

Socialist Worker

Beat the Bigots – Vote Yes

On the 22 May what Ireland needs is a resounding YES vote in the Marriage Equality Referendum.

The NO campaigners are doing their best to sound sympathetic and tolerant – they only care about the children you know – but the truth is a No vote would be a victory for every bigot, homophobe, sexist reactionary and Catholic fundamentalist.

It would leave every lesbian or gay person knowing they were being discriminated against and that despite the rhetoric were still far from equal in 21st century Ireland.

It would also be a setback for every progressive cause, every minority group and all of the left in the country.

And it would not just be a question of Ireland. The legalisation of same-sex marriage is spreading internationally. Defeat in Ireland would be held up as a beacon by the religious right and the homophobes from Mississippi to Moscow.

Knowing full well that the majority of Irish people having nothing against LGBT people marrying the No campaign have deliberately set out to confuse people by saying the referendum is really about children's rights to have a mother and father.

Hypocritical

'If the referendum is passed, there will be children born in this country who will never experience a mother's love,' wrote Breda O'Brien of the Iona Institute in the Irish Times (21/4/15).

This is deeply hypocritical because in reality it was the religious right and bigots who forcibly separated so many children from their parents for so long, along with confining young mothers to the Magdalen Laundries, denouncing them



from pulpits and forcing them to emigrate.

But it is also a completely false argument because people's right to marry cannot possibly be made dependent on some test of their alleged ability to be ideal parents.

In reality there is lots of research to show that children reared by same-sex parents are

not disadvantaged.

Twisted

But even if this were not so it would be a twisted argument.

Unless, of course, the no campaign wants to argue that poor people – whose children ARE

disadvantaged compared the children of the middle classes – should not be allowed to marry.

Or perhaps the No campaigners want the working classes to be obliged to practice contraception?

In fact the moment you substitute ANY other group – black people, Catholics, Protestants, Jews, whoever – for lesbians and gays in this argument the outrageous bigotry involved in denying the right to marry becomes clear.

And the real position of the Iona Institute and Breda O'Brien was revealed in an interview she did with Niamh Horan, when she said 'if gays want to live a Christian way of life, like all unmarried couples, they should abstain from sex.'

In other words all the talk about children is a diversion injected into the debate by people who never campaign over children's real needs – like not to be in poverty, to decent housing, health care and education – but only about clinging on to their old prejudices.

The truth is this referendum is about one thing: equality.

Even if personally you disagree with marriage and have no desire to get married you should still vote YES because this is about equal rights and an end to discrimination.

Even if you hate the government and all its works from the bail-out to the water charges you should still vote YES because this about equality.

Same sex marriage is gaining ground across the world. It is now legal in countries as diverse as Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Portugal, South Africa and Uruguay and in 38 US states from Alaska to Florida via Vermont and Missouri along with 22 Native American tribal jurisdictions. Ireland should join them.

Beat the Bullies – Don't Pay!

Ever since the explosion of mass resistance on the streets of Dublin last autumn the government has known it was in deep trouble over water charges. They are still in deep trouble.

Irish Water keeps putting a brave face on its programme of meter installation, ludicrously claiming it is 'ahead of schedule,' but the truth is this programme has faced determined and successful resistance. In numerous areas not a single meter has been installed.

And then there is the crucial question of non-payment. It is clear that faced with mass non-payment by even a large minority, never mind a majority, Irish Water and the government will be in a major crisis.

This is why both the government and Irish Water are resorting to crude bullying. They are desperate and they are panicking. But we should not panic – our position is strong.

Alan Kelly is making threats about plans to introduce 'fast-track' courts to deal with non-payers. He needs them to be 'fast-track' because he knows he's going to face mass non-payment. But the truth is however fast his special courts are they will only scratch the surface of the hundreds of thousands who aren't going to pay.

And every court case will be a potential flashpoint for protest and defiance by the movement.

Garda aggression

Another sign of the establishment panic has been random acts of Garda aggression against water meter protestors.

For example on Parnell Rd near Harold's Cross last week the Garda, after weeks of a hands off approach to local communities, suddenly went in hard and arrested 15 peaceful resisters including Joan Collins TD and Cllr Pat Dunne.

The Gardai were particularly vicious to one



protestor, Sofian Martin. Sofian recounts how 'They threw me to the ground, pepper sprayed me in the face, handcuffed me very tightly and also verbally abused me in the station, as well as confiscating my camera.'

Violet Rankin, who lives on Parnell Rd., witnessed this attack which she described as 'horrific' and also noted how the gardai 'roughly manhandled a woman on the protest'. Violet was so appalled by what she saw that she immediately joined the protest.

However, if the attack was an attempt to intimidate or deter the resistance it was a complete failure.

The community responded with a strong demonstration in the evening which marched from Sundrive Garda Station to Crumlin Station and there was a big turnout at the protest next morning. Irish Water, by contrast, was nowhere to be seen and have not so far returned.

Standing firm and staying strong

What this episode reinforces is the importance of communities standing firmly together. Between now and the next general election it is certain that the Government and Irish Water will come up with all sorts of threats, manoeuvres and dirty tricks to try to break the movement. But if we stay strong they won't win and the water charges will founder on the rock of non-payment.

Particularly important as parts of this are local street meetings to organise the boycott and the development of a strong radical political alternative to challenge the pro-austerity parties at the election. [See Towards Left Unity – New Statement, p.3].

Lastly, anyone considering what to do should simply check out the Irish Rich List, published Sunday 26 April, which shows that in 'Austerity Ireland' the total wealth of Ireland's 250 richest is now £54.7 billion, up a staggering 15.9% on last year – and DON'T PAY!

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Kieran Allen on Siteserv: Page 2



Michael Wallace on Climate Change is Now: Pages 4&5

SUPPORT THE BUS WORKERS (See p.2)

The Siteserv scandal returns

AS Socialist Worker goes to press the Denis O'Brien Siteserv scandal is growing by the day.

As a result of persistent questioning by Kathleen Murphy TD more information about this dodgy deal is coming out and demands for a full public inquiry are mounting. Enda and Co. are clearly on the back foot.

But the story is not new. We reprint here the report on the scandal posted by Socialist Worker's KIERAN ALLEN three years ago on 17 May 2012.

Fine Gael's favourite businessman, Denis O'Brien, has moved into the water metering business. The move comes ahead of a new offensive by the government to meter as many houses as possible before charging for water.

O'Brien paid €45 million to take control of Siteserv, a company which has been described as an 'infrastructure and utilities support services' business. But one of its divisions is in civil engineering and includes 'water networks rehabilitation / water meters'.

O'Brien's deal has already run into considerable controversy.

The company had reported debts of €144 million and one of its chief lenders was Anglo-Irish bank.

This toxic bank, which has swallowed up over €29 billion from the taxes of Irish people, agreed to write off debt to facilitate the purchase by O'Brien. It is believed that just over €100 million was written off.

Siteserv itself describes what happened.

'Anglo Irish or IBRC agreed to accept payment of an amount which is less than the full amount owed by the Group.

'Without this agreement from IBRC the proposed disposal would not be capable of implementation



Denis O'Brien and Enda Kenny

and it is likely that Shareholders would not have realised any return on their investment.'

