

Socialist Worker

For latest news visit www.socialistworkeronline.net/

Text JOIN to 086-3074060

REPEAL

NOT REPLACE

Eye-witness report from visit to Palestine: p.4-5

Union leaders sell rotten deal: but teachers unions reject it.

SUPPORT TEACHERS FIGHT FOR PAY EQUALITY

Owen MacCormack

A majority of public sector unions have voted to accept a new public sector pay deal. However there remains significant opposition to the Government plan especially in teaching unions. The delay is a rotten one which does not address many core issues and copper fastens pay inequality and many of the austerity measures introduced in the last eight years.

It is no accident that the leader who has done most, this year as in the past, to sell this rotten deal is Jack O'Connor, President of SIPTU and Chair of the Labour Party.

Lower rates for new recruits remain in place, as do much reduced pension rates and higher pension contributions. Up to 15 million unpaid extra hours are effectively made a permanent condition for many public sector workers. In both teaching and the health sector core issues remain unaddressed. Pay inequality and the difficulty of retaining staff because of low pay and poor conditions are not dealt with. The deal will insure that the staffing crisis in our hospitals remains and working conditions will not improve for most workers there.



Jack O'Connor, President of SIPTU and Chair of the Labour Party

The three teaching unions however are likely to reject the deal, this is a significant first and holds out the prospect that teachers across all sectors may unite to fight on key issues in the year ahead. Both the TUI

and INTO have rejected the deal by large majorities and the TUI have backed strike action to oppose the two tier pay structure in schools. This will be an important fight that all trade unionists should support and

it could yet unravel the Government's plans.

While many workers will be disappointed by the large yes votes in unions like SIPTU and IMPACT, this needs to be seen in context. Many workers have taken large pay cuts over the austerity years and attacks on their conditions. In many union workplaces, organisation is poor with little active rank and file gatherings. This means the only information many workers got on this deal was from their full time officials. The gloss they put on this was that there was no alternative, a strike couldn't win any more and that if they didn't vote to accept, there would be no pay rises at all.

On top of this the supposed gains in the deal were talked up and workers were told how much they would gain over the course of the deal. The deal will mean average pay rises of €4-5000 over three years. However, since 2009 many public sector workers have faced average cuts of over €1500 euro per year, or anything from 9 to 19% cuts on basic pay when the pension levy is included. The deal means that many of the "temporary" measures and cuts introduced during the crisis are now permanent and that pay inequality, unpaid extra hours and lower

overtime rates will now be copper fastened.

In workplaces where socialists and other activists had a voice it proved possible to win a majority to reject the deal, unfortunately that wasn't enough to win an overall majority at this time.

Despite the deal's acceptance, trade union activists should not be demoralised. Workers confidence will return and there remain many outstanding issues that union leaders have promised will be addressed. If they are not, workers anger may not be easy to contain.

The deal's acceptance shows yet again the urgency of building a left presence in our unions and reclaiming for the ruinous grip of the Labour Party. More battles lie ahead such as attempts to raise the pension age to 70 and the increase in low pay and precarious work that many face. This means trying to connect with workplaces by leafletting etc. on various issues and building a network of union activists.

If teachers go on strike we should join their picket lines in solidarity and get messages of support for their struggle into as many workplaces as possible to counter media attacks and put the case for full pay equality across the public sector.

Government to privatise 10% of Dublin Bus routes

Owen McCormack

The Government, via the National Transport Authority (NTA) have announced plans to privatise 10% of Dublin Bus routes. Over 350 drivers will be affected and the plan will mean a private multinational will be given over 150 buses by the state to operate the routes affected. A similar plan will be announced soon for Bus Eireann routes.

Despite attempts to paint it as otherwise this is privatisation. Existing publicly owned services and buses will be handed over to a multinational to operate for profit.

The move is justified by the NTA on the grounds that increased "competition" in buses operating in Dublin will mean savings and more efficiency.

This is nonsense, the only purpose behind the plan is to undermine existing pay and conditions.

Where similar plans were introduced in London, workers' wages and conditions deteriorated dramatically. Ironically, state subsidies increased and many privatised firms enjoyed huge profits on the backs of both poorer wages



Go Ahead bus awarded contract

and increased subsidies.

Company

The company that won the "competition" is Go Ahead, one of

England's largest private operators who also run train services. Ironically the company have recently been voted the worst train operator in one survey and had one train route taking away because

the service was so poor. Despite this the company raked in almost £100 million in profits last year. Oxford bus drivers had to strike earlier this year when the company tried to renege on paying agreed bank holiday rates over Xmas.

Despite claiming that tendering out routes would save the state money, the NTA had to admit that the Dublin Bus bid to retain the routes was cheaper than Go Ahead. The agency still claimed that the Go Ahead bid would be better overall in the five years of the licence, but this is an absurd claim.

It exposes the real agenda behind the tendering out of state routes. The state will now increase the amount it subsidises these routes in order to insure the private company makes a profit.

The real purpose is to give a private company, with drivers on lower pay and conditions, every support in order to justify privatising even more routes in the years ahead. Just as in other cities that have privatised transport services, there will be no saving to passengers or the state.

When questioned by People Before Profit TD Brid Smith, the NTA refused

to release any details of the deal with Go Ahead, claiming such details were commercially sensitive.

Shamefully both SIPTU and the NBRU unions have accepted the plans following a strike last year. They accepted on the basis that no driver would be forced to move to the private company that won the bid for these routes.

The government and the NTA have promised more funding and increased routes in other areas to compensate for the loss of the 10%.

But this depends on the NTA developing more routes and awarding them to Dublin Bus. In reality the NTA have now begun a process that they will want to keep pushing in order to privatise more services in the years ahead. The agency is ideologically committed to a neoliberal agenda of privatisation.

Workers and the public need to fight this plan and expose the Government's real agenda. Handing over public services to private operators will not improve services or give us a decent transport system. We also need to demand the scrapping of the NTA and its privatisation agenda.

ARMED GARDAI OFF OUR STREETS!

Eoin Ó Murchu

While the crisis in An Garda Síochána has been grabbing headlines and the ongoing saga of Noirín O'Sullivan's long overdue departure and ground to a conclusion another, sinister, development has been going largely unreported.

Since late 2016 there has been a significant increase in the number of armed response unit (ARU) Gardai on the streets.

They are provided with expensive German made weapons and vehicles set to the tune of €60,000. Their ostensible role is to combat gang activity and improve potential response rate to a terror attack.

Leo Varadkar intends to establish a cabinet level committee on national security similar to the COBRA committee in the UK. The same committee which collaborates with MI5, the



Armed Gardaí

agency currently involved with repression of republicans and socialists in the occupied 6 counties. It is quite clear that Varadkar and the

ruling class behind him are using the threat of terror to ramp up the degree of militarisation of the police. A highly repressive state apparatus

is essential for quashing resistance to relentless neoliberal policies.

