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COMMUNITIES AND CUTBACKS

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On the call for a referendum
on Ireland's economic future

DAWN PURVIS

"Why I broke the link
with the UVF"

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IRISH FOOTBALL'S TALENT DRAIN

BACKSTAGE WITH ALABAMA 3

AINDRIAS Ó CATHASAIGH CONSIDERS THE LEGACY OF JAMES CONNOLLY

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CHASING THE DREAM

"I think they (FAI) have to look at whether whatever money is being allocated to FAS courses should be allocated to League of Ireland teams."

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Editorial: We need debate

As the Tory establishments North and South rob our children of their future, the elderly of their pensions, and workers of their livelihoods, they call for "consensus." What they really mean is that the alternatives must be sidelined and their criminal behaviour never fully revealed.

After decades deriding those who pointed to the need for a strategic vision that went beyond mere profit accumulation, now the southern oligarchs speak of the "national interest." Make no mistake about it, their "national interest" demands that speculators and bankers continue to make massive profits and that right-wing politicians can sleep soundly at night, safe in the knowledge that they have done their duty for their masters.

The willing puppets in the mainstream media share this consensus. The airwaves and newspapers are filled with people preaching the necessity of the cuts, while voices challenging the magic word "austerity" are derided when they are not ignored altogether.

No matter how a compliant media spin it, the establishment's interests are not our interests. This point was driven home by the Con/Dem MPs cheering at Westminster as cuts that will devastate communities were announced and Fianna Fail Minister Dermot Ahern ruling out raising taxes on the wealthy to pay for essential public services because it might discourage US multi-national executives from moving here.

The voice of the majority, of the true producers of wealth, of the working class must be heard. There must be as wide and open a debate as possible about the way forward; the backroom consensus must be opposed.

Our interests are not served by cuts to wages, hospitals, schools and other public services. Our interests are served by investment in communities, jobs, education and public services. Cuts target the most vulnerable communities and individuals. Cuts will kill those who lack the physical and mental resources to survive without help. The selfish are currently in the ascendancy, but if history has one constant lesson it is that change is inevitable.

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Learning division

John Lowry

Northern Ireland First Minister Peter Robinson's recent comments in support of integrated education have only served as a reminder of the extent of sectarianism and segregation in Northern Ireland.

The DUP leader has called for a commission to be established to examine the development of an integrated education system, stating: "The reality is that our education system is a benign form of apartheid, which is fundamentally damaging to our society." He added: "Who among us would think it acceptable that a state or nation would educate its young people by the criteria of race with white schools or black schools? Yet we are prepared to operate a system which separates our children almost entirely on the basis of their religion."

Few could disagree with his assertion that our divided school system, with the majority of Protestant children educated in state schools and most Catholics sent to government-funded schools run by the Catholic church, contributes to the political malaise. Yet Robinson's motives are questionable. To put it bluntly, was he simply stirring the sectarian pot?

The flurry of reaction to his remarks demonstrated that whilst the bombs and bullets may be silent, the sectarian mindsets which fuelled the conflict in Northern Ireland remain as entrenched as ever.

Ironically for a party that claims to be republican and socialist, Sinn Féin emerged as the most vocal defenders of the Catholic Church and faith-based schools. Others rightly questioned whether Robinson would

also agree that our schools are not only religiously segregated but that our education system is also divided by class.

Further evidence of Robinson's questionable motives in appearing to take an interest in the pernicious issue of sectarianism are visible in the community relations strategy which he and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness published in the summer.

Far from facing up to sectarianism and segregation in their strategy, Robinson and McGuinness are proposing a policy of separate but equal, a recipe for the consolidation and continuance of sectarian division in Northern Ireland. Such proposals are a reminder to socialists and progressives of the challenges we face to overcome sectarianism.



Gardai Protect Ireland's biggest crime scene

Dismantling our health service

Alan Myler

Our Lady's Hospital in Navan, County Meath is yet another victim of the austerity measures which the Fianna Fáil/Green Party government is inflicting on society. The hospital is suffering death by a thousand cuts.

Emergency services for children were relocated sometime ago to Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital in Drogheda, followed earlier this year by the removal of all emergency cover, and most recently the complete cessation of acute surgical services with the associated loss of beds. The population of Meath, 170,000, now relies on the Lourdes Hospital in Louth and the James Connolly Memorial in North Dublin for emergency and surgical cover.

The reduction in services is not confined to Meath. The North East region has already suffered service closure in the neighbouring Monaghan General and Cavan General Hospitals. The entire regional hospital service is now centred on Drogheda, in a hospital which was already creaking before taking on the additional workload.

The government and HSE claim that the rationalisation of services fits with the strategic plan of centralising specialist care in a new Regional Hospital for the North East.

However, they have proceeded to cut and centralise in the absence of even selecting a location for this proposed new facility.

A strong community campaign has been built to save Navan hospital, with public

rallies attracting more than 10,000 onto the streets in protest.

The campaign has received cross-party support from politicians of all persuasions, including those of Fianna Fáil who cynically seek to divert responsibility onto the bureaucrats of the HSE.

Equally cynical, Meath Fine Gael TDs have rolled in behind the campaign, conveniently overlooking the fact that their party also intends to slash public services.

The reality is that only a programme of significant investment in the universal provision of healthcare can provide a future for local hospitals across the country.

Fianna Fáil's Cork show houses

John Jefferies

Cash-strapped Cork City Council drafted in 20 cleaning staff to remove hoardings from derelict buildings in the Knocknaheeny area in preparation for the visit of a Fianna Fáil politician.

During the 'clean-up' for the October 11 official opening of a new community centre in the area by Junior Minister for Housing Michael Finneran, shuttering on boarded up houses was taken down, panes of glass were put in windows, and curtains were tacked up behind them.

The cosmetic clean-up to impress a Fianna Fáil politician contrasts with the Council's usual approach of having only two cleaning department staff employed to maintain an area of 4,500 people.

Knocknaheeny has dozens of houses boarded up and their gardens are left as dumping grounds at a time when dozens of local families are on the housing waiting list, officially homeless.

Local Workers' Party representative Mick Crowley said: "Instead of this sham to im-

press a minister who will probably never be seen in Knocknaheeny again, what is needed is a real commitment from both government and the city council to help the people in this area who are trying hard to keep their area clean but whose best efforts are being undermined by official neglect."

Both Crowley and his colleague, City Councillor Ted Tynan, have confronted the City Council over its costly attempt to impress a minister but long-term failure of the people of Knocknaheeny.



Just 1% of the population controls in excess of 34% of the wealth of the country.

Despite owning a £35 million residence on Dublin's Shrewsbury Road Denis O'Brien, like many 1%ers, isn't 'really' resident in Ireland. He is apparently a resident of the small island of Malta, where no tax is charged on worldwide assets or income brought in and the only residency requirement is that you buy or rent an expensive house and visit once a year.

If you're a member of the 1% in Ireland and can claim, with very little checking, you spend 6 months and a day out of the country they you don't pay any income tax here.

O'Brien owns Digicel, a Caribbean-based mobile phone operation. He has an 88% share in Aergo Capital Limited which owns and operates a fleet of 103 commercial aircraft and is valued at \$250 million. His communications firm, Communicorp Group, controls Dublin's FM, Newstalk 106 and Spin in Ireland and has a stake in Independent News and Media. It also controls 42 radio stations across Europe.

In 1995, O'Brien set up and chaired the Esat Digifone consortium which submitted a bid for the second Irish GSM mobile phone license. The awarding of this second mobile phone license is being reviewed by the Moriarty Tribunal which is inquiring into whether then Minister for Telecommunications, Michael Lowry, interfered in the process of awarding the license to Esat Digifone.

To the Tribunal, O'Brien has argued that a \$50,000 payment to Fine Gael at the end of 1995 was not made at his behest. It was made soon after the second mobile phone licence was awarded to Esat Digifone.

Other witnesses including a former general secretary of Fine Gael disagreed with O'Brien's interpretation. In addition £147,000 of £150,000 transferred from O'Brien to David Austin, the former Fine Gael fundraiser, seems to have ended up with Michael Lowry.

The Sunday Times reported in an interview with O'Brien in July 2009 that, "The Moriarty tribunal has found that the state's award of the second mobile-phone licence was illegal, and has made 60 negative findings against Denis O'Brien."

In the same interview the Maltese resident declared, "I am going to fight them at every turn along the way. This is street-to-street now. There are 60 findings and they are all wrong and I know how they are wrong."

The Jemmy Hope Column

Middle Classes of the world unite you have only your debts to lose!

"The middle classes could become a revolutionary class, taking the role envisaged for the proletariat by Marx. The globalization of labour markets and reducing levels of national welfare provision and employment could reduce peoples' attachment to particular states. The growing gap between themselves and a small number of highly visible super-rich individuals might fuel disillusion with meritocracy, while the growing urban under-classes are likely to pose an increasing threat to social order and stability, as the burden of acquired debt and the failure of pension provision begins to bite. Faced by these twin challenges, the world's middle-classes might unite, using access to knowledge, resources and skills to shape transnational processes in their own class interest." - the SWP? No, the MoD actually - from the Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre at the UK Ministry of Defence.

"As a people, we are excluded from any share in framing the laws by which we are governed. The higher ranks usurped the exclusive exercise of that privilege, as well as many other rights, by force, fraud, and fiction."



Family Fortunes

Ireland is a small country, and an even smaller one for our media and political elite; to celebrate this the Jemmy Hope column is asking readers to send in information on interesting familial or social links - here's a few to get you started.

RTÉ broadcaster Ryan Tubridy is a cousin of Fianna Fáil TDs Barry and Chris Andrews, while his own brother Garrett was an unsuccessful Fianna Fáil council candidate in 2009.

RTÉ broadcaster Miriam O'Callaghan is the sister of Dublin Fianna Fáil councillor Jim O'Callaghan.

Sunday Tribune political editor Shane Coleman is the brother-in-law of Justice Minister Dermot 'don't call me little' Ahern.

Send in other interesting connections to lookleftonline@gmail.com

Leo the Lion

May 2010 - Interviewer "What about the provision of abortion services for rape victims?" Fine Gael TD Leo Varadkar - "I wouldn't be in favour of it in that case, and, you know, first of all, it isn't the child's fault that they're the child of rape. You can say the same thing about disabled children. You know, some people would make that argument in favour of abortion. It's not their fault they're disabled. I wouldn't be in favour of it in those circumstances either."

Church Lands

Here's a suggestion that could get a few billion euros into state coffers fairly lively - nationalise church assets.

With their commitment to the needy you'd nearly expect the bishops to suggest handing over the land themselves.

Left co-operation

Francis Donohoe

A number of leftwing groups have come together to form an electoral pact which will contest upcoming elections in the republic under the banner of the United Left Alliance (ULA).

The ULA constitutes the Socialist Party, People Before Profit Alliance, the Tipperary Workers' and Unemployed Group, and Sligo Councillor Declan Bree and his supporters.

Although talks have been ongoing between these groups for a number of months the election agreement was finalized at a meeting in Dublin on October 24.

The basic ULA agreed programme is being described

"as left wing, anti-capitalist and anti-coalition with right wing parties." The ULA is to be officially launched in late November.

Separately the Workers' Solidarity Movement, Irish Socialist Network and éirígi have been co-operating in the 1% Network which seeks to highlight the fact that a small coterie at the top of Irish society control over 34% of the country's wealth while in many cases not paying personal taxes in the state.