But this only begs the question: why should shareholders of an indebted company get a return on their investment when they owed millions to a state owned bank?

The total pay out to shareholders of Siteserv amounts to approximately €5 million. But why was this money not gathered in to help pay off Anglo's debt?

Other aspects of the deal are equally intriguing.

Rival

A rival French company, Altrad, has claimed that it was denied an opportunity to make an offer for Siteserv even though it was prepared to pay €60 million for the company.

One of its senior executives even attended a recent Siteserv shareholders meeting to inform

the gathering that they had been kept in the dark about the deal.

'Right the way through January and the middle of March we were told very clearly... the company was not for sale... and don't worry, if there was anything coming out I'll come and talk about it' Mr Neilson, the Altrad executive said. They never heard back.

Siteserv's main line of business has been to rely on state contracts. One of its brand companies, Sierra, has already received considerable money from the ESB and Bord Gais.

O'Brien will now be hoping that profits can be made for his new acquisition from water metering.

Up to €1 billion of state money is due to be invested in private meters. This is money that could have been much better used to fix the leaking pipe system which loses up to 40% of treated water.

But metering makes way for

privatisation - and more profits for the likes of O'Brien.

Which is why Fine Gael and its former chief fundraiser, and current environment Minister, Phil Hogan, like it best.

O'Brien's links with Fine Gael

Between March 1995 and June 1996 Denis O'Brien (or one of his companies) supported 14 Fine Gael fund raising events at which €22,140 was handed over to the party either personally or through a corporate vehicle.

Last year the Moriarty tribunal, which was set up to investigate payments to politicians found that Mr O'Brien made or facilitated payments to Michael Lowry (a former FG minister) of a combined €572,000 and supported a loan for a further €503,000 and observed.

'It is beyond doubt that...Mr Lowry imparted substantive

information to Mr O'Brien, of significant value and assistance to him in securing a Telecom's licence.'

Despite this O'Brien's connections with Fine Gael continue to this day. Enda Kenny recently appeared with him at the New York Stock Exchange and has defended his participation in other forums.

Unperturbed by any criticism O'Brien has recently been attempting to gain control of the media.

■ To this it can now be added that the Siteserv deal is part of a pattern. In recent years Denis O'Brien has also received write downs when buying Topaz and the Beacon Hospital. No wonder he's one of Ireland's richest capitalists, whose fortune has risen massively during the austerity years.

Did You Know?

The world's super-rich had between \$21 trillion and \$32 trillion of wealth hidden in tax havens by the end of 2010.

This astounding figure is larger than the combined wealth of the United States and Japan, and up to \$280 billion in lost tax revenues.

The global elites involved in this massive tax fraud are less than 10 million people, or just 0.14% of the global population.

A perfect example of the criminal nature of capitalism as poverty and inequality explodes across the world.

There were 45 million people living in poverty in the US in 2013. The number of poor people in the world's wealthiest capitalist country is now at its highest levels in the 52 years since poverty statistics were first published.

The vast majority of low-income Americans are surviving on food stamps. In contrast, US military spending for 2016 will be \$786.6 billion.

The American ruling class prefers to waste billions on fighting their brutal wars and ignore growing poverty and hunger in the States.

Half the world's population, three billion people, is existing on less than \$2.50 a day.

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization estimates about 905 million people, or one in nine on the planet, were suffering from chronic hunger between 2012 and 2014.

Children are the main victims. The total number of children that die due to poverty, and illnesses caused by malnutrition, is 22,000 every day. That's 7.7 million children dying needlessly each year while the rich hoard obscene wealth. Capitalism is a genocidal killer.

Bus workers are right to strike

Owen McCormack
SIPTU, Dublin Bus driver

Bus workers are absolutely right to strike over the NTA (National Transport Authority) proposal to tender out 10% of Dublin Bus and Bus Eireann routes.

Despite NTA claims that this isn't privatisation it means private companies will be handed routes currently operated by the semi state companies' and even handed the buses that are currently owned by the state.

The NTA's claims that they will guarantee drivers conditions as they are forced to move to a new private company are totally false. In reality drivers will have NO guarantee of long term conditions, rights, or rosters. Pension schemes and conditions like medical and travel facilities will be under threat as well.

The entire purpose of the competi-



tive tendering process is to hammer unionised workers pay and conditions and introduce the kind of working

conditions and rosters common in the private non-union transport sector. This is what the Fine Gael Minister

O'Donoghue is talking about when he says he wants to see "competitive tension" in the bus "market".

The Government plan to hand over 10% will not end there. While Labour is claiming their influence in Government has stopped any further privatisation, the reality is this tranche of routes will be just the first if the NTA succeed in this plan. They will move to tender out other routes by 2019 and use the same justifications - EU laws and greater efficiency - for doing so.

In fact the proposals will do nothing for public transport; not a single extra bus or journey will be added to public transport in Dublin or the South East.

All that will happen is a private company employing drivers on reduced rates and conditions will operate the routes with state subsidies being diverted to the shareholders and owners of the private company.

The move is part of the privatisation and neoliberal policy's beloved by Fine

Gael and Fianna Fail and disgracefully supported by the Labour Party. The NTA claims it conducted research that proves the tendering policy works and cites a report it paid Ernst and Young to conduct. Ernst & Young are the consultants who gave Anglo Irish Banks a glowing report before they destroyed the economy.

Bus workers strike plans have rattled this government.

They can stop the privatisation of these routes by a sustained campaign of industrial action and a wider campaign against the privatisation agenda. Such a fight can win support from the wider labour movement and give heart to many workers to resist similar attacks in their workplaces.

Busworkers can bring the spirit of the water charges campaign into the labour movement and help roll back years of austerity and anti-worker measures.

SOLIDARITY WITH THE BUS WORKERS!

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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

Text JOIN to 086-3074060 or fill in the form and send to SWP PO Box 1648 Dublin 8

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Anti-Water Charges campaigners say YES

Socialist Worker interviewed a number of anti-water charges campaigners on their attitude to the Marriage Equality referendum and found strong support for a YES vote.

■ **Councillor John Lyons** of People Before Profit who has played a major role in the movement on Dublin's north side made a call for a YES vote from the platform at the large Bin the Bills Demonstration on the 18 April.

He said he did so because he was 'conscious of the fact that anger at the government might lead some people to vote no or abstain.

'We need to vote in favour of progressive legislation as one step along the road to making Ireland a society of equals'.

■ **Kay Larry** from Ayrfield and Rathvale Against Water Charges said, 'I am confident the large majority of anti-water charges campaigners will vote YES because they are intelligent people who aren't just anti-government but can tell the difference between a good policy and a bad policy.

'All the children of the nation should be treated equally'.

■ **Maeve Kennedy** from Donnycarney and Kilester Says No to Watercharges said 'It is imperative we vote YES to show equality for all.

'By voting no you are discriminating against a section of the community'.



John Lyons calling for Yes vote at Bin Your Bills demo

■ And **Samantha Byrne**, who has also campaigned as a Home Help added, 'Society has changed and we need to be accepting of this.

'There is no justification for discrimination'.

■ **Gino Kenny** from Clondalkin Meter Watch said, 'Water charges have been the cutting edge of a major movement against austerity and this has really politicised people.