Those in working class communities and minorities feel the thin edge of this heavily armed wedge. Actor and activist John Connors spoke out about the invasion of his halting site Belcamp lane in Darnale by armed Gardai.

This invasion, as highlighted by the warrant produced after the raid, was designated for a different halting site and unsurprisingly the inhabitants have been left traumatised and without answers.

With left wing politics on the rise, we can only expect more repression of working class activists and with little accountability from the Gardai.

Numerous scandals highlight the corrupt nature of the Gardai, but not their ability to repress and engage in political policing in a highly effective manner as was seen during the

water charges movement.

As an increasingly militant socialist movement grows, one capable of providing an alternative to our cynical and reactionary states, north and south, it is likely that we will become targets of the Offences Against the State Act of 1939 and the harassment of Special Branch policing.

"The actions of An Garda Síochána in fearlessly opposing vicious criminal elements is a true example of service and commitment to the communities which they serve." Said An Tánaiste Frances Fitzgerald.

The ruling class will stress the ARU's function to target criminality in 'Gangland' but leave the financial terrorist and launderers untouched in the IFSC. This expanded use of armed police should be opposed. It is a cynical ploy to 'normalise' the presence of armed police on our streets.

Never miss an issue of Socialist Worker

Six month subscription €15/£10stg

Name _____
 Address _____
 Tel _____
 Email _____

I would like to receive _____ copies of Socialist Worker each issue
 Return to PO Box 1648, Dublin 8, with a cheque/postal order or a bank lodgement receipt. Bank Details: Socialist Workers Movement, AIB, 37/38 Upper O'Connell St, Dublin 1. Account No: 85173469. Sort code: 93-11-36

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 May government.

Like great socialist James Connolly, we believe that partition has brought about a 'carnival of reaction'

We want to see an Irish workers republic where all

workers gain.

Our flag is neither green nor orange but red!

FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To win socialism socialists need to organise in a revolutionary party.

This party needs to argue against right-wing ideas and for overthrowing the system.

We call for co-operation between left-wing parties and the formation of a strong socialist bloc.

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

Join the Socialists

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

Name.....
 Address.....
 Email.....
 Phone.....



The Meaning of Varadkar: Beneath the Liberal Mask

Sean Egan

Much was made of Leo Varadkar's youth and commitment to innovation and modernity during the bluish shirt leadership elections.

Leo's campaign team made a whistle stop tour of Dublin's hipster coffee shop circuit. The type of places where an avocado based breakfast and a cup of coffee will set you back at least twenty quid.

Leo spoke about the marathons he runs and his favourite prestige television. All the trappings of a thoroughly modern, successful man. He also modelled himself after other blandly attractive, young centrist leaders like Canada's Justin Trudeau or France's Emmanuel Macron.

The early days of his government much like his leadership campaign are all devoted to displays of progress and movement. However, it's beginning to feel like a load of hot air: that this new 'radical' centrism with its claims of bold ideas and shaking up the status quo is little more than a shallow marketing gimmick the same miserable, derivative capitalist politics that have dominated Ireland since its foundation as a modern state.

While Leo's youth and supposed commitment to modernisation is meant to set him apart from the corrupt, incompetent and backwards tenure of Enda Kenny and the Fine Gael-Labour coalition he actually represents a hardening of Fine Gael's right-wing sentiment.

Despite

Despite his early gestures towards a repeal referendum and the prestige derived from his carefully stage managed coming out in concert with the marriage equality referendum Varadkar represents the hard edge of Fine Gael politics, viciously anti-worker, anti-woman and anti-migrant. In fact, Leo and his carefully quaffed counterparts Trudeau and Macron are promoting the same failed policies dressed up as a new vision. **In each case they want to make**



Leo Varadkar with Canadian PM, Justin Trudeau on Toronto Pride

the rich richer and the poor poorer.

Macron's victory in France was hailed as a victory for progressivism and common sense after he easily defeated Le Pen. However, in the first months of his presidency he has not made any attempts to address to corruption and government ineptitude he so often skewered during his campaign. In fact, his first target has been organised workers with attacks of France's labour code which secures French workers from some of the attacks waged

by management.

Macron has also aggressively aligned himself with imperialist forces, and during the visit of Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu he conflated opposition to the Israeli occupation of Palestine with anti-Semitism. Macron's arrogance and attacks on working people have led to the fastest decline in approval ratings in French presidential history: 30% (after winning 66% of the vote in May).

Trudeau is another master of spin and

has strategically used the odious homophobia of his predecessor Conservative Stephen Harper to present himself as a champion progressive. Once again, his record says otherwise.

Despite his incorruptible liberal exterior Trudeau's government is continually engaged in the type of reckless oil and gas exploitation that threatens our entire planet. The construction of the Tar Sands pipeline across miles of Native Land in Standing rock became a focal point for

indigenous and environmental activism last year.

Trudeau has also damaged his feminist credentials by continuing to sell massive amounts of arms to Saudi Arabia, a brutally repressive regime in which women and gay people are routinely executed. Trudeau's skin-deep liberalism represents a broader trend: the shallow co-option of progressive causes by right wing leaders to capitalise on the political gains of marginalised people. But as soon as this gestural liberalism is seen to clash with the profits of the ruling class it is swiftly discarded.

Reactionary

Leo Varadkar has been more open than some of his contemporaries about the reactionary side to his politics. His blatant attempt to capitalise on middle class resentment with his campaign about 'welfare cheats' and appeals to 'people who get up early in the morning' represent the hateful anti-working class rhetoric of Thatcherites. In his campaign for the Fine Gael leadership he was deliberately appealing to the hard right of that right wing party.

It is no accident that beneath all the spin and fine words about new initiatives his government is doing nothing serious to tackle the catastrophic housing and homelessness crisis.

This is combined with his historically vicious stance on the rights of migrants. Back in 2008 Varadkar suggested a scheme that would pay unemployed migrants to leave Ireland. Such a scheme would be well received in the hard right of the Tory party or even UKIP.

Similarly, Varadkar's indifference towards the plight of refugees and asylum seekers imprisoned in the direct provision system speaks for itself. This combined with his commitment to neo-liberalism and the free market is the core of Leo Varadkar's politics: a sort-of Rainbow Thatcherism - a gestural commitment to liberal progress masking a hard right anti-worker, anti-migrant Tory agenda.

Housing and homelessness – the bitter truth

The truth about the housing and homelessness crisis is bitter and hard to face. It is that, for all Eoghan Murphy's fine words and initiatives, it is getting steadily worse and its going to get worse still.