Members of the Workers' Party, Labour and other political parties as well as leading trade unionists took part in the Claiming our Future citizens' forum

held in the RDS in Dublin on September 30. On the same day the WP Northern Regional Conference was addressed by a number of speakers from beyond the WP including Independent MLA Dawn Purvis.

Workers' Party President Michael Finnegan has described moves toward greater co-operation among the left as "positive".

"The WP has been stressing the need for greater cooperation among the left for years, and especially now that elections are looming both north and south", said Finnegan.

He added, "The WP stands ready to promote left cooperation throughout Ireland, and to act in coordination with others in a principled and comradely fashion."



WE DEMAND DEMOCRACY

The Irish Republic belongs to its Citizens

The proposed referendum question:

I, as a citizen of the Irish Republic, assert the primacy of Article 43.2 Bunreacht na hÉireann/Irish Constitution over Article 43.1 Bunreacht na hÉireann/Irish Constitution and instruct the Irish state to develop legislation which expresses this as the will of the people.

Yes  No

Article 43 Bunreacht na hÉireann/Irish Constitution

1.1 The State acknowledges that man, in virtue of his rational being, has the natural right, antecedent to positive law, to the private ownership of external goods.

2 The State accordingly guarantees to pass no law attempting to abolish the right of private ownership or the general right to transfer, bequeath, and inherit property.

2.1 The State recognises, however, that the exercise of the rights mentioned in the foregoing provisions of this Article ought, in civil society, to be regulated by the principles of social justice.

2 The State, accordingly, may as occasion requires delimit by law the exercise of the said rights with a view to reconciling their exercise with the exigencies of the common good.



Educate
Agitate
Organise



Collectively, we can make a difference. The Workers' Party stands solely in the interests of the working class.

And by that we mean all workers, unemployed, employed or retired. We are 100% committed to a democratic, secular, socialist programme. Against the odds the Workers' Party has never wavered in our dedication to these goals.

So if you really want to make a difference then it's time you joined the Workers' Party in the struggle to build a new fairer country.

Over the decades the Workers' Party has built up an unrivalled collection of publications on the struggle to build a democratic, secular, socialist Ireland. This library of pamphlets is an unrivalled resource for progressive political activists and copies of these publications are available to purchase from party offices.

To learn more about the Workers' Party contact:

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Proper debate is needed on the type of economy and society we should aim to construct as part of a recovery strategy. A constitutional referendum, as demanded by the Campaign for a Democratic Choice, would allow the people of the Republic to assert their right to decide their future, writes Sean Garland.

The Irish Republic is in the grip of an economic crisis created by few but devastating many. Decisions made by a handful of inter-connected individuals – the golden circle of Irish politicians, developers and bankers – have resulted in over €50 billion of losses accrued by speculative private enterprises being foisted onto all Irish citizens.

For the last two years, the government has focused on creating mechanisms such as the National Assets Management Agency (NAMA) and the bank guarantee as a delaying tactic to allow those most culpable to escape paying for their economic sabotage.

The decisions that have allowed this situation to develop were not made in the interests of the citizens of the Republic but against them. They were fundamentally anti-democratic. Rather than challenge them, the political class merely seeks a "consensus" on the implementation of cutbacks that will only worsen the economic crisis.

We demand the fundamental democratic right of the people to express our view on our economic future in a referendum.

The referendum would ask citizens to assert the primacy of "the common good" and "social justice" as enshrined in Article 43.2 of Bunreacht na hÉireann.

This assertion would mark a turning point towards the building of a new sustainable economy that will serve the interests of many rather than few.

This constitution assertion would indicate the people's will for the:

1: Revoking the bank guarantee and a declaration that it was entered into by government acting in contravention of the constitution.

2: The use of existing state reserve funds, which still amount to over €40 billion, for a jobs intensive investment programme.

3: The suspension of Article 43.1.2 in specific circumstances where individuals, heavily indebted to nationalised banks, have transferred assets to associates and family members. These transactions will be rendered null and void.

4: All the financial activities of the State being made fully transparent.

Our aim is collect over 50,000 signatures calling for such a referendum and then present them to the President of Ireland and call for its instigation of a referendum on this issue to be held alongside the one deemed necessary on Children's Rights

In March 2010, the Icelandic people expressed their will through a referendum which ended attempts by that country's elite to sell out their nation's wealth. Irish citizens must do the same.

For more information and to sign the referendum petition see www.wedemanddemocracy.ie

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Never waste a crisis

Reactions to the current financial crisis have produced a number of initiatives and proposals that don't necessarily arise from a desire to solve the problem, according to

Brian McDermott.

Let's go over this just one more time. The current financial debacle has been caused by the greed, selfishness, short-termism and fraudulent practices of banks and major financial institutions. Good, at least that's clear now.

But if that's the source of the problem, then why is cutting public expenditure, reducing welfare benefits, freezing public sector salaries and threatening the national minimum wage thought to be the answer?

Well, that depends on whether you think the problem and the proposed solutions are even remotely connected.

While most people reasonably assume that the recovery measures proposed by the British and Irish governments have been formulated in response to the financial crisis, the relationship may not be that straightforward.

Barack Obama's former Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel was not the first to say 'Never waste a Crisis', but he was the one who gave the most telling insight into the mindset and practices of 21st-century capitalist thinking, from the corporate financial world to the local political legislators.

For them, the 'credit crunch' is a timely opportunity to implement a number of schemes they have had in draft for some time and a chance to rewrite the rules in their own favour.

Neil Smith, Chief Executive of New York consulting firm PGI, suggests striking quickly while the crisis is still hot. He notes that employees of some firms currently accept drastic change 'without a peep'. Such acceptance will not last for long. He also advises his fellow CEOs to exploit the fact that staff will currently trade maximum compensation for their work for maximum job security.

Closer to home Bill Jeffrey, a member of The Federation of Small Businesses in Northern Ireland, recently suggested that recovery from the economic crisis would be helped if the national minimum wage was frozen for the next five years. Never waste a crisis!

Unfortunately, Smith and Jeffrey are not on their own. The list of proposed and implemented 'solutions' sounds strangely familiar. Dramatically reduced public expenditure, streamlining

public services, a review of welfare, withdrawal of universal child benefit, increasing the age of retirement – all familiar, and all an opportunity taken by neoconservative politicians and company bosses to re-jig the economic and social structure under the guise of solving the credit crunch.

One other recently suggested proposal came from Sinn Féin's Mitchel McLaughlin and involved the withdrawal of free travel for pensioners. Never waste a crisis!

Look...over here!

For those planning on making the most out of the crisis that they themselves created, it helps greatly if the public debate runs in their favour. In this respect the role, and influence, of print journalism, radio talk shows and television news should not be underestimated. Nor should it be under-analysed.

Arguably, the key functions which the media performs in this, and other crises, are distraction, dissipation and the reinforcement of capitalism as the natural social and economic order.

Let's look briefly at how that happens. Despite the initial clarity that existed about the reasons for this financial crisis, many people now no longer blame the banks or international financial institutions, and certainly not the capitalist economic system.

Vague and spurious reasons like 'international factors', 'global phenomena' and the 'vagaries of the money market' started the smokescreen.

Later, the Chinese Government, consumers and, in Ireland in particular, the public sector were identified as the causes. People who grow old and live too long, parents with too many children, the welfare state, people with disabilities and of course migrant workers – especially those who wash cars or sell newspapers at traffic junctions – all became media targets as contributors to the economic crisis caused by the banks.

'Welfare cheats' have got us into this mess. The more that appears in print, the more often it is rehearsed on radio phone-ins and the more television exposés there are, the more it becomes a reality. Measure the amount

“”

For them, the 'credit crunch' is a timely opportunity to implement a number of schemes they have had in draft for some time and a chance to rewrite the rules in their own favour.

of air-time and column inches devoted to stories about 'dole scroungers' and balance that with an examination of tax evasion and fraud.

Despite the media concentration on welfare benefits cheats as the cause of world economic meltdown, the figures don't add up.

The National Fraud Authority has found that while benefit fraud in the UK in 2008 amounted to around £1billion, tax evasion during the same period cost the public purse over £15billion.

A further £10.5billion in income-related benefits went unclaimed in the UK in the same year.

Even when an alternative view does make it past the media gatekeeper, the arguments will be demonised, marginalised and then dismissed as impractical or downright lunacy.

For example, a trade union spokesperson who was arguing that there was an alternative approach to the problem that did not involve cuts was asked by his radio interviewer if it was fair on the public to be organising strike action and a 'winter of discontent'.

This, despite the fact that he had suggested nothing of the sort.

He went on to point out that pursuing tax evaders and reforming the existing tax system would raise the money required to refloat the economy without cutting public spending. "Well that's a very complicated proposal and listeners will no doubt make their own mind up about that one", said the radio presenter as she terminated the interview – and the discussion.

The third function being performed by mainstream media is the reinforcement of capitalist economics as the natural world order.

Of course, the views expressed on radio, television and in print are not those of individual journalists or media organisations. The claim is that they are merely reflecting the public's views and opinions.

The reality is that media agendas are constructed, that certain views are preferred, that access is not a level playing field and that journalists,



editors and programme makers continue to look to the capitalist economic model for answers to its own crisis. Why is that?

The reasons are complex, but a reasonable starting point in understanding this is media academic Stuart Hall's theory of the ideological compass. Briefly, he argues that for as long as there is a consensus amongst the major institutions, opinion formers and influencers –

amongst them, political parties, churches, academia, the legal system and, of course, the financial institutions – then the media uses that consensus to determine its own direction of travel.

Despite the severity of the economic crisis, its impact on the quality of life of working class people and the draconian measures being proposed to address it, that consensus has remained intact. True there have been

individual exceptions, one or two people have broken ranks and challenged the conventional wisdom of capitalism, but they have been few and their views don't make it to the mainstream media.

Challenging the cuts culture and presenting the alternative case relies as much on disturbing that existing economic consensus as it does on mobilising public support.

Perhaps capitalists aren't the only ones who shouldn't let a crisis go to waste.

A housing policy for landlords, not the people

The Fianna Fáil/Green government prefers to pour millions of Euros into the coffers of private landlords rather than provide families with homes, writes Davy Walsh.

The government's housing policy has been a total disaster for ordinary people, with the real needs of thousands unaddressed while state funds are transferred into the pockets of private landlords and speculators.

Instead of providing genuinely affordable housing to those unable to buy their own homes, so-called social housing schemes are in fact a cash cow for landlords and speculators who are being paid vast sums of money in subsidies, even though many are not properly tax compliant.

These policies have resulted in social housing being practically non-existent in many areas while tens of thousands remain on local authority housing lists. The Waterford City Council housing list alone numbers nearly 2,000.

These people must avail of a Rent Allowance scheme which across the state is paying out in excess of £500 million of taxpayer's money to private landlords. It would be far better if this money was put into the construction of social housing instead of payments to a private rented sector where the monitoring of standards and tax compliance leaves a lot to be desired.

If a proper social housing building or adaptation scheme, to make fit for purpose some of the half-built apartments and houses that litter the country, was undertaken it would not only provide families with homes but also the unemployed with work.

Such an approach would start to alleviate a jobs crisis that once again



Take a seat, you'll be a while waiting for a house in Waterford...

Waterford is bearing the brunt of.

The centralisation by agribusiness Glanbia of most of its production in Kilkenny, the closure of Waterford Crystal, and the loss of 400 jobs at Teva Pharmaceutical Industries have all hurt the region badly.

The problem is only exacerbated by a government and state agencies, such as the IDA, who have repeatedly failed to institute a regional development strategy for Waterford and the South-East in general. Last year, 85% of all jobs

created by the IDA were in the Dublin Region compared to none at all in Waterford.