'The idea of equality has been

central to that. A YES vote is essential'.

■ **Anna Doyle** from Wicklow Meter Watch felt passionately about the issue, 'Because I've seen too many people forced to leave the country because of their sexuality.

'We need equality and acceptance of everyone'.

■ **Brendon Condon**, a campaigner with Crumlin Says No, insisted, 'It's about time. Equality is not just about men and

women or black and white - its equality for all! I'll be voting YES'.

■ **Shay L'Estrange**, also from the Crumlin campaign, saw a direct link between the water charges movement and the marriage equality issue:

'Just as the fight against water charges and privatisation has been engaged in as part of a drive to secure a fair and equal society for all, a YES vote will also strike a blow for a fair and

equal society for all, irrespective of their sexuality'.

■ **Deirdre Wadding** of Right2Water Wexford and a People Before Profit Councillor included a point for those who don't want to marry at all.

'Use your vote to give all couples the same range of options under the law. If you don't believe in marriage, don't marry.

'If you hate the government don't use that to punish our LGBTQ brothers and sisters.

All people of the nation must be given the same legal rights'.

■ And **Derek Mac an Úcaire** of Drimnagh Against the Water Tax is also skeptical about the institution of marriage but saw the need for a YES vote. 'If people are fool enough to get married, no one should say they can't'.

■ **Oein DeBhairduin** of the Irish Traveller Movement put the whole issue in a wider historical and human context:

'In essence it's about two things:

'The first is the legal standing and form of marriage, removing it from a somewhat archaic divisionary device to an embracing legal contract, not on the basis of sex, but on the individual wills of two people.

'The second is creating actualised equality.

'The equality that challenges our assumption around gender performance and outdated static roles, the equality that seeks to be realised in all aspects of our society, regardless of gender or personal orientation and identity.

'On the 22nd of May we have an opportunity, a real opportunity, one that will echo to the generations to come as resoundingly as it will in our

rising youth and long marginalised peers, to move beyond the passive gift of tolerance but to the wonderful and all too human act of celebration. Love matters.'

Beyond marriage equality

Freddie Trevaskis Hoskin : Liberation Campaign

There has been much discussion lately on the issue of marriage equality and before I say any more let me make it clear that I am of course campaigning for a YES vote.

However it seems to me that the discussions around marriage equality have become the only discussions that many LGBTQ activists are having; this is a problem. We should not assume marriage equality is the only LGBTQ issue and guard against tacitly accepting it as our end goal.

It is important to look at those issues which are being pushed to the side as the emphasis is placed on marriage equality. The most obvious example here is trans people. The recent long overdue Gender Recognition Bill is essentially not fit for purpose. This bill continues to medicalise

trans people by forcing them to obtain a doctor's approval before transitioning.

The bill also discriminates against trans children, forcing them to wait until they are 16 before they may transition and even then only with parents consent.

This forces people to go through the harrowing experience of a puberty at odds with their identity which would have been easily preventable with hormone suppressants.

Genderqueer people, those who identify as neither male nor female have no recourse to have their non-binary gender recognised and it seems unlikely that they will any time soon.

Bi-phobia and bi-erasure are still prevalent and rarely talked about with bi-people being discriminated against in both straight and gay circles along with bisexuality being consistently written out by the

media.

These are just a handful of issues that will not be solved on May 22. It is important also to take a serious look at marriage, its origins and role in society as a whole. Throughout much of history marriage was an extremely oppressive institution which enshrined the wife as property of the husband.

Married women had few legal rights and their economic position was entirely at the behest of their husband.

After the victories of earlier feminism marriage has become a more equal institution but not an unproblematic one. Marriage remains an institution based largely on economic dependency with taxes, childcare and other things factored in.

This is problematic for a number of reasons: those who do not fit into the structure of

marriage are excluded from certain economic benefits and those who may desperately need them can sometimes be forced into the institution.

Along with this the movement of reproduction and childcare into the private sphere of marriage has become the norm, thus leaving others such as single parents in a very difficult position they would not be in if we had socialised childcare. So marriage is not the pinnacle of sexual liberation.

The problem with fighting for legal equality is that you have to fight for rights equal to those that already exist.

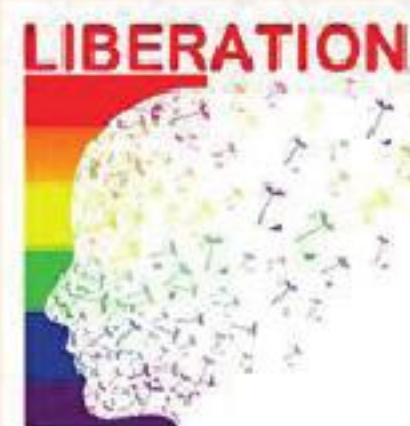
This is a system that has been based on straight capitalist ideas of justice. If we wish to attain liberation it will be necessary not just to fight for reforms but to challenge the system as whole. Two key points here are social liberation and economic liberation.

Even if the marriage equality referendum passes, which it hopefully will, homophobia will not go away. Our ability to live and interact in the world will still be limited by hatred and discrimination. If we wish to change this we must look at the root causes of homophobia, feelings of powerlessness and alienation in society.

These cause people to lash out against others in order to feel a sense of control.

Instead of just trying to stop them lashing out at us and having these feelings once more misdirected we must change society in such a way that all people feel they are participating meaningfully in it.

This would mean a radical extension of democracy and tackling social issues which affect everyone.



We must also look at economic liberation. What is the point in being free to practice our sexuality if we are so constricted by economics that we have no time to explore or enjoy it?

If we wish to have a society where people can really live how they choose we must make humans and human experience our priority rather than everything simply serving the needs of profit.

For more articles visit <https://liberationcampaign.wordpress.com/>

Or to get involved find us on Facebook or text 0872767405

Towards Left Unity - New Statement

On May 1 and June 13 the Trade Unions involved in Right2Water are hosting conferences to discuss a new political initiative.

A recent survey by Dr Rory Hearne from Maynooth indicates that there would strong popular support for a new politi-

cal formation linked to the water charges campaign and to the left of Sinn Fein.

In advance of the conferences People Before Profit, the Anti-Austerity Alliance, Brendan Young, Eddie Conlon and other independent lefts are planning to issue a statement welcoming this development and setting out

the principles which they would like to see form the basis for any new left alliance or formation.

They stress the need for the process of developing a new political platform to be open, democratic and participatory rather than just based on invitations from above.

They say it needs to

complement the anti-water charges campaign not replace it and to retain an emphasis on struggle from below not just winning seats.

It should commit openly to non-payment of the water charges and adopt a principled anti-austerity position.

This includes ruling out coalition with Fine Gael,

Labour or Fianna Fail and rejecting the bank-bailout debt with a willingness to take unilateral action to repudiate it.

It should support public investment to meet the needs of ordinary people, environmental protection and provide proper jobs.

They argue the new forma-

tion should also commit to campaigning for democratic rights, including marriage equality and repeal of the 8th Amendment and reject racism and the scapegoating of minority groups.

The statement will also stress the massive opportunity opening up for the left in the present situation.



Seanie FitzPatrick - one of our own?