The reason is very simple. It is that the Fine Gael Government is ideologically committed to a market based, capitalist solution to the crisis and **there is no market based capitalist solution.**

There are lots of possible solutions but the Government rejects them all because they are based on state intervention which infringes the sacred rights of private property.

They could declare a National Housing Emergency – there is one after all – and use compulsory purchase powers to secure tens of thousands of empty residential properties for public housing. NO! It would infringe on property rights.

They could freeze all economic evictions and house repossessions. NO! It would infringe the property rights of landlords and banks.

They could bring in rent controls. NO! That would interfere with the right of landlords to make profits.

They could halt the sale of public land to private developers. NO! How can you build houses without 'incentivising' developers? That's how the market works.

They could reconfigure NAMA as a state company and use it to **ACTUALLY BUILD PUBLIC HOUSING FOR PEOPLE.**

Appalling idea! Don't you realise that would interfere with the free market and the principles of private property.

This is why People Before Profit

is putting a bill to the Dáil on the first day of its return (20 September) to amend the Constitution to make housing a basic right and to insert the right to secure, affordable housing

ahead of the right to private property

Will this bill be passed? It is most unlikely. So what can be done?

Two things would make a real difference: 1) putting enough people

on the streets to scare the living daylights out of the establishment, as with the water charges; 2) voting out the landlord parties i.e. Fine Gael, Fianna Fail and Labour.

HOMELESSNESS IN IRELAND



TOTAL NUMBER OF HOMELESS IN IRELAND **8,160**
UP ↑ 25% JUNE 2016 - JUNE 2017



THIS INCLUDES **1,429** FAMILIES WITH **2,973** CHILDREN
"MORE THAN 1 IN 3 PEOPLE SUFFERING FROM HOMELESSNESS IS A CHILD"

826 YOUNG PEOPLE AGED BETWEEN **18** AND **24** ARE HOMELESS IN IRELAND

7941 PEOPLE WERE IN EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION IN JUNE 2017

99 FAMILIES BECAME NEWLY HOMELESS IN DUBLIN IN JULY 2017

IN DECEMBER 2016 THERE WERE **61,600** FAMILIES WAITING FOR SOCIAL HOUSING

sources: Focus Ireland, Peter McVerry Trust, CSO.

TOTAL NUMBER OF VACANT DWELLINGS IN THE STATE, EXCLUDING HOLIDAY HOMES



140,154 HOUSES



43,192 APARTMENTS

183,312

THERE ARE A FURTHER **61,204** VACANT HOLIDAY HOMES MEANING THAT ALMOST **10%** OF IRISH HOUSING STOCK IS VACANT

IN 1985 THE STATE BUILT **6,500** SOCIAL HOUSES, IN 2015 WE BUILT **75**

WE CAN SOLVE THE HOUSING CRISIS, WE CAN:

- USE NAMA PROPERTIES - NOT SELL THEM TO VULTURE FUNDS
- USE COUNCIL LAND TO BUILD SOCIAL HOUSING
- TAKE VACANT PROPERTIES INTO PUBLIC OWNERSHIP

#socialism 1.01

John Molyneux

It's a hard rain!

Bob Dylan wrote his legendary song 'It's a Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall' in response to the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, when the world stood on the brink of nuclear war.

It was a prophetic song in which Dylan evoked in the most powerful poetic metaphors a world during or after a nuclear holocaust. By the skin of our teeth we avoided that fate in 1962 but now 55 years on we have another missile crisis over Korea and Dylan's prophecy is coming true, in a form he could not then have envisaged, not metaphorically but literally.

From Donegal to Bangladesh, from Houston to the Caribbean to Florida hard rain is falling, because that is what global warming means. Global warming means global raining as a friend of mine put it at least fifteen years ago.

Or rather that's one of the things it means. It also means extra high winds (that is storms), floods, droughts and fires. And all of these things are happening on an increased and increasing scale in different parts of the world.

Broadly speaking where there are storms, as in the Caribbean, the storms are getting fiercer, where there are floods as in Bangladesh the floods are getting larger, where there are droughts as in Sudan and the Sahel the droughts are lasting longer; where there tend to be fires the fires are getting worse.

Extreme weather is getting more extreme. And crazier - there are also weird things happening like large fires in the non-ice covered part of Greenland!

Recent scientific studies also suggest that the Gulf Stream (scientific name: Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation) is slowing down due to rapid melting of Arctic ice. No one knows the exact consequences of this but it is highly likely to produce even more weather disturbance.

This is not generally speaking how climate



Hurricane Irma

change has been presented to people or understood by people. In the main it was presented as something that most scientists predicted would happen in the future, while other scientists said it wouldn't. In other words it was a matter of opinion.

Also what was predicted would happen was that sea levels would rise and that sooner or later, probably in about 2080 i.e. after most of us are dead, a lot of us in coastal areas would find ourselves underwater. And then again it might never happen.

Urgency

The matter was presented in this way by both politicians and the media precisely in order to avoid any sense of urgency. So long as governments promised to do something about it eventually, say in twenty or fifty years, that was enough.

Climate change was not seen as a real emergency that demanded action now - like terrorism or the banking crisis or Brexit. Rather what was needed was for Governments to spend years agreeing, or sometimes not agreeing, to deals that would cut carbon emissions a bit by 2030 or 2050.

In defence of this attitude Governments and the mainstream media, especially in the US, rely on the argument that specific natural disasters - the Donegal floods, Hurricane Irma etc, - cannot be linked directly to climate change so they refrain, in the US almost totally, from even mentioning climate change in connection with disasters.

But this, deliberately, misses the point which is not that climate change causes an individual disaster but

that it makes such disasters more severe and more frequent.

And the underlying reason for this approach was that almost none of the world's major governments really wanted to do anything much about climate change at all because the capitalist corporations whose interests those governments ultimately serve had such vast vested interest in the fossil fuel economy - oil, gas and coal.

But what is becoming clearer with every passing month and year is the dreadful folly and extreme irresponsibility of this approach. Our rulers, here in Ireland and across the world, have almost literally been fiddling while the planet burns and ordinary people, especially poor ordinary people, are paying the price and the price will rise inexorably.

The underlying truth is that what drives climate change is the economic system which dominates the world, namely capitalism. Capitalism is based on competition, between companies, corporations and states, for profit.

The supporters of capitalism - all the main parties and media - argue that this is the best, and ultimately only possible, way to run an economy. They say there is no alternative. But the fact is that capitalism is progressively destroying the environment on which all human and animal life depends.

Dealing with climate change, both preventing it running completely out of control and dealing with its immediate effects, in any way other than fascism and authoritarian barbarism, demands an economy that puts people before profit not the other way round; it demands socialism.

Repealing the 8th Time to push

Mary Smith

The results of the Citizens Assembly and consistent opinion polls show that the large majority of the Irish people support abortion rights for women in a form that is incompatible with the 8th Amendment.