A start to the regeneration of Waterford and the surrounding region should begin with the establishment of a University of the South East, based around Waterford Institute of Technology.

All players in the region, public and private, must work together to achieve this.

Davy Walsh is a WP Waterford City Councillor.



Making communities work

TASC's Tom McDonnell explains why investing in communities benefits not only society but is the surest route to long-term sustainable economic development.

Major cuts to community development initiatives are planned for both parts of the island. The new ConDem coalition government in Westminster is signalling cuts to communities on a scale not even imagined by Thatcher in the 1980s. In Dublin, it is anticipated that community development budgets will be cut by between 12 and 20 per cent. This scale of cuts will exact an immense social cost and will undermine the vital social capital that has been gradually built up by community development programmes.

The provision of public services by community organisations represents excellent value for money; they are provided with minimal overheads; and, crucially, they are flexible and respond to the needs of their communities – which is something that the state is often unable to do.

Research by Brian Harvey has concluded that the cumulative effects of cuts of 5 per cent to 25 per cent to the community sector in Ireland would be a loss of between 2,124 and 10,260 jobs. The result will be fewer training courses and services for job-seekers, fewer recreational facilities and meeting places, fewer youth services, and reduced availability of childcare.

It has been shown in numerous international studies that cutbacks affecting disadvantaged areas and low income earners will be more damaging to the economy than cuts or tax increases targeting high earners. This is because low income households tend to spend a very high proportion of their income, whereas higher earners are more likely to spend on imports or to save.

Those on lower incomes also tend to spend almost all their income locally, which helps local businesses and protects local jobs. A related effect is that public spending in disadvantaged areas is more likely to recycle back to the Exchequer in the form of higher VAT and excise receipts.

If we cannot kick-start consumer spending we face years of stagnation. If spending continues to dry up, more businesses will go to the wall and the vicious cycle of decline will persist. As people become increasingly fearful of losing their jobs, they will curtail their spending even further, leading to further business collapses, and so the cycle continues. Thus, Government should seek to avoid cuts that will hurt low income earners.

governments do have choices. To give just one example, we continue to effectively 'spend' billions in tax breaks each year.

Many of these tax breaks, particularly in the areas of pensions and property, disproportionately benefit the wealthiest in society. The Commission on Taxation recommended the abolition of a swathe of these tax breaks on both equity and economic efficiency grounds. So far most of these recommendations have not been implemented.

University College Dublin Economics Professor Karl Whelan recently referred jokingly to an 'omerta' or 'code of silence' regarding the low levels of taxation in the Republic. The European Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs, Olli Rehn, cast aside this silence when he declared that Ireland would have to become a 'normal' European economy when it came to taxation.

To put this into context, Eurostat figures for 2008 show that raising our tax take (including social security contributions) to the European Union average would have equated to €18 billion in additional revenue. At the same time, the public expenditure rate was below the European Union average. How we tax and spend is a political choice.

Should we be imposing cuts on communities when the major problems in the public finances stem from chronic under-taxation?

Even if we do accept the need for savings in public expenditure, it is unclear why community development programmes would be an appropriate candidate for cuts. There seems to be a tendency to regard community development as a luxury rather than a necessity – an act of charity by the state, to be indulged in when times are good. But such a tendency reveals a fundamental lack of understanding about how economies develop. The problem is perhaps one of perception.

When arguments are made for spending on roads, and education, it is immediately clear that one of the motivations is the long-term economic benefit that will result.

Roads add to the country's physical capital, while education facilitates the development of human capital. In other words these types of spending are justified, in part, because they are investments in the future strength of the economy.

But community development programmes should also be seen as investment spending, because one of the purposes of this type of spending is to help increase the long-term productive

capacity of the economy.

Ultimately, economic development results from the exploitation of new ideas.

Indeed, seminal research by Robert Solow and other Nobel Prize-winning economists has shown that up to 90 per cent of all economic growth comes from the discovery and use of new ideas.

Reducing the costs of knowledge generation, and removing barriers to knowledge access, are the keys to economic development.

This does not mean that new growth comes from the invention of ultra high-tech gadgets. Rather, it means that such growth results from combining two existing ideas, or putting an existing idea in a new context. The level of social capital in the individual community and the wider economy is an important factor in this process.

The environment we live in constantly influences our exposure to new ideas, and indeed influences our propensity and receptiveness to learning and doing new things.

Community development spending is best understood as an investment in this social capital. By nurturing this social capital, we create educational and economic opportunities while reinforcing civic pride and fostering community engagement.

Community development programmes often act as the glue holding communities together by providing employment and services to job-seekers, literacy courses and other education services – not to mention social care and recreational opportunities for the young.

To put it another way, cutting spending on disadvantaged communities will reduce the level of social and human capital in such communities and will have a profoundly damaging effect on the ability of people within those communities to break the cycle of disadvantage.

Cutting spending on communities is a false economy. In the short-term, it will damage consumer demand, hurt growth potential, and begin a process of disengaging households from their communities and from society as a whole.

In the medium-to-long term, it will erode social capital and make it much more difficult for people from disadvantaged backgrounds to exploit their own potential.

This would not only be a tragedy for the individual and for the community; it would also represent an economic loss to the wider society.


TASC
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Speakers and crowd enjoying the 'Punks or Posers?' talk at the Phibsboro festival

Viva Fiesta – the return of the community festival

This summer will be remembered for the growth, and in some cases the welcome return, of community festivals in Dublin.

Sam McGrath

The Northside's Phibsboro Community Arts Festival (Phizzfest) was one of a group of newly-established community events. Taking place over the second weekend of September, it encompassed a wide range of interests from local history to literature to music and theatre. Hundreds of locals, including artist Robert Ballagh, writer Anne Enright, comedian Kevin McAleer, and historian Pat Liddy were involved in organising the events.

While some community festivals like the one in Phibsboro are just starting off, others, like the community festival in Chapelizod, have been around for a long time.

Celebrating its 15th birthday this July, the week-long festival showcased local art, music and sport.

In west Dublin, the town of Lucan held a successful week-long programme of events in September that "highlighted the many historical and tourist attractions" in the area.

One of the most noticeable aspects of this festival's website was the utilisation of social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter and Flickr to advertise and promote events.

“Community gatherings, whether they come in the form of street parties, art festivals or fairs, play a critical role in creating solidarity and community spirit in a neighbourhood.”

Another festival which makes use of social media is the Ranelagh Arts Festival which has been running since 2005. Funding from the Arts Council and Dublin City Council, as well as sponsorship from locally-owned businesses, allows the Ranelagh events to forgo sponsorship from multi-national corporations such as McDonalds, unlike the Lucan Festival.

As well as festivals, many communities across Dublin organised independent local street parties over the summer months. Often publicised just through word of mouth and leaflets through doors, these small-scale street parties can sometimes invoke more community spirit than perhaps a week-long festival can. The author of this article was lucky enough to be invited to one over the summer in Portobello and had a fantastic time. Furniture was brought onto the street, music was played through speakers placed on a windowsill and each house did their best to cook a dish for sharing. As we go into winter communities are undertaking more traditional festivals. East Wall Community Halloween festival, which is now a week long event, started off seven

years ago as a Halloween evening parade, designed to offer an alternative to the anti-social behaviour engaged in by a minority.

Each day of the festival now features inter-generational snooker and football tournaments, water sports activity on the Tolka as well as costume and prop making for the parade. Daily events attracted up to 80 participants, and the parade itself had over 300 involved.

According to one long time community activist: "East Wall residents have a reputation for standing together, and are prepared to fight for issues that affect the community. It is through building community spirit, and highlighting the positives within the area, that we ensure people feel that there is something there worth fighting for."

Community gatherings, whether they come in the form of street parties, art festivals or fairs, play a critical role in creating solidarity and community spirit in a neighbourhood. Events like those held in Dublin this summer allow for the renewing of community bonds that have been broken by changing work patterns and the promotion of individualism over recent years.



The culling of community development and the silencing of a social class

After years working for Kilbarrack community in north Dublin, Cathleen O'Neill realises there is a wider political agenda at play in the elite's attack on the community sector.

Like most women of my class at the time, I was an early school leaver. I started work at 13 using a doctored birth cert. I returned to school 22 years later, nervously trying out a Basic English class, taking a small step towards finding the woman who got lost between the vows and rows of marriage and mothering five children alone.

I saw adult education and community development as the means of developing myself and my community. These early forays led to my need to understand the theory and constructs of equality and feminism.

Three decades of vibrant community development saw many positive changes; in all these endeavours we carried the values of gender equality and social justice forward.

The economy is the excuse for the current attack on the community and voluntary sector, but we activists know that for more than eight years, there have been plans to close down the sector. It was getting too strong, too bolshie, too successful at educating the grassroots and empowering people to claim their rights. The economic collapse has merely provided the opportunity to get rid of us.

Be very clear about this: there is no room in Ireland for the dissenting or critical voice. There is no room for the community project that tries to bring about change or inform people about the implications of cuts in social welfare or to lobby for equality and social justice.

Community development as we know it ceased to exist on December 14 2009 when the government closed 29 Community Development Projects (CDPs), claiming they were non-viable after an unequal and secretive review process.

Two-thirds of these groups are Dublin-based. The remaining 150 CDPs are being merged with Local Partnership Companies.

Partnership Companies are about providing labour intervention and training. They are not community-development-led.

There are real fears that they will follow a labour market agenda only. No more possibility of meaningful engagement for social change, of building local capacity. We, as workers and activists, will be neutered and domesticated by local partnerships. The loss of CDPs, their ethos and principles, will have long-term consequences for marginalised communities.

For the last two years, through the National Community Development

What are CDPs?

Community Development Projects (CDPs) provide services such as childcare, healthcare, drug counselling, youth clubs, managed and largely manned by people from local communities.

CDPs creation began in the mid 1980s with the European Poverty 2 Programme. When the EU Programme ended in 1990, a state Community Development Programme began. Since then, the number of CDPs expanded to over 180, employing around 400 full-time workers.

In late 2009, the government announced 'reforms' that have resulted in CDPs' management boards being disbanded and the organisations coming under the control of 38 partnership boards.

Partnerships' governing boards consist of some locals, business people, appointed trade unionists and councillors. Many believe the real aim of the 'reforms' is the staged closing of the CDPs. In recent months, ten CDPs in the Dublin area and one in Tipperary have seen their funding ended.



The loss of CDPs, their ethos and principles, will have long-term consequences for marginalised communities.

Forum, I have lobbied tirelessly about the impact of these cuts on vulnerable families and women, articulating the inherent dangers of taking away the independence of CDPs – to no avail. The state has been consistent in conducting a war on the poorest and the most vulnerable in society.

We are worn out articulating the dangers that communities face if they lose their CDPs.

Telling and retelling what will happen to the elderly, to women, and women's groups, men's groups, children with special needs, communities with special needs!

The government doesn't seem to get the powerful role that a small two or three-worker project can play in community cohesion, in leveraging funding far in excess of the small grant it receives, in making community groups viable, in empowering communities to articulate their own needs, from the bottom up.

All this during an era when a little over 20 men – politicians, property developers and bankers – were playing a giant Monopoly game with our country and our people. A wink and a nod here, a tilt of the eyebrow there, a quiet phone call late in the evening, a sharing of information from all the important boards they sat on – as they bartered our futures and our children's futures to buy and sell the most 'valuable' land in the world.

Or maybe they do get it. They certainly seemed to get the role played by the Equality Authority and Combat Poverty in reaching for equality and social justice – they closed them down too.