“We should look after our own first”

This is a commonly expressed sentiment. On the face of it, it sounds like common sense. And also there's a way in which we don't have much choice about it.

We can look after our children or our parents but we can't, at least not personally, look after all children or all old people and so on.

But there's also a serious problem with this.. If we are always looking after our own first then those who are not 'our own' will never get looked after at all. They will just be left to die homeless in doorways, to starve in Calcutta or drown in the Mediterranean - and that's not OK either.

So in dealing with this idea the first thing we have to do is distinguish between what we can do personally, as individuals, and what can and should be done as a society, as public policy.

As individuals we can be kind but we can't all take homeless people into our houses. But we can and should have a society that provides decent housing for all. We can and should have a society that doesn't abandon a whole layer of the population to deprivation.

Clearly this is far from the case in Ireland today and far from the case in the world today.

Who are 'our own'?

Then there's another question and that is who do we mean by 'our own'? It could mean just our immediate family or does it mean our neighbours? And where do our neighbours begin and end? Is it our street, our village, our area, our town? Or is it our country?

Actually one of the main ways in which 'looking after our own' is used today is to refer to 'the Irish people' or 'the Irish nation'. In this use of the phrase 'our own' are contrasted to 'foreigners' be they the poor of Africa or migrant workers in Dublin, or refugees fleeing war and disaster.

And, of course, the same thing is said in America or Britain or France or Russia etc.

This is a view of the world which socialists challenge. It sees the main division of the world as being between different nations and nationalities and it suggests or assumes that all the people of a particular nation share a common interest.

The recent history of Ireland - and everywhere else - shows this is not the case.

Golden Circle

Enda Kenny and the Golden Circle who run Ireland do not have the same interests as the ordinary people of Dublin, Waterford or Cork - and they don't govern in our interests either.

The 1% of millionaires and billionaires on Wall St and in Washington who rule America don't have the same interest as the poor of Washington DC or the black people of Ferguson or the workers of Wisconsin.

David Cameron and his cabinet of old Etonians in Britain don't govern in the interests of their 'own' people in Tottenham or Hackney, never mind Burnley or Newcastle.

Them and us
The simple fact is that in terms of living standards and life style - and frequently in attitudes as well - Irish 'ordinary' i.e. working

class people have much more in common with working people from Greece or Poland, Nigeria or North Africa than they do with Denis O'Brien, David Drumm, Enda Kenny or Bertie Aherne. And ordinary 'foreigners' from Greece or the Middle East have more in common with Irish working people than they do with the fat cats who rule their countries.

Not only do we have similar living standards but we also have the same basic interests. Our rulers and bosses don't want us to see this. They want us to see working people of other countries as rivals so that we work harder for less pay in order to compete with them and in the process increase their profits.

The rulers and bosses of other countries want their workers to do the same, so we all race to the bottom while they race to the top. The rich want us to undercut each other so that they can enrich themselves.

In fact, if workers in Chinese factories get wage increases or migrant workers in Ireland get decent pay this will benefit all workers everywhere. Similarly if the people of Greece are able to resist the Troika and get a debt write down this will help us do the same.

This is why socialists regard working people of all countries as 'our own', as our sisters and brothers, and the bosses, capitalists and exploiters of all countries as not 'our own' but our enemies. This is why we are internationalists not nationalists and why Marx's basic slogan was 'Workers of the world unite!'

Climate Change

Michael Wallace explains why the



Drought in California

Ireland has enjoyed a relatively quiet winter but in early 2014, the country was lashed by extreme storms that caused record tides, severe flooding and damage to homes and lives.

While these storms have receded for now, other parts of the world are being hammered by extreme weather directly linked to a warming planet. Extreme weather events are a major consequence of climate change, and they are becoming more frequent, powerful and erratic.

Series of disasters

In February 2014 the UK was hit by devastating floods resulting from the heaviest winter rainfall in 248 years. In the same month Tokyo was hit by the worst snow storm in 45 years.

In March, the South Pacific islands of Vanuatu were devastated by one of the most powerful storms in history. A massive cyclone flattened 90% of all buildings leaving 24 people dead and 3,000 more homeless.

March also saw mudflows and flash floods in the world's driest desert. A freak

rainstorm dumped seven years worth of water in just 24 hours onto the Atacama Desert in northern Chile. Worsened by melting snow from the nearby Andes Mountains, many small villages and towns were destroyed leaving 26 dead, 125 missing and 30,000 affected by the worst floods in 80 years.

In Australia, falling rainfall levels, high temperatures and drought created bushfires that raged across the continent. Cutbacks to firefighting services and funding to deal with new climate threats made the problem worse.

Two massive cyclones also devastated areas of northern and eastern Australia, leaving many homeless. Thousands were left to fend for themselves with little or no government support. This was the first time twin cyclones of this intensity struck Australia.

As Australia burned, North America froze. February 2015 was the coldest month on record for many cities, including New York, as cold air normally experienced over the polar region reached as far south as

Miami, Florida. Nearly 100 million people in 30 states suffered under brutal cold and endless snow pile-ups.

But while the east froze the west coast burned. For the fourth consecutive year, extreme drought plunged California into crisis. With rainfall and snowfall at record lows and wildfires sweeping across the state at higher than average rates, scientists have calculated this year to be the area's driest in 434 years.

California has just one year's water supply left in its reservoirs and river basins, and even the oldest of water backup supplies - groundwater - could soon be gone after the reservoirs dry up.

In July the strongest typhoon in 40 years struck Southern China killing 16 and affecting 3 million people. Then in September ranging monsoon floods in Pakistan killed more than 440 people and left tens of thousands homeless.

Meanwhile Brazil experienced both record flooding in the Amazon basin and drought in the south.

These events are just some examples of a pattern of increasingly chaotic weather - a pattern produced by an overall rise in temperatures.

Climate Data

Two US government agencies, NASA and the National Oceanic and Atmosphere Administration (NOAA) reported in January that 2014 was the Earth's warmest recorded year since records began. This is the 38th consecutive year that annual global temperatures rose above average, while nine of the top ten warmest years in the last 135 years has happened since 2000.

And, as 99% of scientists recognise, what causes this long-term warming is the greenhouse effect produced by the burning of fossil fuels such as oil, natural gas and coal.



A Frozen Lake Michigan

Change is Now

The world's weather is going crazy



The damage caused by the endless burning of fossil fuels is highlighted by the fact that the amount of carbon dioxide concentrations in the atmosphere is now higher than at any time in the last 650,000 years.

The link to capitalism

There is a direct link between all of this and capitalism.

The burning of fossil fuels is central to global capitalism's energy needs. Seven of the top ten world's largest corporations are oil and gas companies such as ExxonMobile, which has revenue of \$496 billion annually. Along with other fossil fuel giants like Royal Dutch Shell, BP and Sinopec Group, they collectively made profits of \$900 billion between 2001-10.

These companies continually block any serious attempts at tackling global warming by lobbying politicians, financing climate science denial and downplaying climate destruction in order to protect their massive profits.

California drought and the fracking boom

Another factor in this crisis has been the stampede of oil and gas energy corporations into California over the last few years to get in on the new hydraulic fracking boom.