For example a poll earlier this year showed that more than 80% of the population would favour the right to abortion in circumstances where there is a threat to woman's health. This completely contradicts the 8th Amendment which equates the life of the foetus with that of the mother.

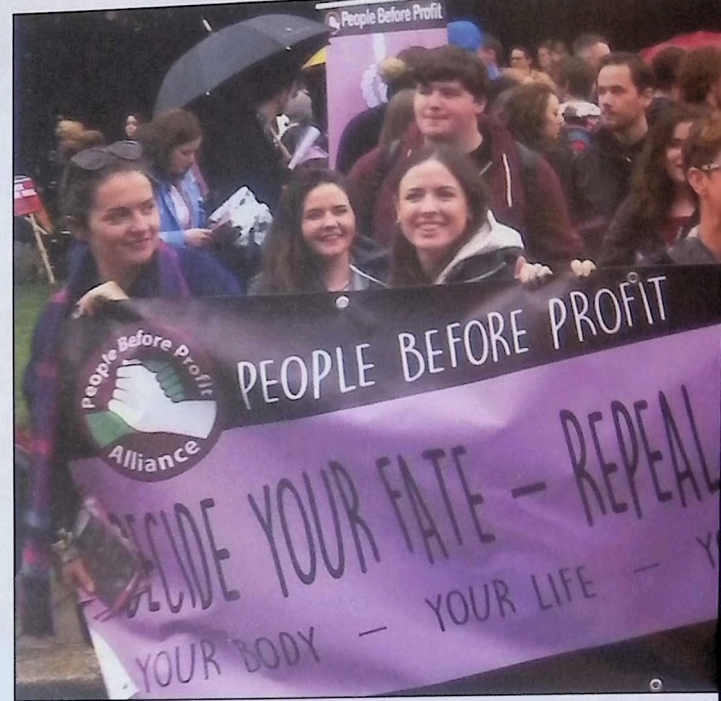
The same opinion poll showed over 70% in favour, if abortion is legalised, of allowing abortion up to 12 weeks.

Again this is utterly opposed to the 8th Amendment.

Yet the Fine Gael/Independent Alliance government is still dragging its feet on the issue. Leo Varadkar, the supposed liberal and progressive, is in particular trying to evade and prevaricate on the question.

Varadkar's and his government's strategy is to exploit the complexity of the issue to hide behind public opinion. But this won't wash.

Yes, people will have different views on the details. Some, like People Before Profit and most socialists are committed to a free, safe and legal abortion rights for all and uncompromisingly in favour of a



woman's right to choose, whereas others like Sinn Féin, for example, may favour restrictions but this doesn't change the fact

that the 8th has to be repealed. In reality what concerns Varadkar is not general 'public opinion' but appeasing his

WELCOME TO ISRAEL, OR NOT!

People Before Profit Councillor Tina MacVeigh and Shay L'Estrange have recently visited Israel/Palestine. Here is their eye-witness report.

On arrival in Ben Gurion Airport, Tel Aviv, one is greeted with a palpable sense of tension and hostility, in equal measure.

This is in no small part due to warnings over the intercom system, advising that it is not permissible to carry guns in the airport.

This warning is not directed towards any potential terrorist treat but towards the general Israeli Zionist population who can regularly be seen carrying guns as part of their daily routine.

Nor is it helped by a very hostile immigration control who have a reputation for lengthy and aggressive questioning, an example of which was the very aggressive questioning of one of our group for eight hours.

Having left the airport our next encounter with the security services was at the Gilo 300 border crossing into the West Bank. As we were your fairly obvious western tourists, we passed through with ease unfortunately the same could not be said for the Palestinians who were passing through at the same time. Here we were about to experience our first taste of Israeli apartheid.

These Palestinians who were simply moving from one part of their own country to another were treated with total disrespect; with the barrel of a rifle they were gestured to move to the right of us and without a word spoken the Palestinians produce their ID cards. Again in silence they move forward to a turnstile.

Whole process

The whole process resembles what you might experience in a cattle mart as a farmer moves his animal from



Israeli soldiers

one point to another. We later realised that this could be best understood as symbolic violence against the Palestinians where they were being stripped of their very humanity, making

them seem less than human, this was to be a regular occurrence throughout our visit where oppression can be seen to penetrate every level of society. Having arrived at the Aida refugee

the 8th — sh forward



progress on this issue for so long.

But now it is clear that Ireland has changed and changed fundamentally. There is a new generation of young Irish women (and men) for whom denial of their bodily autonomy is no longer acceptable.

And the way they have made themselves heard has given confidence to the latent majority for choice among the mass of working class people, including many older people.

This means that now is the time for the vibrant movement for choice to really put the pressure on the government to force a referendum NOW — a straightforward referendum on Repealing the 8th with no strings or complications — not waiting for the Pope's visit or other such nonsense.

To do this the whole Repeal movement has to hit the streets in huge numbers: first on 30 September in the March for Choice; but also in every local community across the State.

We need local groups organising everywhere, with stalls, meetings, rallies, and ultimately, door-to-door canvassing.

This is what was done for the Marriage Equality referendum and it was what delivered the stunning YES vote which so impressed and surprised the rest of the world.

This is what must happen for Repeal: we need a real people's movement from below to win an Ireland fit for women in the 21st century.

conservative and right wing base in Fine Gael — the base he relied on to win the Fine Gael leadership. It is because both

Fine Gael and Fianna Fail have relied on, and carried favour with, this conservative base for decades that there has been no



emplified perfectly by a bullet hole in a poster at the entrance to the camp.

This poster was erected in memory of a young boy who had been shot and killed by the IOF (Israeli Occupation Force) just outside the camp: his only crime was he had thrown a stone. The bullet hole in the poster was a message which clearly said the IOF had no level of depravity to which they will not stoop.

This level of violence was continuous for the two weeks we spent in the West Bank, particularly in and around the Aida refugee camp.

Nightly raids on homes were the norm. IOF snatch squads regularly kidnapped children as young as ten for interrogation. Rubber bullets, tear gas, sound grenades and live rounds were fired indiscriminately into the camp and at children as young as six who played at the entrance to the camp on a daily basis.

If we were shocked by the treatment of the inhabitants of the Aida refugee camp, nothing could have prepared us for Hebron, here we encountered the naked face of apartheid.

On arrival we were greeted by an armed settler who followed us down the street telling us how he was going to force the next Palestinian family from their home.

We were then met by deserted streets that had once been a thriving Palestinian market place, now declared off limits to Palestinians. Then on to an area where Palestinians live — here they are not allowed to drive yet illegal settlers are free to drive these same streets.

Apartheid

Next we found roads that are off limits to Palestinians, where instead they are forced to walk on a dirt track that runs parallel to

these perfectly paved roads used by the Zionists. These scenes in Hebron were reminiscent of the darkest days of South African apartheid: a horrific and explicit example of Israeli apartheid.