Do they realise the role played by CDPs in helping people to name their own worlds and identify their own needs? Maybe they do! Hence the savage attack on the sector and on CDPs, and working-class communities.

What justification can there be, for example, in purporting to 'save' an average of less than €95,000 per year by removing a project and support that the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people depend upon? The fact that this will generate the need for significant increased service spending – addressing the effects of individual and community breakdown – demonstrates a reckless disregard for accountability in public expenditure.

What if this is not incompetence? How is it possible that even our own particularly challenged and overpaid political leaders cannot grasp the damage and cost associated with their decision?

We think they do know. And that is why they decided more than eight years ago to close us down.

The reality is that sustainable communities, based on equality of opportunity, are not on the Irish political agenda.

It is not so long, after all, since a certain Minister for 'Equality', 'Justice', and Law Reform reminded us all that equality is bad for the economy.

Don't confuse this madness with incompetence. Tell them that you know! Tell them you know that they are attacking the most vulnerable and it has to stop! Tell them that our communities, and community development, equality, and social justice are rights: Our rights that cannot be bartered nor sold to the highest bidder.

A millionaires' charter

ICTU Assistant General Secretary Peter Bunting considers the Tories' cutback agenda which seeks to remodel the British economy to benefit millionaires at the expense of the working class.

The second paragraph of HM Treasury's Spending Review 2010 document opens with the pithy sentence: "The Spending Review makes choices." It is, by far, the most honest statement in the entire 104-page screed.

What George Osborne announced on Wednesday October 20 2010, was the surrender of the entire British economy to the whims of a handful of millionaires. Not only the 18 millionaires in the cabinet, at least three of which have, shall we say, innovative tax arrangements. Since the general election, the coalition government has cut over £18billion from benefit claimants. The investment banks and hedge funds which caused the crisis pay up £2.5billion. However, these same banks will get back hundreds of millions through cuts in Corporation Tax over the next two years.

Coincidentally, the major donors to the Tory election campaign were investment banks and hedge funds. But other sectors than banking paid into the Conservative war chest.

Lord Wolfson of Next gentlemen's attire, coughed up £293,250 since 2006. He was ennobled last June. Sir Christopher Gent, of Glaxo-SmithKline, has given £113,400 since 2003.

Plain Aiden Heavey, of Tullow Oil, has so far donated £5,500. All signed a letter supportive of the cuts to the Daily Telegraph just ahead of 'Axe Wednesday'.

They could easily afford their contribution to "democracy."

Wolfson earned £1,737,000 in 2010; Gent pulled in £680,000 in 2009, and Heavey got by on £1,659,855 the same year. Thirty-two others signed the 'spontaneous' letter of support for the strategy. Bob Wigley of Yell struggles by on £177,000. Ten are on over a million quid, with Mothercare's Ben Gordon on £6,468,000. That's a truckload of baby-grows.

The 'bedrock' of our economy, the SME sector, was less than impressed. "Large companies can take these cuts in their stride," said Stephen Alambritis of the Federation of Small Businesses.

"The city will reward them with a higher share price if they reduce their workforce." On the other hand, "Some small firms rely on public-sector contracts for 50 to 60 per cent of their turnover. If the cuts are swingeing and overnight, these companies will be lost to the UK economy forever."

It is notable that the FSB in Northern Ireland were reluctant to follow the advice offered by the local CBI. Small businesses here are only too aware that one in three private sector businesses in Northern Ireland depend upon contracts from the public sector. Every year, the state which the CBI feels obliged to slash and shrink buys services and goods from the Northern Ireland private sector worth £3billion.

Nor are our local small businesses likely to profit from the privatisation of state assets at knock-down prices, when it is difficult enough for them to get modest loans or overdraft facilities from the banks (who are members of the CBI).

Also unimpressed with the CBI/ IoD Axis of Austerity are the Construction Employers' Federation, who last month published a ten-point plan which was distinctly Keynesian. The latest NI Construction Bulletin showed a 14.5 per cent decline in construction output since 2009. The last hope for this sector was that the government would honour its commitments made at the time of the St Andrews' Agreement to the Investment Strategy. The Secretary of State told the unions that he would honour the commitment, but Osborne seems not to have noticed. Our local private sector is being undermined at each turn, not least by their main political mouthpiece.

Which begs the question: how is the private sector going to fill the hole in the labour market with half-a-million public sector jobs facing the axe? The sight of Liberal Democrats waving order papers and pat-

ting Osborne on the back after commending this vandalism to the House of Commons will haunt them to their political graves.

The Spending Review makes choices. Democracy is about choices. Here are some:

- The UK is a starkly unequal society. If we imposed a mere 2 per cent wealth tax on the richest ten per cent, £78billion could be raised in a single year.
- If we had a Robin Hood tax on speculation and the excesses of investment banks and hedge funds, we could raise billions more, and at the same time we would reduce the rewards for reckless gambling.
- If we employed enough tax inspectors with the same political backing to pursue tax cheats as we have for chasing benefit fraud, then we could raise £123billion per year in taxes which are evaded, avoided or, unbelievably, not collected.

Vodafone made a deal on taxes recently that saved them £6billion. You can call that tax efficiency, or you can call it a political choice. 2008's Nobel laureate has no doubts. "The real reason has a lot to do with ideology," wrote Paul Krugman. "The Tories are using the deficit as an excuse to downsize the welfare state."

The good news is that thousands of people agree with this analysis, and in the wake of the Con/Dem onslaught demonstrated in the rain against their choices at Belfast City Hall. This argument is only starting.

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Going it alone

Kevin Brannigan meets former Progressive Unionist Party leader Dawn Purvis to find out what made her finally break with the UVF-connected party and why she believes it is important the Loyalist working class has its own voice.

It's May 28, and Dawn Purvis MLA, the new leader of the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP), is attending a wedding in County Donegal. Being a Friday and being Ireland, the weekend is set to be a nice break from the corridors of Stormont.

What Dawn doesn't know though, is that across the border back in her native city of Belfast, a group of Ulster Volunteer Force gunmen are making their way up a busy Shankill Road to publicly execute Bobby Moffett, himself a leading loyalist. Their actions will eventually lead to her resignation from a party in which she had served for 16 years.

As crowds gathered around the dead body of Moffett capturing the gruesome image on camera phones, before circulating it across Northern Ireland in an obscene viral campaign, Dawn's phone began to buzz with quote-hungry journalists desperate to hear what the leader of the PUP, seen as the political voice of the UVF and Red Hand Commando, had to say about the potentially ceasefire breaking murder.

In the immediate aftermath what Dawn had to say was that the killing was "horrific" and "wrong". In a land though where murders are so often glossed over with clichéd condemnations before moving on to the next crisis on the road to peace, Dawn's words were soon backed up with action when she announced her resignation from the PUP, ending her leadership and casting her into the lonely world of the 'Independent'.

"My main focus in the days after the murder of Bobby Moffett was the future of the country, the peace process and where we are going with that. I felt that those responsible really had not considered the implications either for the peace process, the country or the party.

"And I sadly came to the conclusion that I didn't believe that they ever would," is how Dawn explains her decision to LookLeft.

"There are progressive elements inside the UVF and Red Hand Commando who have been trying to steer a path that would eventually bring an end to paramilitarism but I felt that they were seriously hampered and I felt that the PUP, and what they were trying to do – give a voice to working class loyalist communities, to try and transform those communities – was being seriously hampered.

"If you constantly have to ask questions about the wrong doing of others you're not able to do normal politics, you're not able to fight for working



It's a man's world: Dawn during her time as PUP leader flanked by former UVF man Billy Hutchinson

class people on working class issues and in the aftermath of the murder that's what I toyed with for many days and I came to the conclusion that I had to go," said Dawn.

It's also believed that Dawn wasn't alone in coming to her conclusion that the Moffett murder was a step backwards for the UVF, with at least one long-serving member of the paramilitary's brigade staff believed to have stepped down in protest.

In the wake of Dawn's resignation questions were raised as to why the Moffett murder prompted her to leave when the 26 murders attributed to the UVF since Purvis joined the PUP in 1994 hadn't. For Dawn, it's all about the context.

"I joined the PUP after the ceasefire was called in 1994, I know some people have made much of when I joined and the amount of murders that were attributed to the UVF and the Red Hand Commando since that time.

"Yes there were horrific murders committed by the UVF during that period but I also knew that those within the PUP and the UVF were doing their best to transform the organisation away from violence and towards peace. I think when we got the statement of intent in May 2007 from the UVF it was really a change in time and context, here we had a paramilitary organisation wedded to violence and responsib-

le for some of the worst atrocities of the troubles saying they were intending to go away and that in my mind was a very strong statement.

"It was also around the same time that devolution was restored and it gave a lot of hope to the community that on the back of all that. We also had the UVF and Red Hand Commando entering into a process that would eventually lead to decommissioning.

"So here we had an organisation that had built up some credibility. Obviously you will have people who will disagree with that and ask how can you say any organisation responsible for murder can build up credibility, but it had built up credibility in terms of 'here's what we intend to do and by the way we're decommissioning', so within that context the UVF had indicated that politics was working and that they were going away."

She added: "I think the murder of Bobby Moffett not only undermined the credibility they had built up but also undermined the work of the PUP and people associated with the organisation that were working to bring an end to paramilitarism.

"So the context to the Moffett murder was different, it was absolutely different. And people will look at what I did and say well why didn't you walk

away earlier when others died what I say though is; different context, different time.”

While Dawn was trying to decide what her next step would be following the Mof-fett murder, rumour was rife that the PUP would split from the UVF and Red Hand Commando. Purvis though never saw that as a likely outcome explaining that the UVF need to break the link with the PUP by realising there is no longer a need for them to exist rather than the PUP breaking with them.

When Dawn, who has a degree in Women’s Studies, Social Policy and Social Anthropology, is asked if she ever felt excluded as leader of the PUP from the loyalist groups they purport to speak on behalf of, on the basis of her gender, she gives an interesting insight into the relationship between the PUP and the UVF.

“I would suggest most UVF members are DUP supporters and would vote DUP rather than PUP and for the life of me I can’t understand why given that the DUP’s attitude towards loyalist paramilitaries over the years has been questionable to say the least.”

Such a statement from a former PUP leader shows how, unlike Republican groups, loyalist paramilitaries and their political affiliates are operating on a much longer leash.

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When asked if she thought of joining any other party rather than going it alone as an Independent Dawn insists she couldn’t find a home anywhere else and wonders how the PUP’s new leader Brian Ervine (brother of the former party leader David Ervine who died in 2007), who vehemently opposes abortion, can lead a party that is pro-choice.

One feels this could become a campaign issue when the two run against each other in the next election.

Some had hoped Dawn’s resignation from the PUP could usher in a new era in the form of a cross-community left alliance but Dawn doesn’t seem too enthusiastic, fearing that the personal histories of its main players rather than present day positions would dominate debate and the sectarian nature of northern Irish politics providing too great a hurdle.

While Dawn’s view on the future of cross-community political alliances may be bleak, her analysis of the unionist communities’ thoughts on the current campaign being waged by the various splinter republican groups offers a little more hope.

“Some within loyalism and loyalist paramilitaries use the issue of dissident republicans as rationale for their existence. I remember David Ervine saying.

‘Don’t hitch your wagon to the existence of dissidents as that is a struggle to be dealt with internally for republicans and should be dealt with by the security forces’.