Fracking involves blasting huge amounts of water into the earth to release pockets of natural gas and oil.

This unregulated and destructive process that the state's politicians have eagerly embraced sucked up 70 million gallons of water last year.

The big oil companies in California are also pumping contaminated water containing radioactive material and arsenic into reservoirs and groundwater supplies adding to the misery of the drought crisis.

Air pollution and people's health are also being affected as some of the 750

chemicals used in the fracking are causing serious illnesses for local populations, including severe organ damage, infertility, birth defects and cancer. And of course the extraction and burning of all this oil and natural gas causes further global warming and extreme weather.

Nestle, the world's largest food corporation, are getting in on the act too. While ordinary residents of California are having severe water restrictions imposed on them, Nestle are extracting undisclosed amounts of the precious resource from several local wells to sell for profit as bottled water. Unsurprisingly, the chairman of Nestle, Peter Brabeck-Lemanthe, recently declared that water is not a human right and should be privatised.

What links all these phenomena is the systematic sacrifice of the planet and its people for the sake of profit.

It's not too late

The fact that numerous climate conferences have ended in failure shows that a world dominated by rival competing capitalist nations cannot solve the problem of

climate change and the extreme weather it is bringing about.

And we are running out of time. According to scientists, global greenhouse gas emissions will continue to increase over the next few decades by between 50 and 90% if nothing is done.

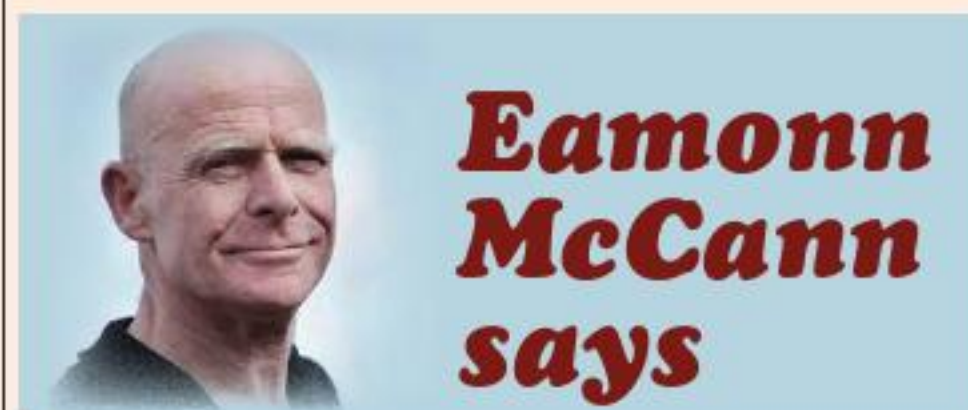
This will lead to apocalyptic environmental consequences for the world, with some regions suffering flooding, others drought, complete melting of the polar caps and dangerous sea-level rises threatening coastal cities.

Food and water shortages will worsen, as unstoppable increases in global temperatures will eventually make large parts of the planet uninhabitable. Extreme weather will become the new normal.

This nightmarish future doesn't have to happen. An ageing economic system run by a tiny wealthy elite hell-bent on destruction in the name of short-term profit must be overthrown and radical social political changes that place the earth's resources in the hands of the working must be implemented. It's not too late to win such a world but we need to start fighting for it now!



Snow in Istanbul



Eamonn McCann says

British Labour hits new low

IN its unprincipled desperation to win votes, the British Labour Party has made mugs of anti-racists within its ranks.

"Controls on Immigration", reads the slogan running around a coffee mug promoted by the party as election merchandise.

A fiver a time for using immigrants as scapegoats for the country's ills.

There are no cups or plates inscribed with "Controls on Banking," or "Controls on Police" or "Controls on Domestic Abusers".

Tens of thousands perish in the Mediterranean as they try desperately to escape poverty, conflict and fear.

All Miliband and Labour can offer is a pledge that few who survive will be allowed to set foot in Britain.

There's a daft bat called Katie Hopkins on the loose who has suggested that the way to deter boats overladen with migrants is to send in gunboats against them.

Writers in the respectable conservative magazine, the *Spectator*, have eagerly agreed and rubbished as "bleeding hearts" anyone who takes a different view.

The *Spectator* crowd will have felt the more comfortable in their racism for the fact that all the British mainstream parties have bought into the lie that a hard line on immigration is essential in order to hold on to white working-class votes.

But there is no reason to believe that working-class people of any background would automatically or at all shut their ears to a policy of welcoming immigrants.

It isn't that the rational argument on immigration is being rejected by the mass of the people.

The argument isn't being made.

Instead, Miliband, Cameron and Clegg are tripping over one another so as not to be outflanked by Ukip on the right.

On the BBC's "Newsnight" on April 22nd, a spokesperson for the Confederation of British Industry said that not only had immigration not harmed the British economy, the economy would have been in deeper dire straits without it.

But even a capitalist argument for immigration cuts no ice with a party like Labour which has no principles left and therefore no strategy other than scrambling in the gutter for any grubby vote going.

Laurens Jolles, United Nations

High Commissioner for Refugees' representative in Italy, says that "anti-immigrant rhetoric from politicians across Europe, including Britain, is blocking attempts to introduce large search-and-rescue operations in the Mediterranean that would save large numbers of migrant lives".

Labour, like the rest, puts a little value on the lives of Arabs and Africans as was accorded them in the days of Empire.



The ills which afflict Africa and the Middle East today and prompt millions to put their lives at risk have resulted from a combination of colonialism, new conflicts arising from Western military adventures and the collapse of local economies under the impact of repressive terms of trade and structural adjustment programmes.

The boats floundering in the Mediterranean are carrying people already victimised over and over by Western imperialism.

On an adjacent issue: that ultra-respectable body the Institute for Fiscal Studies, on the basis of studying the various manifestos, says that, behind the rhetoric, Tory, Labour, and Lib-Dems all envisage spending cuts as deep and devastating after the election as before.

None of them offers an end to austerity.

Which is why all of them are complicit in denying the humanity of migrants.



The Casualisation of Irish Labour

The Dunnes Stores strike highlighted the problem of zero-hours contracts and casualisation.

Brian O'Boyle shows this is part of a general trend

Ask any Dunnes worker and they'll tell you straight: fulltime employment has become harder to attain since the economic crash in 2008.

In branches across the country, 75% of staff are now employed on part time and/or temporary contracts. More importantly, 98% would like more hours and more security.

Work practices across the retail sector are broadly similar. A recent survey of Mandate members, revealed a majority on part-time contracts, with over 60% of these expected to change their hours regularly.

What was worse, 97% received no shift or bonus allowance for the inconvenience caused.

As Ireland's largest employment sector (15%), retail is indicative of the casualisation that has gripped the wider economy since the start of the crisis.

According to the Central Statistics Office, part-time work has increased by more than 25% during the last six years.

Historically, it was workers in non-unionised sectors that faced the insecurity of precarious labour, but increasingly the so-called professions are also being hit.

Research by the Teachers Union of Ireland, indicates that 30% of teachers are currently without full time hours or a permanent contract.

For teachers under 30, this figure rises to more than 50%. In the university sector things are no better.

Lecturing is gradually being outsourced to people without any entitlements beyond an hourly wage.