And alongside the explicit apartheid we saw in Hebron, we also witnessed the insidious day to day manifestation of the Zionist oppression and occupation that Palestinians encounter at every turn in their daily lives.

Whether the more than 100 permits that make even the most banal activities, like carrying out repairs to your home, virtually impossible, or making water available for only two hours every six weeks even in the hottest of the summer months or settlers attacking Palestinian garden farms and allotments, smashing their equipment or releasing raw sewerage into their villages.

Or soldiers listing their homes for demolition and then making them pay the financial cost of their expulsion from their homes.

Palestinian refugees, like all refugees the world over have a right to return to the homes and villages they were ethnically cleansed from.

If this right of return is ever to be achieved it can only be done if Palestine is a single state.

When the Zionist state is compared to the West Bank, the areas under the control of the Palestinian Authority, inequality could be seen at every level including: housing, income, welfare, health, services and education.

Here we witnessed the perfect storm — capitalism compounded by an occupying racist force.

Therefore if a solution is to be found it must include the dismantling of the apartheid Israeli state and replacing it with a single democratic secular state where everyone has an equal voice irrespective of religion or none.

Cllr. Matt Collins says



The Politics of Bonfires

■ Matt Collins is a People Before Profit Councilor on Belfast City Council. Here he sets out some the complexities of dealing with the issues of bonfires in the City.

concerns that come with the burning of tyres and other harmful substances.

By and large these bonfires are supported and funded by Belfast City Council's bonfire programme, to the



Bonfire in Belfast

This summer the issue of bonfires was at the centre of politics in the North, with tension increasing after it emerged that Belfast City Council effectively colluded in the storing of large amount of material for loyalist bonfires, and then some weeks later when sporadic violence flared up in Belfast after material was removed from a handful of sites at nationalist bonfires in August.

As always, it was ordinary people who suffered the most from events, with cars destroyed in the Markets area and a former credit union building burnt to the ground in West Belfast.

For establishment politicians and much of the mainstream media, the explanation for the violence essentially amounts to one of reckless young people and criminal elements that are simply condemned.

But the violence was more than just 'anti-social behavior'. It was also a reflection of the alienation in working class and deprived communities — manifested in a destructive manner. Some of the young people who engaged in violence were as young as twelve; others grew up in the most poverty-ridden areas, which have suffered terrible violence through generations.

In this context, it was entirely inappropriate that some elected representatives called for forced evictions as a solution in the wake of the trouble, instead of looking at what support could be given to these families, and to these communities as a whole to tackle prolonged issues of low pay, mental health, and drug abuse.

Increased State repression such as forced evictions will not work. Neither will paramilitary shootings, nor any other skin deep punitive measure bandied about when this type of situation arises.

Moreover, the response from the great and the good of the political establishment was devoid of any serious recognition of the State's role in fuelling sectarianism around bonfires. The hypocrisy of political leaders who issue hollow words of condemnation every time sectarianism flares up was hard to stomach.

The bonfire issue is the most recent example to show that the State itself is the main source of sectarianism here. Year on year among the many loyalist bonfires erected on 12 July, sectarian and racist slogans and symbols are commonplace.

Sectarianism

Many of these bonfires flout very basic health and safety concerns, with some built dangerously close to homes and apartments (this year being erected one month after the Grenfell disaster), not to mention the obvious environmental

tune of thousands of pounds, in what in essence amounts to State funded sectarianism.

In July, the situation took an even worse turn when news broke that Belfast City Council had been helping to store some 3,000 pallets to be used for bonfire material. This, in all likelihood, meant that the Council was colluding with loyalist paramilitaries to store a large amount of stolen wood.

Against the build-up of State supported loyalist bonfires, we also see the erection of nationalist bonfires during the August interment anniversary. These bonfires receive no State funding or support from any major political party. At best they are void of all progressive political and historical motivation and at worst ape some of the most unsavory aspects of loyalist bonfires.

The scandal on Belfast City Council led to heated debate between councilors, yet both unionist and nationalist parties have for years bought into a sectarian carve up on the Council, allowing sectarianism to become normal and institutionalized in our society, often funded by the public purse.

The left should be clear that if the State is a primary source of sectarianism around bonfires, then it should not be relied on as the solution to the problem. We should also be alert to the danger of bonfire rules being used to enforce a particular kind of 'community control', where the big unionist and nationalist parties are able to decide what is an acceptable event in their areas and what isn't.

In the special meeting of Belfast City Council that ultimately decided to remove bonfire material in August, People Before Profit proposed an amendment. I argued that any scheme to remove bonfire material should be led from the bottom up, by local communities affected by these bonfires and by trade unionists who represent workers. Any serious approach to reduce bonfires should be informed by this kind of approach. Unfortunately, my amendment was rejected, in what proved to be a serious mistake.

Socialists ought to be clear that bonfires, whether presented as culture or tradition or not, do not have an inalienable right to exist, or to be funded or facilitated by the public purse, especially if they are unwanted and foisted upon working class communities by a small minority, where they present a danger to public health or where they advance reactionary sectarian and racist ideas.

Ultimately, challenging the bonfire issue requires challenging the sectarian carve-up of politics in the North; it means challenging the State and the rotten sectarianism that it espouses, and building a political movement that can unite working people across the divide.

What is happening in Venezuela?

The Maduro Government in Venezuela is facing a developing right wing coup.

Socialists are completely opposed to these reactionaries, but the bitter truth is that they have gifted the opportunity by the failure of the Maduro government to maintain or deepen the Bolivarian Revolution launched by Hugo Chavez.

MIKE GONZALEZ, leading writer on Latin America and author of a biography of Hugo Chavez, reports on the crisis in Venezuela.

The promise

When Hugo Chavez launched the first declared socialist project of the 21st century, it inspired a new optimism.

Here was a 21st century socialist who connected with the new anti-capitalist movements who seemed original and creative.

The Bolivarian Constitution in 1999, declared the new republic to be a "participatory democracy" in which the people were the subject.

Oil wealth would be used to raise the living standards of the majority instead of lining the pockets of the rich.

The rights of indigenous peoples would be respected.

The environment would be protected. Oil profits would be used to end dependence on the world market and finance new kinds of social production.

This would be administered by new kind of state that replaced the corrupt machinery of patronage that had run Venezuela for over forty years.

It was these promises that won over the 62% of the electorate for Chavez as President in 2006.

The revolution reversed

Eleven years later Venezuela has changed radically, but not in the way Chavez promised. There are daily queues at supermarkets, streets full of tear gas, and a rising number of dead in street confrontations.

This is Venezuela under Nicolas Maduro, who succeeded to the presidency after Chavez's death in 2013.