“In other words this isn’t your fight and you don’t have to pick it as one. There are those who use it as an excuse to stick around. Loyalists don’t feel under siege but obviously when it strikes home like when there was a bomb under the car in east Belfast people were thinking ‘that’s close’. It does concern people but because of the segregated nature of our society the trouble with the dissidents seems to be internal and loyalist communities seem to be far removed from that and they don’t see it as a threat and they don’t regard it as a threat but that’s not to say our political class here will not talk it up as a threat when really they should be talking it down.”

When our interview ends Dawn walks us to the front door of Stormont past the oil painting of Ian Paisley, a man who once labelled her a ‘Communist.’ In the assembly hall they’re debating the state of the Northern Irish poultry industry. A DUP MLA wants the North’s borders closed to outside eggs and seems quite passionate on the matter. Everything changes while all else stays the same.

Up the polls

Irish Labour activist John Moynes considers the impact of recent polls which show his party with an historic lead.

Two of September’s three major opinion polls in the republic placed Labour ahead of the two conservative parties by a comfortable margin. The results could have some Labour activists tempted to crack open the beers and pretend they didn’t snigger when Labour Youth started waving the “Gilmore for Taoiseach” placards a couple of years ago. But it’s a little early for all that. These polls raise three crucial questions;

- 1: Can opinion polls be trusted?
- 2: Can Labour turn this lead in the polls into seats in the Dáil?
- 3: Does this mean the electorate has moved to the left?

The answer to the first question is, not really. Those trying to crunch the figures from a single opinion poll into a prediction of the make-up of the next government are kidding themselves. But a string of polls, from different companies, using different methods of compiling their data, are showing Labour in the lead.

Also anyone who has canvassed for Labour recently will have seen the strange phenomenon of people answering the doorbell and enquiring how to join the party.

So we can be sure that, barring some very strange events between now and the next election, Labour will record an excellent result.

The second question is a little trickier. The work of building the party in our historically weak areas is progressing well, but it’s too early to tell if we have the time to finish it before the election. It’s also too early to tell if we can finish it at all.

Another problem for Labour is the lack of experience of vote management when running multiple candidates in the same constituency. A mistake that should not be made is that just because Labour is united behind the party leadership and against the civil war parties that we’ll actually be united on the campaign trail in multi-seat constituencies, such unity must be worked towards.

As for the last question, this one’s easy. Labour’s lead in the polls does not mean Ireland has gone left wing. We’re ahead because Gilmore and Burton have been consistent and intelligent

while the government and Fine Gael have been panicky and stupid. But nobody will ever convince the people of the necessity of socialism from opposition.

The only thing that can move Ireland to the left in the medium to long term is a left wing government. It’s not what we will do before the election that counts, it’s what we do afterwards. In Northern Ireland people from all communities know the benefits of universal healthcare, nobody here will until they experience it. Labour’s lead in the polls doesn’t mean that the left is succeeding in winning the public argument about the importance of building a nation on strong communities, only that the voters have seen through the parties that deny this. As yet there is no proof that Ireland has changed, just that we have the opportunity to make the necessary change. This work will require the co-operation of all democratic left wing parties. And I can’t wait for it to start.

Political Party	Irish Times / Ipsos MRBI September 30th	Sunday Bussiness Post/Red C September 27th	Millward Browne Landsdowne/ TV3 September 23
Labour	33%	23%	35%
Fine Gael	24%	31%	30%
Fianna Fáil	24%	24%	22%
Sinn Féin	8%	10%	4%
Greens	2%	3%	2%
Independents	9%	9%	8%

13 lookleft



LABOUR

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Will UK Labour's new leader Ed Miliband bring genuine political change? Northern Ireland-based British Labour Party activist Jenny Muir considers this question and the leadership contest that resulted in victory for the 40-year-old Londoner.

Following the UK Labour leadership contest as a Northern Ireland member was strange. For all but a few British Labour activists, we don't exist. Some who do know about us think we should all join the SDLP. And we are not permitted to stand in elections. All this gives us a semi-detached status in the UK Labour Party, as is also the case in the Irish Labour Party.

So, for me, voting for the new Labour leader involved two questions. First, who was most suitable for the UK as a whole, in terms of policy direction and leadership ability? And second, who would be most likely to support the expansion of Labour activities in Northern Ireland, including elections and increasing the membership?

Some of my comrades didn't take the second question into account at all. They argued that the most important issue was to select a credible leader who could win the next election, to get rid of the ConDems and adopt a different approach to the economic crisis. This would be good for all of us, even if the candidate most likely to achieve it didn't support Labour in Northern Ireland. I felt that wasn't enough, if it means in Northern Ireland we were to remain dependent on the sectarian parties for decisions about devolved public services, made within a framework of territorial rather than class politics.

The candidates didn't show a great deal of interest in Northern Ireland members. David Miliband sent a short video, telling us how important we all were but omitting to mention elections. Nothing from Diane Abbott, Ed Balls or, indeed, Ed Miliband. Andy Burnham, however, came over for a day, gave interviews with the local media, spent hours with members over both lunch and an early evening meeting, and backed us all the way. That's how I ended up with the slightly weird alternative voting order of Andy Burnham first, followed by Diane Abbott, Ed Miliband, David Miliband and Ed Balls.

THE CONTEST

The campaign was surprisingly comradely. This wasn't because candidates and their supporters had decided to stop stabbing each other in the back, rather there were several structural reasons.

First, there were too many candidates, unlike the last time around when we had no choice at all. This meant none could develop the critical mass to nudge out the others, although at one stage it looked as if David Miliband would do so.

Secondly, there was no vacancy for Deputy Leader, and Harriet Harman not only refused to endorse any of the candidates, but didn't even vote. Therefore no 'slate' emerged – it was always clear that whoever won would have to work with Harman and with a Shadow Cabinet elected separately by the Parliamentary Labour Party and therefore likely to be centrist.

Thirdly, and perhaps most important, was the use of the Alternative Vote system for the ballot. Members were not choosing for or against, rather they were stating a preference – which created a different, more collaborative, debate and increased support for the end result. Most members could honestly say 'I voted for Ed'.

But what about the politics? Woe-ful, I'm afraid. The top priority for the good-natured hustings was to debate the future of the Labour Party. Was New Labour dead? How could Labour reconnect with 'ordinary people', whoever they are? The candidates' reliance on their personal histories rather than policies as their Unique Selling Point started as cringe-making and ended as an annoying distraction from more substantial issues.

Balls, Burnham and Ed Miliband distanced themselves from their activity in previous governments, resulting in the peculiar spectacle of ex-Ministers not standing on their record. Even David Miliband didn't dwell on his time as Foreign Secretary. Abbott referred to the others' cabinet responsibilities as often as

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The top priority for the good-natured hustings was to debate the future of the Labour Party. Was New Labour dead?

possible, because she hadn't been there. Although she won this point over and over on Iraq – quite rightly – none of the other candidates took her up on the disadvantages of not having had that experience.

Of course the economic situation was the major policy issue, but the differences between the candidates were marginal. Did they support halving the deficit in four years or should it take longer? Did they want to shift the balance further towards taxation or keep the emphasis on cuts? Would they join protest marches and support strikes? Despite many comments on the importance of promoting growth, no-one set out a coherent alternative vision.

It would be fair to say that no other policy area was addressed in much depth at all. Iraq, Afghanistan and the future of Trident were used to score points rather than as any serious discussion about foreign policy in the 21st century. Service provision was marginalised, with the exception of Burnham's proposal for a National Care Service, and most crucially the role of the private sector in public service funding and delivery was not addressed. Abbott brilliantly challenged the assumptions of the other candidates on immigration, but it wasn't clear from the hustings I saw that audiences agreed with her.

THE WINNER

So in the end it was the candidate backed by the major unions Ed Miliband, who won through at the Labour Party conference in Manchester. Immediately after the cliff-hanging result, the media hit on the 'won through trade union votes' angle, and within 15 minutes or so the 'lurch to the Left' was established. The coverage from then until the leader's speech the following Tuesday was overwhelmingly negative, either due to the 'Red Ed' tag (which seemed to include not being married) or to speculation that he wasn't ruthless enough – although if you compete against your brother for the job he's always wanted, I reckon that makes you pretty tough.



The subsequent leader's speech was a very mixed bag. On the economy, the speech would have been appropriate for five years ago, but it didn't seem to face up to the magnitude of present-day problems. Miliband trod a careful path on the deficit, saying that cuts are needed but it could be done whilst reducing inequality, maintaining a living wage, encouraging small businesses and without damaging economic recovery. A higher banking levy was, however, the only contribution on the credit side to achieving all this.

He said honestly that he wouldn't oppose everything the coalition did, that the public mustn't be alienated by irresponsible strikes, but then set out a significant marker for the government and the media: 'responsible trade unions are part of a civilised society'. But then he also called for responsible behaviour from business, seeming to equate the two without an awareness that workers need unions because they have less power than their employers. None of this adds up to the rock solid economic plan Labour needs to win the next election.

A further cause of concern was the platitudinous approach to 'change'.



The trouble with the youth of today – they think everything they've not heard of before is new.

Miliband claimed Labour hadn't changed in response to the new challenges of terrorism after 9/11, increased EU immigration, and the economic crisis. But surely the problem was that Labour did change in response to these events, becoming more authoritarian, pandering to anti-immigrant prejudice, not being tough enough on the banks and on elite interests generally. Yes, Labour introduced civil partnerships and devolution, but it wasn't enough to dispel suspicions about the Party's overall direction.

And that's what makes the vision for the 'new generation' so interesting. Miliband stated 'we must shed old thinking'; however, much of what he was talking about is returning to even older thinking, rather like Labour in the 1950s and 1960s plus gay rights. Respect for trade unions, importance of community and family, a narrower gap between rich and poor, decent wages, a life that's about more than work, war as a last resort in order to defend values not resources, living more simply – this time in order to save the planet. Even a spirit of optimism.

That's the trouble with the youth of today – they think everything they've not heard of before is new.

At this rate, we'll even get the Labour Party back into Northern Ireland elections.



Defend Sean Garland campaign receives support from the British Left

British trade unionists and Labour Party members have voiced strong support for the call on US president Barack Obama to withdraw the threat of extradition against veteran Workers' Party leader Sean Garland.

Francis Donohoe

At the September UK Trade Union Congress annual conference in Manchester, RMT General Secretary Bob Crow hosted a fringe meeting to highlight the campaign to defend Garland. Also speaking at the Miscarriage of Justice Fringe Meeting were victims of British injustice Gerry Conlon, who served 15 years in UK jails after being wrongly convicted as part of the Guilford Four, and Paddy Hill of the Birmingham Six, who wrongly served 16 years.

At the meeting, WP International Secretary Gerry Grainger outlined the US allegations against Garland that the long-time socialist activist was involved in an international plot to distribute near-perfect forgeries of \$100 bills printed in North Korea.

The allegations, which are vehemently denied, resulted in Garland's arrest in Belfast in 2005 and in January 2009, a US extradition request to the Dublin government for the 76-year-old to be sent to the US for trial. Grainger said: "Independent analysts who have examined the allegations as to the printing press and ink allegedly used by North Ko-

For more information on the campaign see: www.seangarland.org



Graffiti on the Wall - Belfast Graffiti on the Falls Road 'International Wall' supporting the campaign

rea have concluded that the ink used in the manufacture of the so-called "super-notes" is an exact match for that manufactured for the US and that only the US itself could have access to the paper, ink and printing press necessary to produce such notes."

He added: "What chance has a life-long revolutionary, committed to Marxist principles, accused of working with North Korea to undermine the 'beloved dollar', however untrue such allegations, of securing a fair trial in the USA?"