Flexibility or insecurity?

Why does this matter? For all its limitations, fulltime work affords people a degree of security to allow them to plan their lives and their futures.

It often comes with important benefits including pension rights, paid holidays, promotional opportunities and protection from dismissal.

Those on part-time/casual contracts have very few, if any, of these benefits. Work is often low paid, insecure and badly protected.

Workers can be sacked relatively easily with the flexibility imposed on employees helping to generate extra profits for employers.

The personal effects of such arrangements are all too predictable.

According to Mandate, 30% of their respondents said that they were finding it difficult to feed their families;

40% found it impossible to cover their bills, whilst 75% admitted to increased stress and vulnerability.

This sense of job insecurity is becoming all-too-widespread.

Speaking to *Socialist Worker* at the picket lines of the recent Dunnes strike, one woman explained the effects of casualisation on her life

"I have worked in Dunnes for 12 years on a 15 hour contract.

I've just had a baby and could really do with some extra hours, but because I'm earning €11.65 the management are giving them to people on lower wages.

I've always worked hard for Dunnes, but the thanks I get is losing my hours as soon as I get a tiny pay rise.

I can't get a mortgage with the kind of hours I'm guaranteed and it leaves my family very vulnerable"

Austerity

This vulnerability is not happening by chance. In 2008, the Irish Business and Employers' Confederation (IBEC) argued that the biggest cause of the economic meltdown was a lack of competitiveness. This was really a euphemism for the need to drive down wages under the cover of the crisis.

Understanding the signals, the government immediately sprang into action. Over the course of the last seven years, the State has cut public sector pay by €3 billion per year. On top of this, it has drawn up a series of 'labour activation policies' (LAPs) and dismantled the protections associated with Joint Labour Committees (JLCs).

The cumulative effects of these policies have been devastating. Let's start with the LAPs. Instead of receiving wages for their labour, younger people are being conditioned to believe that paid employment is a privilege that must be earned.

Currently there are around 6,500 people on JobsBridge with as many as 85,000 on labour activation programmes more generally. This represents the extreme end of casualisation as employers often receive free labour for a period of up to 9 months with no obligation to hire anyone at the end of it.

Joint Labour Committees traditionally protected workers in precarious sectors such as hotels, hairdressing and retail. Reducing pay needed employee consent and wages were slightly higher than would otherwise have been the case.

Under the Industrial Relations Amendment (2012), employers can now plead poverty to escape the rules of JLCs. Sunday pay and premium rates have also been scrapped, whilst future JLCs will have to take into account factors such as competitiveness and rates of employment and unemployment.

European Monetary Union

Driving this casualisation is the logic of what economists call 'internal devaluation'. Yet once again this is merely a euphemism for reducing wages to escape the crisis.

Prior to monetary union, governments had a variety of tools to achieve this goal. They could (1) borrow to fund new technologies and R&D, (2) reduce the costs of business loans through expanding the supply of money and/or (3) make their exports cheaper by making their currency lose some of its value.

Under the rules of the monetary union none of these policy tools are currently available. Indeed, the rules of EMU outlaw every form of government action except those designed to make labour markets more flexible.

Instead of well-paid and secure employment, EMU demands that governments attack pay and conditions as the only means of regaining competitiveness. Casualisation is therefore likely to worsen so long as we remain trapped within the prison of the Eurozone.

Zero Hours: Victory in New Zealand

Jimmy Yan

In a global first, fast food workers in New Zealand have won a major victory against job insecurity and under-employment.

Workers at Restaurant Brands, which owns KFC, Pizza Hut, Carl's Jr. and Starbucks stores in the country, will vote on a new collective agreement scrapping zero hour contracts.

The agreement, which takes effect in July, guarantees staff 80 percent of hours worked over a three-month period.

The victory is the product of a nine-year industrial campaign led by the militant Unite Union, which represents 2,000 mostly young workers at the chain.

In February, workers at the Wendy's chain walked out against management theft of paid days off.

Unite argues that company abuse of rostering is enabled by the denial of job security under zero hour contracts.

According to Unite organiser Joe Carolan, "in many other countries across the world, companies are increasing their use of zero hours. This is really bucking the trend".

Unite is planning to extend its campaign against precarious contracts to the rest of the industry, with Burger King already following suit in banning zero hours.

Workers have voted for strike action at McDonalds and Wendy's as part of the International Day of Action for Fast Food Workers.

Joe Carolan says "this is what a fighting union led by socialists looks like."

Workers have sent a message of solidarity to Dunnes workers being victimised for striking against precarious contracts in Ireland.



Clare Daly and Mick Wallace face jail

TDs Mick Wallace and Clare Daly face the prospect of going to jail after both declared that they will not pay €4,000 in fines imposed on them by a judge.

They were found guilty at Ennis District Court of breaching airport regulations when entering a restricted area at Shannon airport last July and fined €2,000 each.

The judge has given them three months to pay and threatened 30 days in prison if they do not.

However, speaking on the steps

of the courthouse after the case, Mick Wallace told reporters and supporters: "I wouldn't pay that fine to save my life."

Dublin North TD Clare Daly agreed.

"We have no intention of paying a financial contribution to a state which allows this behaviour to continue (at Shannon)," she said.

The issue involved is that Day and Wallace, like Margaretha D'Arcy before them, 'breached airport regulations' in order to

highlight a much greater wrong, the breaching of Irish neutrality by making Shannon available to US military aircraft for the purpose of transmitting arms, military personnel and military prisoners for rendition (torture in other countries).

Socialist Worker applauds their principled stand and condemns the hypocrisy of a government that prepares to celebrate the centenary of a revolt against empire while deliberately violating Irish neutrality



TTIP – the trojan horse trade agreement

Chris Wakefield

The US and The EU have been engaging in bilateral talks on a comprehensive free trade agreement aimed at removing tariffs and other restrictive barriers that would inhibit trade between the two global heavyweights that represent 40% of global GDP combined.

The main aim of TTIP (Transatlantic Trade & Investment Partnership) is to deregulate and lift barriers that would restrict the potential profits of transnational corporations.

The Chief EU Negotiator representing the 28 E.U. States, Commissioner Karel De Gucht is heading the ninth round of secret negotiations which have commenced this month. 90% of the participants involved in the talks are lobbyists for multinational corporations, financial institutions, Business Europe and the American Chamber of Commerce.

It sounds all above board at a glance: good for jobs, growth, stability, boosting the economy and a making the world a better place in general, but a better place in general for who?

The Dept. of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation commissioned a TTIP impact assessment to be conducted by Copenhagen Economics.

The report claims TTIP will boost jobs in our export industries by 5,000 to 10,000 and produce a potential €525 additional income per home.

The report also boasted that it would most benefit manufacturing industry, particularly pharmaceuticals and electronics, the agri-food sector, private healthcare and the insurance industry.

But this is the spin. Serious concern

Lobbying for TTIP:



has been raised in relation to a clause to be included called ISDS (Investor-State Dispute Settlement), a key part of the trade deal which would allow firms to sue national governments if they feel local laws such as health and safety regulations, food standards, environmental protection laws and financial regulations interfere with their business.

Investor-State Dispute Settlements

in trade agreements have proven to be disastrous around the world.