Today it is a country locked in crisis. Inflation is approaching 800% and rising; it takes eight minimum wages to



President Maduro and his wife greet supporters

buy a basket of basic goods.

Public services are collapsing; hospitals are devoid of equipment and drugs and most medicines are unobtainable.

The infrastructure is crumbling as public investment dries up.

\$600 billion has left the country to sit in bank accounts around the world. Poverty levels which decreased from 60 to around 20 percent by 2012 have almost returned to earlier levels.

The average Venezuelan is reported to have lost around 8 kilos due to food shortages.

A tray of eggs costs a week's wages.

In December 2015, as the crisis deepened, the right wing opposition won 63% of the vote for the National Assembly.

This was not the result of a massive shift to the right, but of the abstention of disillusioned Chavista voters.

Their message was clear: the crisis was biting and something had to be done. The right wing majority in the Assembly

were members of the bourgeoisie; none of them faced the daily struggle of the majority.

They had no programme or strategy to deal with the crisis.

Their only concern was to get back to power and they encouraged masked gunmen and paramilitaries in the streets.

Special powers

After the election, Maduro took special powers. It was true that capital flight was huge, that the commercial bourgeoisie were hoarding and raising prices at will, that Washington was actively sabotaging the country but his government has failed to stop this.

The Fair Prices Ministry did nothing to address the situation; the new minister was a young relative of the president.

The much vaunted bags of basic goods at fair prices were distributed through the state party, the United Socialist Party (PSUV) to its supporters – and those

who received them, were systematically overcharged.

It was one more source of corruption in a wholly corrupt administration.

\$400 billion 'disappeared' from the Treasury in the previous decade according to the ex-minister of the economy, Jorge Giordani.

The Odebrecht case has revealed the huge scale of bribes which were repeated in every department.

Those profiting were on both sides of the political divide. As the violence in the streets has increased, so too has the level of state repression.

It is not clear how many of the dead and injured are its victims.

A socialist government would have expropriated companies who were disinvesting, would have jailed corrupt government officials and above all would have clamped down on the currency speculation that has swallowed huge amounts in a system which has enriched a small

number of the Chavista ruling elite to an unimaginable degree.

But in reality there have been just two responses.

The first has been to militarise government.

Half the Cabinet are military as are most of the state governors.

A new military company housed in the Ministry of Defence, but unaccountable to government, has been put in charge of trading the country's massive oil, gas and mineral reserves.

The second has been to offer those resources to multinational capital in a massive auction sale.

This is nothing less than putting the revolution in reverse.

The right wing opposition and the Chavistas are embedded in a power struggle for control of the profits from this re-entry into the global capitalist market.

As I write a Constituent Assembly is redrafting the Bolivarian Constitution.

Unlike the experience of 1999, there has been no open democratic debate about the proposals – none have been published.

The delegates have been hand-picked to applaud the government's changes.

As these are emerging, the first casualty is participatory democracy, the second the right to recall public officials, the third – and most important – that the nation's resources must be used for the benefit of the majority.

Power will now be increasingly concentrated in the hands of a tiny ruling group, and the PSUV will continue to be a career path for people willing to share in the new bonanza.

The new mining projects in the Orinoco Basin will poison and wreck the region but 150 multinationals will profit handsomely.

So too will Venezuela's new establishment.

And all this in the name of socialism. There is a rising anger at the grass roots; but there is also fear and disillusion.

But the collective memory will retain the hopes and promises of the Bolivarian revolution, and will come to understand how it was corrupted and undermined, from within and from without.

The international left can contribute to that rebuilding, and begin by being honest about what is happening in Venezuela today.

Raqqa: Airstrikes if you stay, land mines if you flee

Memet Uludag

As Isis face defeat in Raqqa the civilian population continue to pay the price in the fighting between the US led coalition and Isis.

More than 25,000 civilians are trapped in the city facing daily intensive US airstrikes plus land mines and bombs set by Isis. Furthermore, according to local observers Isis is using civilians as a shield against the airstrikes.

As the fighting intensifies between Isis and Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) – a US supported group predominantly composed of Kurdish PYD fighters – more civilians are caught in-between.

According to the Syrian Observatory, an estimated 800 people have been killed since the United States-led coalition began its assault on the city in June, 150 in August alone according to the United Nations.

Members of Isis are executing civilians on a daily basis and those who flee face snipers, and deadly land mines set by Isis.

The city infrastructure is destroyed beyond repair. Hundreds of thousands of refugees who flee Raqqa will not be returning to just an Isis-free city but also to a destroyed one. Turkey-based Raqqa activist, Sunbhi Sukkar, estimated that the US-led bombing and shelling had destroyed at least 40 per cent of the city's neighbourhoods!

Fares al Ali of the Istanbul based Syrian Opposition Coalition said 19 Raqqa neighbourhoods had been bombed and shelled, and the destruction level in some



US air strikes pound Raqqa

locations, such as Al Rumanya, may be as much as 80 per cent.

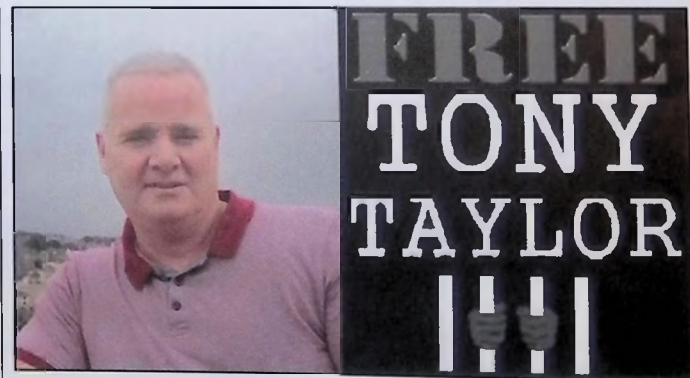
Raqqa is another example of destruction by imperialist intervention. In Syria, global imperialist powers such as the US, Russia, Britain, France etc, and the regional powers such as Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia did not intervene to help and support the people's uprising but to extend their own power. Isis is a sectarian reactionary product of the disastrous US led invasion of Iraq in 2003. It has exploited the chaos created in Iraq and Syria by the Iraq War and the by brutal attacks by the Assad regime.

All of these forces have collectively choked the Syrian revolution which was not only fighting the brutal regime of Assad but also the like of Isis. They have murdered hundreds of thousands of civilians and

created more than 10 million internally and externally displaced refugees.

Today, many of the western powers who support the war efforts in Syria have shut-down their borders to fleeing refugees. It is utter hypocrisy to claim to 'liberate' people and at the same time condemn the refugees to death.

