in absolute rage at the way in which police officers act with impunity and the city bends over backwards to cover up their corrupt, racist and all too often lethal practices.

There have been consistent protests in Chicago against police murders and police brutality, against apartheid education and

systematic discrimination against the Black population of the city. Without this organising and the national outrage against police violence that sparked rebellions in Ferguson and Baltimore, this would have been another nameless police murder hidden by the state.

There continues to be an atmosphere of vitriolic racism that is most obvious in the rhetoric of presidential candidate Donald Trump, but is felt in the police brutality and harassment experienced by African Americans daily. In fact, the media and state reaction to the Black Lives Matter movement has emboldened the far right, evidenced by police officers claiming that they are under attack and that "Blue Lives Matter."

In Minneapolis, a group of white supremacists shot at a protest encampment outside a police station set up after the police murder of Jamar Clark. This act of clear premeditated terrorism hardly made mainstream news in the U.S.

Yet, consciousness in the U.S.

about police brutality and racism has changed dramatically over the past year because of protest. There remain outbursts of mass struggle, where thousands of people are involved in protests against police brutality, racism, mass incarceration, discrimination on campuses, and there are more instances of small struggles that react to the racist violence of the state.

### Victories

Over the past month there have been important victories, which not only prove that if you fight, you can win, but also have knit together new groups of activists that might not have previously been standing shoulder to shoulder.

This month began with the massive victory at the University of Missouri (Mizzou). Students there organised a campaign against racist abuse on campus by fellow students and the unwillingness of the university administration to address the rampant racism. They organised an encampment in the centre of

campus, a graduate student went on a hunger strike, and then, importantly, the football team refused to play until the president resigned.

The football strike, which would have cost the University around a million dollars if they forfeited a game, turned the tide on the protest movement as the players and the coach stood behind their decision. The next day graduate students and faculty walked out of class, pushing the president over the edge and forcing his resignation.

Crucially, as protests popped up on over a hundred campuses across the country in solidarity with the students at Mizzou, these individual protests had their own list of local demands and grievances. A movement that seemed, at that moment, to be ebbing, began to burst onto the scene again.

The struggle in Chicago, Minneapolis, and campuses and cities across the country continues for justice and against the ugly racism that lies at the foundation of the U.S. state.

## Lenin's Imperialism – the Highest Stage of Capitalism

James Grannell continues our series of reviews of classic socialist texts

**L**enin's *Imperialism: the Highest Stage of Capitalism* was written in 1916, at a time when many Marxists were greatly exercised by the task of understanding the changing nature of capitalism since the publication of *Das Kapital*.

Lenin was one of a number of key theorists who sought to explain the changing nature of capitalism at this time. Others included Luxemburg, Kautsky, Bukharin and Trotsky. However, it was Lenin's contribution that would prove to be the most influential analysis.

It ought to be noted from the outset that Lenin's work did have significant limitations. In order to get around Tsarist censorship he had to refrain from drawing overtly political conclusions — limiting himself instead to the economic features of imperialism. Despite this, Lenin still managed to draw some important

conclusions about the essential characteristics of imperialism. The full breadth of his analysis becomes apparent when one takes into account his other works on this subject.

Lenin's understanding of imperialism was a driving force behind his opposition to the imperialist war of 1914-1918, and his support of the self-determination of oppressed nations.

### Oppressor

He insisted that revolutionaries in oppressor countries — Russia, Britain, etc., — had a duty to defend the right of oppressed nations to secede if they chose to do so. This was, in his view, the only basis on which the international unity of the working class could be achieved. This unified working class would, in turn, have the potential to overthrow the capitalist system that gave birth to the monster of imperialism.

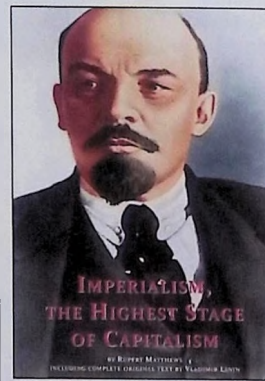
Lenin argued that while imperialism emerges as a development, and is a continuation, of the

fundamental characteristics of capitalism, it is nonetheless distinguished by five features.

Namely: The replacement of capitalist free competition by capitalist monopoly leading to the domination of economic life by large cartels; The emergence of finance capital resulting from the merging of bank capital and industrial capital, which allows for the rise of a financial oligarchy;

The shift from the export of goods to the export of capital, particularly to countries where profits are high, because of a scarcity of capital and the availability of cheap labour, land, and raw materials; The formation of international capitalist monopolies, which operate across the globe and divide the world among themselves; Along with this economic division, the Great Powers engaged in a territorial division. This meant that further expansion and acquisition of colonies, was only possible through the forcible repartitioning of the world.

Lenin's analysis of imperialism was born out of his revolution-



ary opposition to the First World War. He saw that the war was the direct consequence of imperialism and this partitioning of the world, which was in itself the latest stage of capitalism. Thus, real peace could only be achieved by the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism itself.