Tobacco

For example, the US tobacco giant Phillip Morris is suing the Uruguayan government for €25 million dollars over cigarette plain package legislation, because Phillip Morris feels it will lose out on profits due to this law.

So what would happen when the Minister for Health's plain cigarette pack legislation hampers the projected profits of a cigarette company?

Will the law be circumvented and the state brought to a court of arbitration and be sued via the ISDS for similar amounts? Let's look at other examples of ISDS type situations.

Germany made a decision to phase

out nuclear power after the Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan and now the Swedish utility Vattenfall is suing Germany at the Washington based International Centre for Settlement of investor disputes. Vattenfall is seeking €4.7 billion in damages.

The Canadian government is being sued by the US company Lone Pine Resources for \$250 million via NAFTA's similar investor dispute settlement clause because the Canadian government decided to have a moratorium on fracking.

Needless to say the taxpayer picks up the tab for compensation awarded by these "courts".

Another risk of TTIP is labour rights. The French multinational Veolia sued the Egyptian government for raising the minimum wage after the Arab Spring.

Bear in mind Veolia run the Luas lines in Dublin.

Imagine TTIP negotiations are successfully concluded and agreement is reached.

Then imagine the unions tried to get a pay rise for their members? Or the state decides NOT to privatise our bus and rail networks?

It would be very likely that the state could be sued for colossal amounts of money at the taxpayer's expense because investors felt it wasn't in the interest of trade or profit margins.

TTIP is a direct threat to democracy because governments will be shy to bring forward new legislation in relation to labour laws or food safety that may land them in hot water with multinational corporations. TTIP will result in an abdication of political decision making in the name of corporate interests.

TTIP - designed by corporations for corporations.

Belfast rallies against racism

Tiarnán O Muilleoir

BELFAST rallied last week in defense of a Lithuanian woman who had her business destroyed in a racist attack.

A gang of masked men torched victim Asta Samaliute's beauty salon on Castlereagh Street near midnight on Monday April 13.

The men forced up the shutters on the shop before pouring in fuel and setting it alight.

The interior of the shop was destroyed along with equipment and decorations, leaving Asta out of pocket and distraught, and her employees with no work to go to.

"POLISH OUT!" was daubed in graffiti on the shutters indicating the racist intent behind the attack. However the callous intimidation soon drew an outcry from the local community and further afield.

An online fundraising page aiming

to raise £4,000 to help Asta repair the damage to her business exceeded its goal within days and currently stands at almost £9000.

While the evening after the attack over a hundred people attended a rally organised in short notice in support of Asta.

Asta told the BBC she had initially considered leaving Northern Ireland in the wake of the attack but was heartened by the supportive response.

"To be honest, last night when I got the police phone call, I didn't feel like I want to live here, but today my mind has changed completely" she said.

"People are being so, so supportive and I'm just so blessed to have such nice people round me" she added.

People Before Profit Councillor Gerry Carroll attended the rally and told Socialist Worker:

"This attack is just the latest in

a number of racist incidents in Northern Ireland over the past eighteen months. It is vital we take a strong stand against this trend"

This surge in racism has occurred in the context of a wider populist right-wing shift in public discourse in the North boosted by the rise of UKIP in Britain.

The nadir came last summer when First Minister Peter Robinson defended comments by an extremist preacher who described Islam as "heathen" and "satanic".

As with the attack on Asta's business, the majority of racist incidents have occurred in traditionally 'Loyalist' areas like East Belfast.

Migrants are being scapegoated for the real social issues in these communities such as unemployment, lack of affordable housing, and low pay.



However the demonstration in support of Asta shows popular opposition exists to racism in Northern Ireland, including among poor Protestants.

But in the vacuum that is NI politics, the racists will continue to thrive in a context of austerity,

fear, and normalised 'us and them' sectarianism.

Gerry Carroll's challenge to the political mainstream in the North through his current campaign for election to Westminster plays an important role in building the anti-racist movement.

Damon Albarn's political new album

as an increasingly political and culturally disaffected songwriter, there is more substance to Albarn's critique of pop music than meets the eye. Blur's new album, *The Magic Whip*, their first with the original line-up in 16 years, highlights the gulf between Albarn and his pop contemporaries.

Albarn's music has always been inflected with cultural criticism. Blur's 1993 landmark album (the start of nearly everything interesting that happened in the 90s) was entitled *Modern Life Is Rubbish*, and served as the first in a trilogy of what are now considered to be classics of the 'Britpop' genre. Albarn's observational character-based songs decried the sameness and inertia of everyday life, a theme he has revisited throughout

his career.

Since effectively disbanding Blur in 2003 to focus on his side project Gorillaz, the tone and content of Albarn's song writing has shifted notably towards the political. Having long grown tired of effortlessly churning out pop anthems Albarn was drawn more and more towards musical and lyrical experimentation towards the end of his time with Blur. After the release of what it seemed would be the band's final album in 2003, the same year as the invasion of Iraq, Albarn felt sufficiently liberated from the trappings of pop stardom to tackle political causes.

Alongside Robert Del Naja of Massive Attack (himself noted for his long-standing activism in support of Palestine), Albarn led the charge in attempting to mobilise the music community against the war, and played a visible role in the historic

protest movement that brought millions on to the streets. Now, with Blur having reunited to record *The Magic Whip*, their first album as a four-piece since 1999, Albarn views his music as a political intervention.

Possessing the most Tory rhythm section in history – bassist Alex James is a friend of David Cameron while drummer Dave Rowntree is a failed New Labour election candidate who supported the Iraq War – doesn't hinder Blur. Thankfully, when it comes to the political tone of their songs, the band defer to their frontman's superior judgement. *The Magic Whip*, with tracks like 'There Are Too Many Of Us', picks up where he left off on last year's solo debut *Everyday Robots*, a mournful look at the increasingly alienated and atomised nature of life in modern capitalist society: "We are everyday robots on our phones...in the process

of being sold."

The problem, as Albarn sees it, is that this kind of cultural criticism is playing an ever diminishing role in contemporary pop music: "It's bereft of it. It's a shame because the three-minute pop song was such a great way to express discontent." Now, he feels, it's as if "the Beatles and Bob Dylan never happened". Viewed against the backdrop of this decline, Albarn cuts a lonely figure, a rare breed of cultural critic who represents the best traditions of pop music as political expression.

Albarn's role, throughout the 90s with Blur and 2000s with Gorillaz, has been to help carve out and shape new terrain in pop music whilst writing songs that say something real about the world in which we live. It's a fine tradition, and one which perhaps no other artist of this generation has done as much to preserve.



Reviewed by Rory O'Neill

"BUT look at music now. Does it say anything? Young artists talk about themselves, not what's happening out there." These words from Blur and Gorillaz frontman

Damon Albarn might seem trite but viewed in light of his development

Socialist Worker

No to Austerity - People Over Profit

Shaun Harkin

Gerry Carroll, People Before Profit Belfast City Councillor, is standing in West Belfast for election to Westminster to give a political voice to anger at establishment parties and opposition to austerity.

Every vote for Carroll sends a message to Stormont and Westminster parties demanding an alternative to cuts, job lay-offs and the destruction of vital public services.