Members of the Defend Seán Garland campaign Valerie Hayes, Campaign Coordinator, Seamus McDonagh, National Organiser, and Paul Gormley, London Coordinator, also met with Labour MP John McDonnell, who voiced his support for the campaign.

For more information;
www.seangarland.org

GUESS WHO'S BACK

1868

Born, Edinburgh

1882

Joins British Army

1889

Deserts Army

1896

Dublin -
Founds ISRP

1897

Historian **Aindrias Ó Cathasaigh** considers the life and ideas of Irish socialism's most important thinker, whose legacy is crucial to shaping the new Ireland

This year marks the centenary of James Connolly coming back to Ireland from the US, the start of six hectic years of activity ended only by the firing squad. But Connolly is returning again in our own day. The public have voted him one of 'Ireland's Greatest' and new documentaries have told the fascinating story of his life, introducing him to a new generation and reawakening the interest of others.

Connolly was forced to struggle against poverty from day one. Even the fact of his birth in Scotland was due to the desperation that forced his parents to emigrate. His father carted dung from the streets of Edinburgh when he was lucky, and James was forced to work in dead-end jobs from around the age of ten, eventually having to join the British Army for a living.

So Connolly didn't need books to tell him that the world was divided into opposing classes. Poverty for him was never a sociological concept, but a harsh reality. His lack of formal schooling actually spurred him on to learn things for himself, and the writings of this self-taught socialist can still put many an academic historian and professional journalist to shame today.

Back in Edinburgh after deserting the army, Connolly threw himself into the socialist movement. This apprenticeship in speaking, writing and agitating laid down a solid foundation for a lifetime of activism. He won a decent enough vote as a local election candidate, but was clear on the limits of electoral politics: "The election of a socialist to any public body at present is only valuable insofar as it is the return of a disturber of the political peace." But it was in Dublin that Connolly came into his own.

As organiser for a small socialist party, he was central in revolutionary socialism putting down real roots in Ireland for the first time. Despite its small numbers, the party organised impressive protests against war and British royalty, and its paper *The Workers' Republic* presented an unashamedly socialist take on the events of the day.

The secret of their success was Connolly's clear-cut argument for an Irish socialist republic. British rule over Ireland had to be ended completely, not modified into home rule, but an independent capitalist Ireland would leave working people exploited as much as before. The rich were comfortable enough in the framework of the British empire, and any hope that they would fight for independence was misplaced. So the workers would have to lead the fight for national freedom as part of their fight for socialism: "The Irish working class must emancipate itself, and in emancipating itself it must, perforce, free its country."

Moving to the United States brought Connolly to a rapidly expanding economy and a far larger socialist movement. But it also brought him face to face with sectarianism on the left, as domineering party leaders put the interests of themselves and their organisations ahead of the working class. "Some men in the Socialist movement on both sides", he wrote, "would rather have a party of ten men who unquestioningly accepted their dictum and called their blind faith 'democracy' than a party of half a million whose component elements dared to think and act for themselves."

The founding of the Industrial Workers of the World in 1905 showed a new way for the movement and for Connolly himself. The IWW openly proclaimed that the bosses were not their partners but their sworn enemies, and organised a series of bitter struggles to win better conditions for workers. Connolly became an organiser for the movement and one of America's best-known propagandists for industrial unionism — the idea that workers should organise in one big union to take control of industry from the capitalists.

Unlike the old conservative unions, the IWW reached out to organise immigrant workers. Connolly was to the fore in facing the reality of a multi-ethnic working class of diverse origins. He was active in bringing Italian workers into the movement, even learning a little of the language himself. The Irish Socialist Federation drew on Ireland's radical traditions to spread left-wing ideas in the Irish-American community.

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Connolly didn't need books to tell him that the world was divided into opposing classes.

This was helped by a revival of socialist politics back in Ireland, and — although Connolly was beginning to make a name for himself on the American left — he was itching to get back home. A small but effective group of socialists in Ireland were successfully pushing their ideas in a workers' movement energised by union leader Jim Larkin. The cultural revival provided another audience for socialist politics, and the rise of the women's movement contributed to a mood of rebellion against the status quo.

Connolly participated heart and soul in this ferment, not least with his pen. A frontal attack by a Catholic priest aimed to take the wind out of Irish socialism's sails, but Connolly answered it powerfully in his pamphlet *Labour Nationality and Religion*. Twelve years of research came together with the publication of *Labour in Irish History*, a book that rescued the forgotten stories of working people and their resistance, and argued that this same resistance was the key to liberation: "only the Irish working class remain as the incorruptible inheritors of the fight for freedom in Ireland".

His work as a union organiser in Belfast gave him an opportunity to put his brand of fighting trade unionism into effect again. Workers who were brutally exploited won increases in their wages, their leisure, and especially their dignity. Workers who had been ignored by mainstream trade unionism because they were unskilled or women or Catholics were organised to stand up effectively for their rights.

But, as Connolly recognised, "Our fight is a fight not only against the bosses, but against the political and religious bigotry". The northern working class was deeply split by sectarianism, with the employers naturally taking advantage. Connolly fought tooth and nail to unite workers across that divide, and was often successful. But he insisted that such unity could only last if it opposed the extra discrimination experienced by Catholic workers, and supported Irish independence: "We declare to the Orange workers of Belfast that we stand for the right of the people in Ireland to rule as well as own Ireland, and cannot conceive of a separation of the two ideas."



RP

1897

Pamphlet -
'Erin's Hope'

1903

Moves

to United States

1907-8

IWW Organiser

1910

Returns to Ireland - Labour Nationality
and Religion - Labour in Irish History

1914

Leader - ITGWU &
Citizen Army

He stuck to this principled position in the heat of a viciously sectarian atmosphere as unionism became increasingly violent in its opposition to home rule. When the British government proposed to partition Ireland and create a unionist state in six counties of Ulster, Connolly was horrified: "To it, Labour should give the bitterest opposition, against it Labour in Ulster should fight even to the death if necessary."

Things were hotting up in Dublin too as the city's employers came together to lock out thousands of workers who refused to break their connection with the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. Connolly came down to take the lead while Jim Larkin was imprisoned, and spent a week in prison himself until winning his release by a hunger strike. He always looked to the fighting spirit of rank-and-file workers to win the strike, and appealed for solidarity from the British trade union movement. When its leaders refused to turn sympathy into sympathetic action, the Dublin workers were left high and dry — a serious setback to Connolly's hopes.

Worse came in August 1914 with the outbreak of world war. The tragedy of workers marching to mass slaughter to decide which empires would rob the world was made far worse by the collapse of the socialist movement internationally, its anti-war resolutions forgotten as they rushed to support their governments' war effort. Connolly opposed the war with every fibre in his being, hoping to see strikes and rebellions break out against it: "a great Continental uprising of the working class would stop the war". When this didn't happen, he was more isolated than ever.

With few forces to hand, Connolly concluded that an insurrection against British rule was probably the most that could be achieved for the time being. Far from abandoning the interests of the working class, he continued to lead strikes and welcomed every sign of workers' resistance anywhere, and believed that a blow struck for independence would leave Irish workers in a better position to fight on.

When republicans convinced him that they were planning a serious rebellion, he willingly joined them. But he famously warned the Citizen

Army that their aim was economic freedom too: "So hold on to your rifles!" He played a leading part in the Easter Rising and was badly wounded. The British government didn't let that stop them from making sure that Connolly couldn't live to fight them another day.

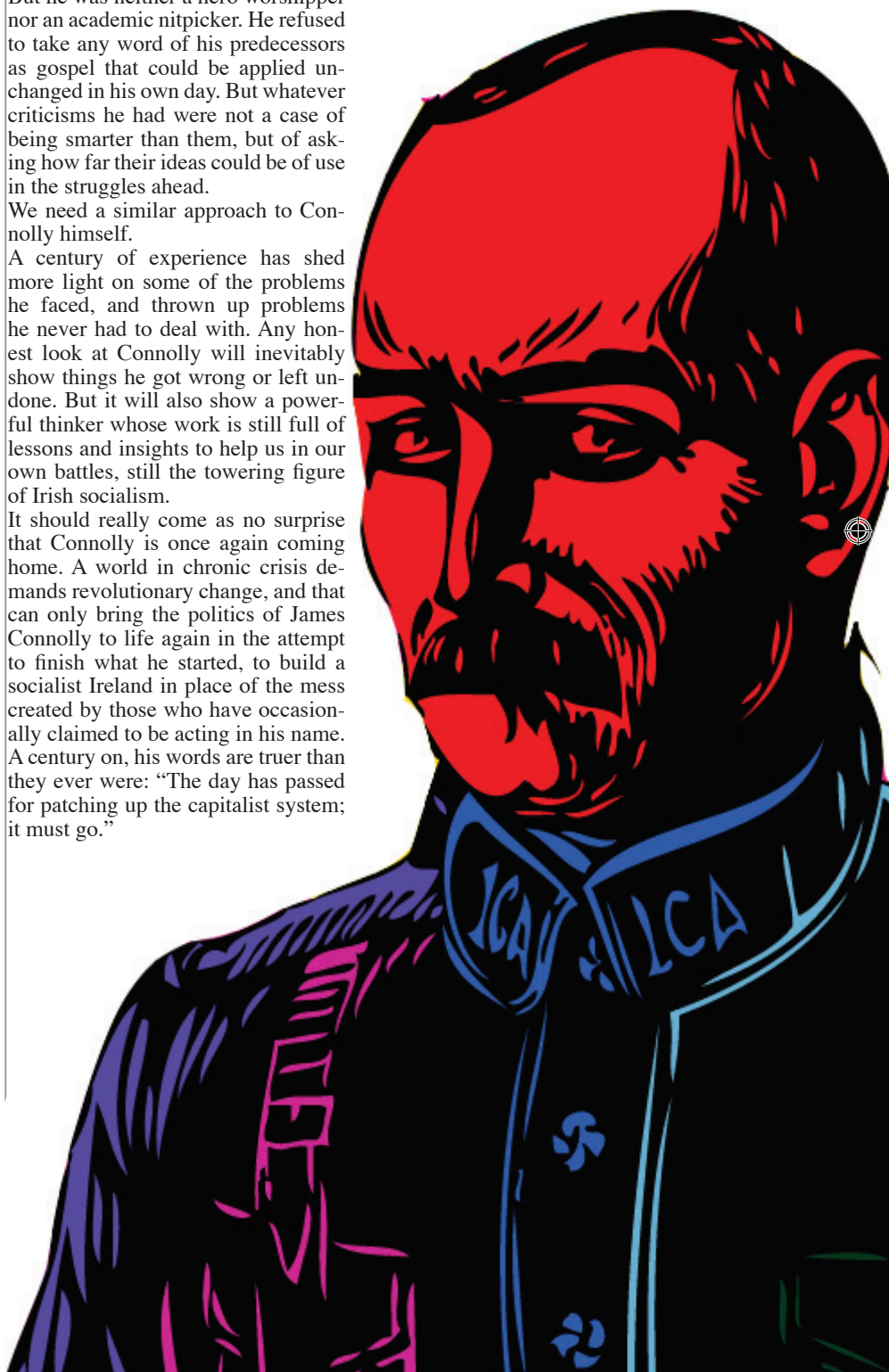
Throughout his life Connolly drew on the work and example of thinkers and fighters who had come before him, from Karl Marx to Wolfe Tone. But he was neither a hero worshipper nor an academic nitpicker. He refused to take any word of his predecessors as gospel that could be applied unchanged in his own day. But whatever criticisms he had were not a case of being smarter than them, but of asking how far their ideas could be of use in the struggles ahead.