Key to this argument was the difference between Lenin's analy-

sis of imperialism and that of Kautsky, who was then regarded as the foremost authority on Marxism, but who had failed to oppose the war in 1914.

Rejecting the argument that imperialism was a stage of capitalism or a necessary component of capitalism, Kautsky believed that imperialism was simply a policy adopted under the influence of particular pro-imperialist capitalists.

He went so far as to suggest that capitalism would enter an ultra-imperialist phase where competition and conflict between rival monopolies and states would give way to agreement and peaceful co-operation.

Lenin strongly rejected these ideas as both theoretically false and politically disastrous as they separated the politics of imperialism from its economic base. He argued that the idea of a peaceful 'ultra-imperialism' was a utopian illusion and that imperialism, by its nature, would lead to war.

It is now almost one-hundred years since the publication of

Lenin's *Imperialism* and there have been numerous further changes in world capitalism. As a result, aspects of Lenin's analysis have become less relevant today than they were when he was writing in 1916.

However, the core of what he wrote is still remarkably relevant. Our world is still dominated by large capitalist corporations and imperialist states. As the world turns its eyes toward Syria and Paris, a standoff between China and its neighbours, in which the USA is involved, is occurring in the South China Sea. There, territorial claims to largely uninhabited islands which hold the key to controlling trade routes are fast becoming a flashpoint for international conflict.

It is precisely because of the continuation of this imperialist economic and political expansion that we must engage with these century-old arguments of Lenin and, like him, fight to unite the workers of the world so that, together, we can bring about lasting peace.

# Socialist Worker

## A FRESH ATTACK NOT A FRESH START

Mick Collins

It's often said that the sequel is worse than the original, and last week the Assembly proved that with their Stormont House Agreement 2.0. It is a revamped and repackaged deal from last year, more damaging than the original.

The deal has been touted by Sinn Féin and the DUP as a 'fresh start.' It is anything but. Instead it is more of the same. 18 years since the Belfast Agreement, and Sinn Féin and the DUP have failed to deliver anything for working class people. But this latest deal is the worst round of austerity yet.

Instead of striving to fight within Stormont against Tory cuts, the Assembly parties have simply accepted David Cameron's mantra that austerity is the only option.

The solution to the North's economic woes, as spelled out in this latest deal, is a fresh wave of austerity: to cut back on public services to the tune of £1.8 billion -10% of the regions overall budget.

The new deal will see at least 20,000 redundancies in the public sector, which the Assembly has borrowed £700million to implement.

### Welfare Reform

On top of this the Assembly has reached agreement on Welfare Reform, something which Sinn Féin claimed for months they would refuse to do in order to 'protect the most vulnerable.' It is now clear, with the inclusion of the Welfare Reform amongst other cuts, that it will be the most vulnerable who will lose out the most from this deal. People on benefits will come under sustained attack with a 1% year on year cut to housing benefits, a freeze on job seekers allowance (which in real terms means a cut) and wholesale attacks on disability living allowance, meaning victims of the troubles, and those struggling with mental or physical disabilities, are set to lose their benefits as a result of stricter criteria for applicants.

While the DUP stand steadfast in defence of the deal, Sinn Féin are a little bit more uneasy. They claim they have negotiated



First Minister Peter Robinson and deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness sign the copy of the document 'A Fresh Start - The Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan'

the best deal they could, citing the £500 million which will be used to alleviate those hit hardest by the Welfare cuts. This in itself is a sham. Firstly, the £500 million will only last four years after which the Welfare cuts will be unmitigated. And secondly, most of the money set aside is to come from different Stormont departments anyway. There is no extra £500 million after all.

Furthermore, £125 million of this £500million is to come from clamping down on 'benefit fraud'. In reality, much of this will come from efforts to reduce people's benefits, through all manner of manoeuvring.

It beggars belief that when billions of pounds are being lost every year through corporate tax evasion, Sinn Féin and the DUP have decided that instead of going after Google or Apple for not paying their taxes, we should pick the pockets of people on benefits to try and raise revenue.

Sinn Féin claim they have brokered the best deal for the North. That any blame

for austerity to come lies at the feet of the Tories in Westminster and not the Stormont parties who've signed up to this deal. This is complete nonsense.

### Corporation tax cut

It wasn't the Tories who made Stormont reduce corporation tax to 12.5%, for example. Both the DUP and Sinn Féin have had this on their radar for years, Arlene Foster recently went one further, arguing it should be reduced to 10% to undercut the South, creating a race to the bottom where only working class people can lose out.

As for Sinn Féin, lowering corporation tax has been a long standing party policy, with Gerry Adams recently reiterating this in an address to business leaders in Dublin saying it was 'consistently' SF's position to seek to 'harmonise corporation tax North and South'.

This tax break for big business will lead to a loss of £350 million from the block grant, as big companies are paying less into

the public purse. This means more austerity to come. This is a policy designed not by the Tories in Westminster but by both Sinn Féin and the DUP, who stand ardently by the decision claiming it will bring more jobs into the North. In reality it will make the North a tax haven for big business, creating a low wage, low tax economy for big business similar to that of the Celtic Tiger.