The madness in Syria has to stop. All foreign armies and forces must leave Syria. The only solution to Syria is the re-emergence of popular people power and revolt that rejects sectarianism, all imperialist interventions and builds a country free of dictator Assad's oppression and brutality. Such re-emergence is not only prevented by Isis's attacks but also by the destruction and mass killings caused by foreign intervention.



Sean Egan

In March 2016, leading republican activist Tony Taylor had his licence revoked and was remanded in Maghaberry prison, a facility notorious for human rights abuses including violent searches and prolonged solitary confinement.

Taylor had been convicted of a firearms offense in 2011 but had received parole. To this day, no justification for the revocation of his parole has been given. As this goes to print Taylor will have spent more than 550 days interned without facing any charges or evidence.

In his native Derry, a campaign for his freedom has received support across the spectrum of nationalist and left-wing politics including People Before Profit whose local candidate Shaun Harkin said: 'This is a straightforward matter of defending civil liberties. No government should have the right to simply lock away anyone it chooses.'

The revocation of parole is a tactic that's been consistently used against

high-profile activists like Marian Price and Brendan Lilis.

It represents the same level of overreach as the charges levied against the Jobstown defendants in the south and has the same aims: to punish rebels and disable them as activists, to criminalise protest and to deter future resistance.

The Free Tony Taylor campaign has held a large demonstration in Derry and held solidarity vigils throughout the country. Lorraine Taylor, Tony's wife, addressed Belfast's annual anti-internment march. However, outside Derry these actions have been largely limited to anti-Good Friday Agreement republicans. To effectively challenge state repression, we must see it as an issue not just for militant republicans but for all individuals and organisations that defend democracy and civil liberties.

The tools used against republicans today will be used against socialists tomorrow. We need to campaign to free all political prisoners present and future.

Student housing crisis –yet again

Conchúir Ó Rádaigh

As the beginning of a new academic year looms for thousands of Irish students, a now yearly frenzy for accommodation begins.

This time however, it's worse than any year before, just as it was last year, and the year before that.

A chronic shortage of student beds, dire living conditions and record breaking rents are symptoms of the worst housing crisis in the history of the state.

In 2015, the Higher Education Authority (HEA) commissioned a report into student accommodation.

The report found that there was a deficit of 25,000 dedicated student beds, forcing many into the savage private rental market.

It projected that there would be an additional 25-30,000 students in third level by 2024, pointing to a devastating deepening of the crisis.

Since then, little has changed for students.

For many, the search for a place to stay begins as soon as the Summer break begins, lasting weeks.

Weeks of viewing exorbitantly priced dilapidated dwellings.

This year the average cost of a single academic year in Dublin was estimated at €12,500, almost three times the maximum



Hines' Binary Hub in inner city Dublin

rate paid by the SUSI maintenance grant.

What the report omits, however is that in some places, up to 15 students are living in four bedroom houses, while others live in sheds and many face long commutes

from their colleges.

The situation has become so untenable that there are now a significant number of students commuting to cities by train for three hours and more per day.

Market focus

When you look at the Fine Gael government's plan to tackle the student accommodation

Crisis, as with its plans for the housing crisis as a whole, it focuses almost exclusively on private initiatives, massively incentivising property giants like Hines to enter the Irish market and allowing them to charge as much as they want to future tenants.

And as with the with those wider plans it provides no solutions, in fact it's likely to worsen the crisis.

Already, Hines charge €230 per week for their most basic room in Binary Hub, while Ziggurat's "Montrose Aparto" is marketed at an eye-watering €13,000 per year.

These outrageous prices coupled with the possibility of rising tuition fee and income contingent loans are a terrifying prospect for ordinary students.

Third level education is becoming a preserve of the privileged, either totally out of reach of working class people or too costly in comparison to going directly into employment after school.

One thing is certain, the market offers no solutions.

For students, young people, the homeless or those desperately seeking housing, the only true solutions are those with human need as their focus.

These solutions are our solutions, those of the radical left and it's our task to bring them forward into an uncompromising movement in our colleges, neighbourhoods and streets.

A National Identity Card by any other name

Dave O'Farrell

The controversy around the roll out of the Public Services Card continues after it was revealed that a woman in her seventies has been unable to collect her state pension for over 18 months after she refused to go through the procedures to acquire the card.

The Public Services Card is a biometric ID, the chip embedded in the card contains, in addition to your personal details, a biometric scan of your face.

Expanded

The cards were first introduced in 2011 and since then the list of services for which it is required has rapidly expanded.

It is now required to collect social welfare payments, including the free travel pass; to apply for a Driver Theory Test and to apply for your first passport or to replace a lost, stolen or damaged one.



Public Services Card

This list is set to expand even further, for example it is planned to require one to apply for a student grant from 2018. This has led to very reasonable fears that it is in fact a National Identity Card brought in through the back door.

The government's response has done little to allay these fears. Regina Doherty, the Fine Gael Minister for Employment and Social Protection, stated that the card is "mandatory but not compulsory".

Hollow

This Jesuit style wordplay rings more and more hollow as essential service after essential service requires the applicant to produce the card.

People are right to be worried about the direction in which the Public Services Card is going. Legal and data protection experts have all warned of the potential dangers.

There is no proper legal framework as to how it will operate, what data is collected,

how it is stored, how it is accessed and who has access to it.

This is particularly concerning where state services have been privatised – for example the Driver Theory Test is outsourced to Prometric Ireland Ltd, an Irish subsidiary of a multi-national company operating in over 160 countries.

While many countries have introduced National Identity Cards many have not – usually after public opposition due to the potential for abuse.

By greatly expanding the public services card, without any public debate the Fine Gael / "Independent" Alliance government are once again showing their contempt for even the most basic democracy.

In the absence of proper debate it will be up to ordinary people to stop the continued roll out until we are satisfied that our personal data is safe and no one is denied access to the public services we are all entitled to.

The politics of public monuments



The Robert E Lee statue in Charlottesville

James Grannell

At the centre of the recent fascist demonstration in Charlottesville was the attempt to defend a monument to pro-slavery Confederate General Robert E. Lee.

Some liberals, probably with good intentions, have said they deplore racism and slavery but defend this and other Confederate statues on the grounds of maintaining an objective historical record.

In reality neither the erection nor the demolition of public monuments has ever been politically neutral or about 'pure' history. It always been part

of political and social struggle.

Ireland itself provides an excellent examples of this. Most readers will be aware of the destruction of Nelson's Pillar in Dublin in 1966. Fewer, perhaps, will be aware of the removal of the plethora of other public monuments that commemorated our British and Imperial past.

Cavalry

A cavalry statue of George I which stood in the Mansion House garden was removed in 1937 1937; a similar statue of George II in Stephen's Green was blown up in the same year; a statue of William of Orange on College Green

was removed in 1929 and melted down in 1946; a large statue of Queen Victoria was removed from the front of Leinster House in 1947 and now stands in Sydney – and the list goes on.