We need a similar approach to Connolly himself.

A century of experience has shed more light on some of the problems he faced, and thrown up problems he never had to deal with. Any honest look at Connolly will inevitably show things he got wrong or left undone. But it will also show a powerful thinker whose work is still full of lessons and insights to help us in our own battles, still the towering figure of Irish socialism.

It should really come as no surprise that Connolly is once again coming home. A world in chronic crisis demands revolutionary change, and that can only bring the politics of James Connolly to life again in the attempt to finish what he started, to build a socialist Ireland in place of the mess created by those who have occasionally claimed to be acting in his name. A century on, his words are truer than they ever were: "The day has passed for patching up the capitalist system; it must go."

Aindrias Ó Cathasaigh's books include 'James Connolly: The Lost Writings'. He is also editor of the socialist journal Red Banner and scriptwriter of the recent highly acclaimed TG4 series '1916 Seachtar na Cásca' which told the story of each of the seven signatories of the 1916 Easter Proclamation.



1916

**Leads Republican forces in the Easter Rising.
Executed in Kilmainham Gaol, 12 May**



THE REAL ECONO



Where now? The future for the trade union movement

A balanced appraisal of social partnership is essential to the building of a new progressive strategy for the trade union movement, writes John Dunne.

Contrary to popular belief the percentage of the workforce organised in trade unions is actually growing. The reason for this increase in all important trade union 'density' is unfortunately not due to any great rush to our ranks but to the decline in employment in the private sector and the rise in unemployment. The density issue is something that has confronted the trade union leadership for a decade. During the past 15 years, density in the private sector dropped from 31 per cent in 2000 to just 22 per cent in 2007. Public sector density in Ireland hovered around 60 per cent across the same period.

Trade union membership had been maintained at a relatively high level in Ireland up until quite recently. In 1987 the overall combined public and private sector trade union membership was 46 per cent of the workforce. That equated to about 500,000 members in an overall workforce of just over one million. Now the number of members is probably just higher than 500,000 but the overall workforce has grown to around 1.7 million, so with half a million out of that figure you can see the overall result will be a decline in trade union power and influence.

The fact that social partnership is now dead, in that government and some employers, are no longer prepared to negotiate wide-ranging deals with the trade union movement warrants balanced consideration.

In the recent past many on the left

criticised the whole idea of the partnership process and National Wage agreements in particular. There was a concerted albeit lacklustre campaign against the public service Croke Park Agreement by elements of the left. They were of course aided by major elements of the right and the political establishment represented by Shane Ross and the Sindo brigade.

My experience of the social partnership era, as a trade union representative working in the public sector for part of it but representing workers in the private sector for most of it, is that the national wage agreement elements by and large did work for both sides: the workers and the employers. It did not take long, however, for a quasi coalition of the right and left to begin attacking the very concept of a social partnership. Many of us on the left may not have been happy with the outcome of some of the national wage agreements, in fact I argued against some of the agreements as an activist on the grounds that the tax cutting elements of the Partnership 2000 deal agreed in 1999, could have a detrimental effect.

We stated that this approach was bound to lead to loss of investment in the public service and was counter-productive in that if and when problems arose in the economy the public sector services would suffer. Were we proved correct?

The question of course is whether improvements for workers their families, and society in general, were achieved through the time of the first agreement (The programme for Economic and Social Progress) in 1986 to the last and unimplemented towards

wards 2016 or September 2008.

The debate on this continues.

But the key issue now for the trade union movement in Ireland, and internationally, is the concerted efforts by employers, and their allies, to sideline organised labour.

In the countries traditionally looked to as beacons of the trade unionism and social democracy such as Sweden, Norway and Denmark, there is a decline in density for the first time. There has been the development in Denmark of so-called Yellow Trade Unions.

These are unions set up by right wing parties in order to avoid negotiating with the traditional unions. Elsewhere in the world, multinational corporations have restored to terror tactics against trade unions and their members.

The concerted anti union campaign is well underway in Ireland. Any notion of a trade union voice is represented as belonging to the past. The right-wing media have listed trade union leaders as part of a gallery of people and organisations that caused the economic crash. Employers seek to the use the present crisis to drive home their advantage. The CEO of Waterford Wedgwood while complaining about the cost of doing business in Ireland stated: "The high level of wages much of which stems from the partnership agreements, are at the heart of this high cost structure."

All serious parties of the left must make themselves aware of this struggle, this war on the interests of workers and the only viable organisations that have sustained the working class movement in Ireland and internationally for over 100 years. It is simply not good enough for socialists to lazily condemn the work of the trade union movement, and the agreements that they reach on behalf of their members. It must be remembered that the majority of trade union members voted to accept the National Wage agreements down through the years and more recently the Croke Park agreement. It is the job of the trade union movement to represent its members and therefore treat with employers no matter how disdainful that may seem to some purists. Irish history's foremost organiser James Connolly recognised this on many occasions when he settled disputes in Dublin, Belfast and in Wexford. This everyday activity of a trade unionist sapped even Connolly who in writing in 1914 to his

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It is simply not good enough for socialists to lazily condemn the work of the trade union movement

colleague William O'Brien stated: "I have spent myself pushing forward the movement here for the past three years and the result of this is my activity labelled as a desire for 'cheap notoriety'. I am sick, Bill, of this part of the globe."

Connolly recognised that there were limits as to what could be achieved by trade union action and activity only. The role of the unions, after all, is as stated to represent their members. The role for those involved in politics, especially in left politics, at this time in our history is to change the society.

What is required now, I believe, is a serious political alliance of the trade union movement with those parties and individuals on the left in order

to push forward a political project whereby workers and their families can change the system which has placed many in the depths of economic despair.

That alliance will not happen by chance and the experience in this country is of fragmented attempts at mobilising. The ICTU 10-Point Plan launched in early 2009 was an honest attempt at managing the economic crisis over an extended period. It got little serious perusal by the political establishment at the time. But now more and more are accepting that economic crisis cannot be solved by simply cutting back expenditure or by expecting only workers and their families

to carry the burden of savage government policies.

The Workers' Party initiative on holding a referendum on the way forward for the country in this economic crisis is a serious democratic reaction which can harness the public's anger and their energy into a positive political response to the government's failure to address the crisis on behalf of the people.

Other left parties and groups have ideas around stimulating the economy and bringing democratic control over the current crisis. Trade Unions can't do it on their own. They couldn't in 1913: they can't now.

John Dunne is a SIPTU official and WP activist in north Dublin

There is a name for this and it is not austerity – it is class politics

Aidan Regan

In October the full cost to the Irish state of the decision to guarantee the losses to private financial institution of at least €50,000 million – €50 billion – was finally owned up to. This massive cost raised the Republic's budget deficit to a record-breaking 32 per cent of GDP. In effect, the state has risked sacrificing the economy to ensure the holders of private capital do not lose money. Why would a state's democratically-elected government do this?

In a recent RTE interview, Finance Minister Brian Lenihan said it is because the state needs those same holders of financial capital to fund day-to-day spending in the state (public sector employment, healthcare, education, social protection). When directly asked why capitalism cannot work both ways (i.e. let bondholders take a loss), Lenihan responded quite frankly, "We cannot allow investors to take losses on their bonds in Irish banks because the state has to borrow from those very same investors." So, there it is in black and white – those with capital can't lose because they have rigged the game both ways.

The state has stepped in to make sure financiers do not lose the gamble because they have to go back to the same gambler to fund a) the cost of bailing them out in the first place and b) to cover the collapse in tax revenue due to the institutionalisation of a low tax regime over the past 15 years.

This is a regime that taxes capital at far less than any other European country (12.5 per cent).

So, you would think the government would ask the banks and other corporate sectors to pay a little bit more for their follies, to contribute some of their profits back to the public? Afraid not. The government has made it clear it will increase tax on income, property and water, not corporate profit. Keep in mind the shape of Ireland's income distribution and its impact upon income inequality.

In 2008, 9000 people or 0.3 per cent of the population earned €6.7billion, or 6.6 per cent of all income. 71 percent or 1.3 million people earned an average of €38,000 a year. Also, in the same year Ireland's adjusted wage share of the economy was 55.2 per cent of GDP.

The EU average was 64.2 per cent. In terms of wealth – in the form of assets, shares, property – the top one per cent hold 20 per cent, the top two per cent hold 30 per cent and the top five percent hold 40 per cent. We have no wealth or financial transaction tax. The policy response is to not tackle low taxes or let the financiers fall but to slash public spending. This is being done in an attempt to reduce the budget deficit from 32 per cent to three per cent by 2014 – not remotely realistic but designed to send a signal to the markets that the government is tough on you and me – as part of the EMU 'Sta-

bility and Growth' Pact. This reduction in public spending further deflates the economy and depresses economic growth, which in turn reduces state revenue and requires more borrowing at higher interest rates to pay the same financiers who hold all the cards. So, to recap, the state, given the constraints of financial markets, must operate according to the interests of the 'market' because it is dependent upon holders of private capital for funding state services. Given that they are not being asked to pay more in capital taxation, and we have paid for their losses surely they won't charge higher interests rates on the states borrowing cost? Again I'm afraid not, they are increasing it all the time. Why? Because they can see that they will make money out of it given that the state must borrow in the absence of a secure tax-revenue base.

Given all these contradictions (internal to finance markets) you would think economists, those clever mathematicians in our universities, would encourage the state to fix the tax base, generate growth and bully back the financiers.

More bad news is that Ireland's plethora of establishment economists are encouraging the state to cut public spending, to roll back social services and hope that growth will pick up through private-market expenditure. They are encouraging the government

to shift the entire burden of adjustment on to those who paid for the bailout, a double whammy. The logic of this argument is total utopianism. It is premised on the assumption that when the state cuts back public spending and outlines a clear strategy of 'retrenchment' consumers will step in and start spending money again. This private expenditure will start the economy growing. This is Alice in Wonderland, aka neo-classical economics.

So, it is quite simple, the state – the public representation of citizens in a democratic republic – is being forced to sacrifice the economy for the holders of private capital. There is a name for this and it is not austerity. It is class politics.

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THE REAL ECONOMY

Making semi-states companies part of the solution

Padraig Mannion outlines how strategic development of semi-state companies could form the basis of a sustainable export-led economy recovery for the Republic.

We need jobs. Hundreds of thousands of jobs. To create these jobs, we need sound infrastructure, companies with a proven track record who can raise money on the international markets without state support, and companies committed to Ireland for the long haul.

Only one sector can deliver this boost to the people. This is what is commonly called the commercial semi-state sector, our publicly-owned companies. These companies are ideally placed for this task, and they have the added bonus that at the end of each year they hand over a fat dividend cheque to the Irish people. It is one of the best kept secrets in our Republic that in the last ten years the ESB alone handed over almost one billion Euro to the state in dividends and got not one cent in investment. A secure energy supply at a competitive price is a necessity for manufacturing industry, for service industries, and for households. We are remarkably lucky in that the three companies which control the vast bulk of our electricity and gas needs are already in public ownership. This means that we, the people, own these companies. ESB, Bord na Móna, and An Bord Gáis are all leaders in their own sectors. However these companies are all competing with each other, all fighting for the same end product. This is a waste of resources. Therefore The Workers' Party proposes the establishment of a State Energy Company. This would bring together the ESB, Bord Gáis and Bord na Móna. In the immediate term this new company would concentrate on developing a secure energy supply and furthermore would concentrate on building an export industry in energy and energy-related services.