Instead of austerity, Carroll demands increased taxes on the super-rich and the reigning in of corporate tax dodgers like Google and Amazon.

Carroll says "I don't consider myself a 'politician': I'm an activist, a Socialist and an advocate of West Belfast. I believe in doing politics differently: being visible on the ground, working for constituents and building a consensus for change through People Power and grassroots organisation."

Union Action

Grassroots activism will be absolutely crucial to stop cuts and defend jobs.

Despite pressure not to continue action against austerity during the elections some unions are seizing the opportunity to send a message by striking in the run-up to May 7.

Bus, rail and ambulance workers are following-up the March 13 public sector strike with another 24-hour stoppage on the eve of the election.

Jimmy Kelly, UNITE general secretary and representing Translink workers, said "The proposed cuts to bus and rail services being brought forward by Translink will impact the most vulnerable people in our society - including the old and infirm, those with families, the working poor, those living in isolated, rural communities who are dependent on public transport.

Cuts are being proposed to hospital runs, shopping services, rural routes and town centre buses as well as to cuts to morning, evening and Saturday rail services on the Larne-Belfast and Newry-Bangor lines."

A UNITE official representing ambulance workers explained "This fight is about protecting jobs and services and we will do what it takes to get the Stormont Mandarins to start treating the staff in health with respect and dignity."



Canvass squad for Gerry Carroll, April 25.

Ambulance workers were blocked from participating in the March 13 strike when management declared a last-minute emergency clause.

UNITE members across the health sector will engage in a work-to-rule campaign by refusing to carry out unpaid overtime from April 30 to May 10.

GBM NHS members will take action short of a strike for two weeks from April 27, while ambulance workers in the union will ban overtime for a fortnight from April 28.

Members of the Royal College of Midwives (RCM) voted to strike for four hours on April 30 to demand a 1% wage that's already been given to their colleagues in England, Scotland and Wales. This is the first such vote in the college's 134-year history.

The March 13 day of action across the North organised by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions demonstrated the tremendous power of the labour movement. Strikes by bus, rail, ambulance workers in the run-up to May 7 will also send a powerful message to Stormont that resistance to austerity will continue.

These workers are right to strike and deserve our full solidarity. However, their strike action would be much more powerful if the ICTU called on all their member unions to back them by coming out on strike as well.

Standing up to racism and homophobia

Grassroots activism is crucial to defend public services and fight for living wage jobs but it's also crucial to standing up to racism and homophobia.

Racist attacks on immigrants in both Belfast and Derry were met with large protests and calls for solidarity over scapegoating.

The homophobic outburst by Northern Ireland Health Minister and DUP MLA Jim Wells has been widely condemned and greeted with calls for his immediate resignation.

Whatever the outcome of the Westminster elections, all the establishment parties are committed to continuing austerity.

It's ridiculous for Sinn Fein to claim a vote for them is 'a vote against austerity'

as their election literature states when they are for the full implementation of the Stormont House Agreement with its package of 20,000 jobs cuts, reduction of the Corporate Tax rate and increased privatisation of public services.

Austerity that leads to increased poverty and inequality is a potential breeding ground for the politics of hate and scapegoating.

This is why challenging austerity and fighting for working class solidarity over division and racism is key and must go hand-in-hand.

Keep up the Pressure

Stormont parties, as Sinn Fein's U-turn on Welfare Reform showed, are susceptible to pressure.

To do this we will need more coordinated strike action by all the unions and the threat of sustained action, not just one-day strikes.

Union leaderships and activists now have a crucial role to play in preparing union members and co-workers for more action in defense of jobs and public services.

There is outrage at the daily news of the impact of cuts across the North. Grassroots campaigns can push back against these cuts and involve union, community and student activists.

In Derry, over 100 attended an anti-austerity rally initiated by People Before Profit.

The rally drew together activists involved in housing, health, disability, arts, anti-racist and trade union struggles.

When the Westminster election ends, the campaign for the North's Assembly elections will begin.

Resistance through strikes and protests is crucial but we also need a political alternative to the parties of austerity.

Trade union, community and student struggles need a political voice that can encourage resistance and present an alternative to the politics of austerity, bigotry and sectarianism on offer in Stormont.

This is exactly what Gerry Carroll's campaign and People Before Profit activists across the North are aiming to do by standing for Westminster and through organising grassroots struggle over the coming year.

Vote Gerry Carroll on May 7!

Mediterranean tragedy exposes EU racism

Memet Uludag

THE terrible death by drowning of 900 refugees on the morning of Sunday 19 April was like a flash of lightning that suddenly lit up the sky and threw a bright light on the callous racism and imperialism of the European Union.

First, the simple undeniable fact that these deaths, and the total for 2015 is now over 1500, were a direct result of EU policy.

Last autumn they cold bloodedly cancelled the Mare Nostrum sea rescue programme and replaced it with the, much cheaper, Frontex operation which was about border control not rescue.

They did this because they believed, as British Foreign Office minister, Lady Anelay, explained in the House of Lords, that 'search and rescue operations' were 'an unintended "pull factor" encouraging more migrants to attempt the dangerous sea crossing'. In other words if we let them drown they'll stop coming.

Second, the fact that part of the reason for this disgraceful policy is the desire of the 'mainstream'



governments of Britain, France, Germany etc to appease the racist and fascist parties of the extreme right. The far right are building support by turning anger at the hardship caused by austerity into racism scapegoating of foreigners, immigrants and refugees. The 'mainstream' have to appease

them because they are committed to austerity to defend profits.

Third, the fact that EU governments, along with the US government, bear a direct responsibility for the disastrous and unbearable circumstances from which the people of North Africa and the Middle East are fleeing.

Failed State

We hear that Libya is a 'failed state'. Are we supposed to forget that in 2011 this state was bombed and invaded by NATO, with Britain and France in the driving seat?

They said it was a humanitarian mission but the moment they had achieved their twin aims of overthrowing Colonel Gaddafi and controlling the revolt from below, they walked away from the chaos they created.

It is the same story in Iraq, Afghanistan and Yemen. Where Western governments don't actually bomb, invade or occupy they sell weapons to corrupt and brutal dictators, like Al-Sisi in Egypt or the Saudi Arabian regime, who do the fighting for them.

Fourth, the fact that despite a certain certain modicum of crocodile tears, the main response of the EU institutions to the tragedy is not to accept refugees but to intensify operations to detain them and prevent them leaving North Africa.

That is it is a brutal racist and punitive response.

Racist Myths

We should never underestimate the callous inhumanity our rulers are capable of but in this, and many other cases, they are better able to get away with this inhumanity because of the racist myths they spread so assiduously.

It is a myth that refugees and migrants are a threat to our societies or to the interests of ordinary people, whether the numbers they come in are large or small. They do not 'take our jobs' or 'steal our benefits' or cause the housing crisis.

It is the economic crisis caused by the greed of the rich that has created unemployment, recession, poverty and homelessness, not the presence of immigrants.

On the contrary, provided they are allowed to work, migrant workers make huge contributions to the countries they arrive in just as Irish workers made contributions to the countries to which they were forced to emigrate.

The problem is the 1% need scapegoats and they will let people die rather than give them up.