Throughout the twentieth century Dublin was cleansed of many of the most obvious monuments to its British past – statues were removed or destroyed, and towns train stations and streets were renamed.

Post revolutionary Ireland set about monumentalising its own heroes and the ideals that it stood for. The idea of continuity between Gaelic Ireland and the new state were demonstrated with the installation of the Cú Chulainn statue in the GPO in 1935 and the Children of Lir statue in the Garden of Remembrance in 1966.

In the meantime the names of national heroes could be read on the maps of almost every town in Ireland as the political mood demanded new monuments to new heroes.

Monumental

Monumental history serves another purpose – it encourages us to look up to great men (most monuments are of men) of the past who delivered some advancement or other to our nation. They perpetuate the myth that history is a catalogue of the works of great men. They spread the idea that progress is the work of remarkable individuals, rather than of normal people.

This serves to disempower the

masses – those the Earl of Clarendon described as 'dirty people of no name'. However, these people are the true movers of history.

The cotton barons may have owned the mills, but the people built and operated them.

In the same way it will be the ordinary people who will build a better society. Maybe we need less monuments to great individuals and more to the collective struggles of working people, like the water charges protestors.

The act of removing monuments is part of the revolution, of people's anger at the current state of things. It

is no wonder that in the USA where African Americans are still oppressed so violently that a movement has emerged calling for the removal of monuments to men who supported slavery. It's not just about nineteenth century slavery, it's about police brutality and racism today.

In the end however, it's not enough to remove metal and stones.

What we must strive for is the removal of those monuments to corruption and greed that are made of flesh and bone and populate the parliaments and financial institutions of every nation.

Ireland's Largest Left Wing Conference

24th-26th November
Griffith College
Dublin

MARXISM

THE RACE FOR THE FUTURE

2017

Tickets now available online at <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/marxism-17-the-race-for-the-future>

Socialist Worker

No Rotten deals with the DUP

Stormont negotiations should extend equality demands

The recent DUP decision to vote with Corbyn's Labour opposition in the House of Commons against the Tories to end the pay cap for NHS workers and to oppose the proposal to increase student fees by £250 has underscored the weakness of Theresa May's Tory/DUP government.

It also underscores the chasm between the DUP and the working class communities it claims to represent where there is no mandate for austerity.

Every opportunity should be taken to weaken the Tory/DUP government and to break support away from the DUP towards a genuine anti-austerity, pro-LGBT+, pro-choice, pro-refugee and anti-sectarian alternative.

The signals from Stormont negotiations to form a new Assembly Executive point increasingly towards a return to direct rule from Westminster.

However, all of the parties, the DUP and Sinn Féin in particular, have made it clear they want to restore the Executive as soon as possible.

It's clear none of the parties want to be accused of walking away from negotiations first.

Nevertheless, for now, Sinn Féin have



Arlene Foster and Theresa May

made it clear they will not rejoin an Executive if the DUP fail to agree to an Irish

Language Act and other equality demands. The absence of Stormont, along with

Brexit fears, including a return of any kind of border, is generating political frustration

and restlessness across the North.

But the DUP, now propping up May's toxic government, shouldn't be allowed to continue to ride roughshod over basic equality demands.

Meaningful

To make negotiations with the DUP meaningful these demands should be extended to include Equal Marriage rights in the North but also the right to choose, the reversal of neoliberal austerity contained in the Stormont House and Fresh Start Agreements, an end to foot dragging on legacy issues, the reversal of plans to reduce the Corporate Tax rate and an end to Tory inspired Welfare Reform. Without these demands being met there can't be equality, dignity or respect.

The DUP should come under increasing pressure to break from Theresa May's and Tory plans to continue with austerity.

The recent vote in the House of Commons proves this is possible.

The most effective way to increase pressure on the Tory/DUP government, secretary of state for Northern Ireland James Brokenshire and budget cutting civil servants, is through mobilising people power from all working class areas to stop the cuts as on the 1 October demonstration.

Stop the Health Cuts, End Austerity

The North has been without governing institutions since the Assembly was collapsed in January in a crisis that began with the nearly £500 million Renewable Heating Incentive (RHI) scandal involving the former DUP First Minister Arlene Foster.

No functioning Executive means unelected civil servants under the direction of James Brokenshire, the Tory secretary of state for Northern Ireland, are running government departments and with no budget in place they are imposing across the board cuts to public services.

Anger

This includes the Department of Health's recent announcement of £70 million in cuts to the health service.

These are the most significant cuts planned to date and they have unsurprisingly been greeted with anger across the North.

Brokenshire is willing to put lives at risk by using cuts to the health service, education and elsewhere as a political football.

The Tories are ruthlessly attempting to impose their plans here and across the water but they are facing increasing



Royal Victoria Hospital; Belfast Health Trust set to make £26.3 million savings out of £70 million cuts in the North

resistance.

The NHS has faced relentless cuts over the last decade leading to out of control waiting lists, reductions in services and demoralisation among overworked and underpaid staff.

The NHS is a very popular public service and fears for its future are

deeply held among all working class communities.

Persistent cuts to the NHS are inspired by Tory plans to privatise more and more aspects of health care delivery but the DUP/SF Executive avoided ardent opposition to austerity and allowed privatisation to creep forward.

The fact that May easily found £1 billion for the DUP to prop up her humiliated government shows funding is and has always been available.

Stormont was ineffective in blocking austerity over the last decade and shouldn't be the focus for opposing it now.

Ineffective

The Executive was ineffective because it accepted Tory lies that austerity was necessary.

We shouldn't allow the state of Stormont negotiations to hold us back from opposing cuts that are being implemented now.

Health Trusts have been challenged by trade unionists and health care activists to refuse to engage in the proposed 'savings' called for by the Department of Health.

We need to take opposition to the cuts to the streets, workplaces and communities across the North. Mobilising the broad opposition that exists to the cuts in all working class communities is the key to stopping them. Activists have been taking the lead in pushing for protests and trade union action.

The campaign to stop cuts and

end austerity will be most effective if it is backed by all the political parties opposing Tory austerity. However, opposition must be active and not simply by announcement or negotiation.

Active

That approach has failed.

The constant dampening down of active campaigning over the last decade has made opposition to austerity less effective.

This mustn't continue.

We need to mobilise now on the streets, in our communities, workplaces and schools, to stop the health cuts, to stop all the cuts and to push for an end of privatisation and austerity.

Now is the time to take action to end the pay cap on public sector workers.

If necessary, we should start planning for strike action now.

This kind of mobilisation is the only way to force the Tories to 'find' funding for our priorities.

Solidarity and people power is crucial to stopping Brokenshire, unaccountable Stormont bureaucrats and the entire political establishment that further cuts to the health service and all public services will not be tolerated.