This deal is far from a Fresh Start. Instead it is the same old rotten politics of austerity which give handouts to big business and attack working class people and public services.

Any party who is genuinely anti austerity could have proposed a whole number of additions to this deal that would protect services and the vulnerable. Why not borrow £700 million to create jobs instead of cut them?

Why lobby for powers to reduce corporation tax, when we could fight to raise taxes on the 1%? Belfast has more multi-millionaires than any other city in

the UK other than London or Aberdeen; it's not like there is no money going around, it's a question of where do we get it from, those at the top or those at the bottom?

### Priorities

Why not argue for a more progressive rates system where the wealthy pay more? Or an end to the fat pay checks for consultants, or chief executives, who are paid handsomely to administrate this austerity agenda? Why not end PFIs, that are costly to the public sector and an absolute waste of money?

Why not argue for a living wage to be implemented in the North, which would save millions on working tax credits, because the vast majority of benefit claimants are people who need help because they are paid too little by private companies already? 'Sinn Féin do not have powers to set the minimum wage' will be the mantra: but powers to reduce corporation tax only exist now because Stormont parties have devoted so much time and energy lobbying for them. It's a question of priorities.

A Fresh Start, therefore is a laughable title for such a shoddy deal, one hell bent on gutting the public sector and paying the way for the neoliberal takeover of the North. The best way to look at it is this: who will benefit from this deal?

Working class people will invariably lose out. People on benefits will lose out. Public sector workers will lose out. The only people who will benefit in the end will be the corporate elite and big business, who'll see their taxes reduced.

There needs to be resistance to this deal. So far, however, the response from the Trade Union movement has been weak. NIC-ICTU General Secretary Peter Bunting, for example, stated that he was 'neither for nor against the deal': a significant about turn considering that the Fresh Start deal amounts to the original Stormont House Agreement, which the NIC-ICTU described as a "bad deal". This simply won't do. We need renewed resistance to Stormont austerity across the Trade Union movement. The protests called by Unite outside the SF and DUP offices were a good start.

## NORTH BELFAST POVERTY - IT HASN'T GONE AWAY, YOU KNOW

Niall Coleman

Stormont has bestowed on us their latest gift to the masses. A gift wrapped in the finest, shiniest wrapping paper, courtesy of the PR machine behind those most treacherous to working class people across this state.

We have been offered a "Fresh Start"—the product of 12 months of bluff, blunder and rhetorical exercise. It doesn't take a sniffer dog to recognise this deal for what it is; a fresh austerity offensive that will adversely impact upon the most vulnerable in society.

What impact will this deal have on working class areas? Take North Belfast for example; an area consistently amongst the most deprived in the North, long ravaged by the twin effects of sectarianism and poverty.

Since 2011, the area has moved from having the lowest suicide rate in the UK to the highest. The change here is drastic, and cannot be ignored.

### Lost generation

Dr Paul Nolan, author of the Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report did not mince his words in his assessment of the region as a "lost generation economically". Nolan said

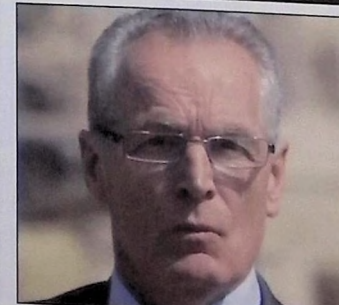
"they [Stormont] are specifically not delivering in the areas of greatest social disadvantage, areas where you see flag protesters and dissident republicans".

Indeed, North Belfast will remain the poster-boy of the effects of economic inequality, unless working class people get organised in the street and at the ballot box.

The outcome of the report will come as no news to any resident of North Belfast. Regardless, it reflects the disastrous impact of austerity measures on the area. North Belfast is indicative of the failures of Stormont; where a toxic mix of neoliberalism and sectarianism combine, with the losers being those at the bottom of society.

For that reason, the politics of distraction will continue to be the modus operandi of North Belfast's elected representatives, as they continue to bicker over the past, flags and parading, in an effort to divert attention from the war on the disadvantaged.

The planned 20,000 cuts in public sector job cuts will have a disastrous effect upon the workers of North Belfast. The longstanding issues of mental illness and community division in this constituency will be strengthened by the SF/DUP deal.



### Rising poverty

And long-term unemployment and rising poverty rates will be exacerbated by welfare reforms which severely cut the incomes of those supported by benefits.

Measures which pressure those to seek work without an improvement in the quality of jobs on offer will serve only to further alienate working class people across the sectarian divide in North Belfast.

There is no doubt that this 'deal' signifies a redistribution of wealth of the most insidious kind. The wallets of North Belfast will be significantly emptied to prop up the capitalist ambitions of the pro-austerity parties.

The line has been clearly drawn between those who shall stand together with most vulnerable, and those who shall stand together to retain their warm offices in Stormont House.

For the last 15 years politics in North Belfast has been dominated by two parties and two politicians - Nigel Dodds (DUP) and Gerry Kelly (SF). Continuity isn't working. North Belfast is in dire need of need of political change. It is time for North Belfast to put people before profit.