Oil and natural gas are the base components of most of the energy used in the country. We have huge reserves of both oil and natural gas off our coast but we have control of none of it. It is a sad and ridiculous fact that the vast gas reserves in the Corrib gas field in Rosport, county Mayo will be of more benefit to the Norwegian government (because it owns Statoil) than to the Irish people.

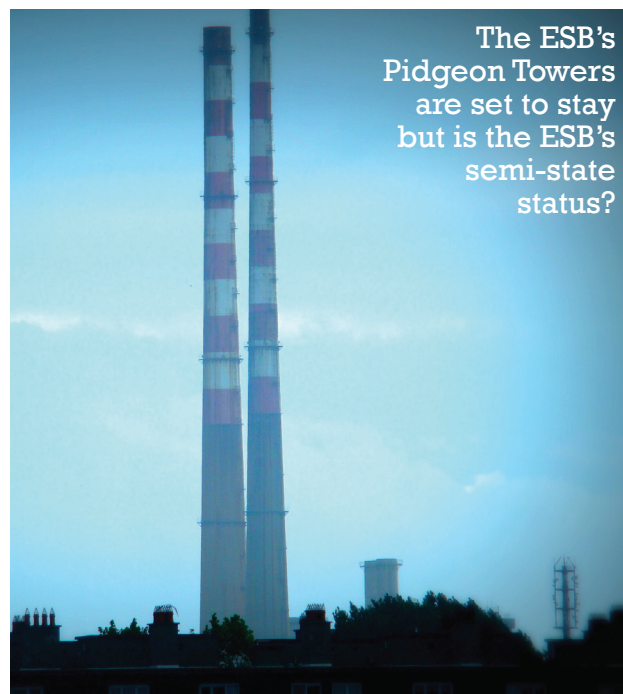
That is why The Workers' Party proposes that our new State Energy Company would take charge of all our oil and gas reserves. This can be easily done as the examples of Norway and Venezuela show. Such a simple and basic move would secure our energy supply for the next century, greatly reduce imports and interest charges, and create a massive export industry. Thousands of jobs could be created, especially in the downstream industries of pharmaceuticals and plastics.

Coillte and Bord na Móna jointly own approximately 10% of the land of the state, and are uniquely placed to take the lead in a vast array of ventures to drive the rural economy which is currently stagnating to the point of collapse. The creation of added value from the raw timber, into which, for example, Coillte has slightly ventured, could be greatly expanded.

It is a government and EU objective that we reduce our carbon emissions. The location of our bogs and forests give the two companies unique locations for the development of wind-energy. It is therefore completely logical that we use the sites in public ownership to tap into this industry. Within very few years we could have thousands of jobs and a multi-billion Euro sector.

Much of the land resources of Bord na Móna can no longer be used for peat harvesting. But they do provide ideal locations for the development of large plantations. The development of bio-mass crops, which are a sustainable product and reduce our dependence on imports and aid our balance of payments, is a further sphere where cooperation between these companies would yield major sustainable job creation with little public investment.

This year the Government published the report "Food Harvest 2020 - A vision for Irish agri-food and fisheries". The land banks publicly owned by these two



The ESB's Pigeon Towers are set to stay but is the ESB's semi-state status?

companies, under the direction of Teagasc, could and should be utilised for revitalizing our horticulture; spearheading crop development; and examining new growing methods.

Huge numbers of long-term jobs could also be created in the tourist industry if we use Bord na Móna and Coillte land to develop walking, cycling and hiking trails. If we then take the next step and link these trails to our publicly-owned national parks, our canal walkways and other local initiatives, we could become a European leader in this type of holiday.

Our banks are robbing us blind. €50 billion at the last count. Thousands of jobs are being lost and neither businesses nor families can get credit or loan finance. This is creating huge problems in our society. The solution is simple. Apart from the basket case Anglo Irish, the Irish people effectively owns Irish Nationwide, EBS, and AIB. We also own An Post with a post office network in practically every village and large community in the country. This provides the ideal framework to create a community bank.

Such a bank would have thousands of outlets for normal transactions like lodgments and cash withdrawals. It would also have a network of regional centres for services like loan applications, mortgages, overdrafts etc. It would have a huge reserve of savings – a capital cushion. Therefore this new bank would be in a position to give credit to viable companies, to give mortgages where the capacity to repay exists; to give overdrafts on an individual basis rather than by some stupid computer program.

This would have a dual benefit for jobs. First it would secure jobs in the financial sector – a sector which has lost almost two million posts internationally in the last 30 months. Second, and vital for our future it would both secure jobs in many firms throughout the country and also stimulate growth by sensibly increasing purchasing power.

Irish Boat to be part of Second Freedom Flotilla to Gaza

Kevin Squires

Funds are currently being raised for the purchase and fitting out of an Irish vessel to take part in the second Gaza Freedom Flotilla when it sails on its siege-breaking humanitarian mission next March.

The Irish Ship to Gaza Campaign (ISTG) has already secured a down payment on a boat and several public figures have committed to take part in the mission, among them Dublin Sinn Féin TD Aengus Ó Snodaigh.

The purpose of the flotilla is two-fold - to peacefully breach the illegal Israeli blockade of Gaza that is causing untold human suffering and to bring much-needed supplies to the people.

ISTG campaign coordinator Dr Fintan Lane took part in the first Gaza Freedom Flotilla which was attacked by Israeli commandos.

He said, "In May we were violently attacked by Israel in an act of bra-

**GAZA: END THE BLOCKADE
LET THE AID IN**

zen piracy that left nine human rights activists dead. This was an attempt to intimidate international activists, but it failed. Instead, the killings led to global outrage and have strengthened our resolve to break the siege."

He added, "We still need to raise funds urgently to ensure the latest initiative is a success and call on all supporters of the Palestinians to please donate generously".

chair of the Irish Palestinian Solidarity Campaign (IPSC) Freda Hughes said the blockade has turned

Gaza into an "open air prison", placing a stranglehold on 1.5 million people.

"Israel's stated aim is to apply "pressure and sanctions" to weaken Gaza and to "put Palestinians on a diet, but not to make them die of hunger". This is both unjust and sickening, and as recently stated by the UN Human Rights Council, the blockade violates international law. Unfortunately as governments refuse to act, civil society groups must act instead," Hughes added.

A new start for the Roma community in Ireland?

Paul Dillon writes that education and representation must be the starting points for the integration of the Roma community in Ireland.

Anita Elena is a Romanian woman who has lived, worked and studied in Ireland for 7 years. As part of her postgraduate work in Trinity College Dublin, she is conducting research on the life experiences of the 3,000-strong Roma community in Ireland.

"What many people forget or do not know is that the Roma face racism everywhere, including Romania. There is a refusal to accept the Roma way of life".

In Ireland, the consequences of that refusal to accept the Roma way of life manifest themselves in the Roma experience of access to public services, not least education. According to the Roma Support Group Ireland, around 30% of Roma children attend school. Approximately 85% of the Roma population are illiterate. 95% of Roma women cannot read or write in any language.

A major report on the educational needs of the Roma community in Ireland conducted in 2005 for the Dublin City VEC found members of the Roma community often find educational services difficult to access and that structural changes were required to make services more accessible.

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What many people forget or do not know is that the Roma face racism everywhere, including Romania.**

The report argued that "countless programmes for Roma have been destined to fail because they were developed without Roma participation, and correspondingly, with scant awareness of the specific culture and needs of the intended beneficiaries". The author went on to recommend "that a family centred approach should be adhered to in addressing the educational needs of Roma" and that "targeting adults and/or children outside the family nucleus will not succeed in access".

Martin Collins is the assistant director of the Irish travellers' rights organisation Pavee Point, a group which also campaigns on issues relevant to the Roma community.

"On the 8th of April this year, International Roma Day, we launched a leaflet highlighting the issues the Roma community face in education in Ireland. The key is integration and listening to the voice of the Roma themselves. Many Roma children will have parents from countries in Eastern Europe with a history of segregated education. The voice of the Roma support group needs to be heard in the formulation of policy".

According to Martin Collins, "There is a need to recognise the appalling racism and discrimination in countries

where Europe's Roma originate from. Immigration is often a factor of discrimination. The voice of the European Traveller Forum, which has consultative status at EU level, needs to be heard and listened to".

In July 2007, when a Roma settlement along the M50 in Dublin made headlines, Brian Lenihan, the-then Minister for Justice asked for a report from officials into the role of Pavee Point in speaking on Roma issues. The Irish Times reported him as saying: "Naturally I'm reviewing this case ... to see if organisations which are funded by the exchequer here are performing their correct roles".

Asked if this had any impact on Pavee Point, Martin Collins said, "We feel no stress. We will continue to do what we feel are the right things to do".

For Anita Elena, the starting point is to give the Roma community a voice in education.

"The issues facing the Roma emerge into the media at certain times at controversy. But unless we recognise the basic issues of integration, the most obvious being education, we will learn nothing from the controversies and nothing will change."

The hidden War on Cuba

Paul Dillon meets Keith Bolender, the author of a new book which uncovers the largely hidden story of the US-backed terror campaign against the people of Cuba.

If we cannot control Central America, it will be impossible to convince threatened nations in the Persian Gulf and in other places that we know how to manage the global equilibrium.”

Political theorist Noam Chomsky draws our attention to this quote by infamous former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in the introduction to *Voices from the Other Side: An Oral History of Terrorism against Cuba*.

Chomsky also reminds us of what the CIA told the White House in the aftermath of the 1959 Cuban Revolution, when they reported that the overthrow of the new regime “was the key to all of Latin America; if Cuba succeeds, we can expect most of Latin America to fall”.

These US policy objectives underpin the basis of the terrorist war against Cuba – whose aim is to overthrow the country’s radical socialist government and replace it with a regime more in tune with the interests of the Caribbean island’s northern neighbour.

The most brutal act of terrorism against Cuban citizens occurred on October 6, 1976 when 73 people were killed on Cubana Airlines flight 455 when the plane was blown up mid-air en route to Venezuela.

Luis Posada Carriles, one of those who masterminded the attack, told the New York Times in 1998, “the CIA taught us everything, how to use explosives, to kill, to make bombs ... they trained us in acts of sabotage”.

There have been over 1,000 documented incidents of terrorism against Cuba since the revolution, causing 3,000 deaths and 2,000 injuries. These range from attacks against those conducting a literacy campaign among poor farmers in the aftermath of the revolution, to bombings of tourist hotels in 1997, to attacks on Cuban government representatives in the US. There is also overwhelming evidence that links biological attacks, including a Dengue Fever outbreak in Cuba in the 1980s that killed nearly 100 children, with US covert operations.

Although US agencies lie behind these attacks, the vast majority have been carried out by terrorist groups with names such as Omega 7 and MIRR, largely made up of

Cubans based in the Miami area.

In *Voices from the Other Side*, Canadian academic and journalist Keith Bolender has compiled the testimonies of 75 people who were victims of these terror attacks or who lost family members.

Among the testimonies is that of Ana Elba Caminero, who was living in a Havana suburb when she was faced with the horror of seeing her two daughters, Janet and Isnáviz, become ill with a headache, fever and aching bones. Both soon started vomiting blood. A day later six-year-old Janet died. On the same afternoon Janet was buried, Ana had to visit the hospital to comfort Isnáviz, who was aware her younger sister had just died of the same disease she had. Fortunately, a few days later the 12-year-old recovered and Cuban authorities were able to identify the infection as Dengue 2, a strain hitherto unknown in the country.

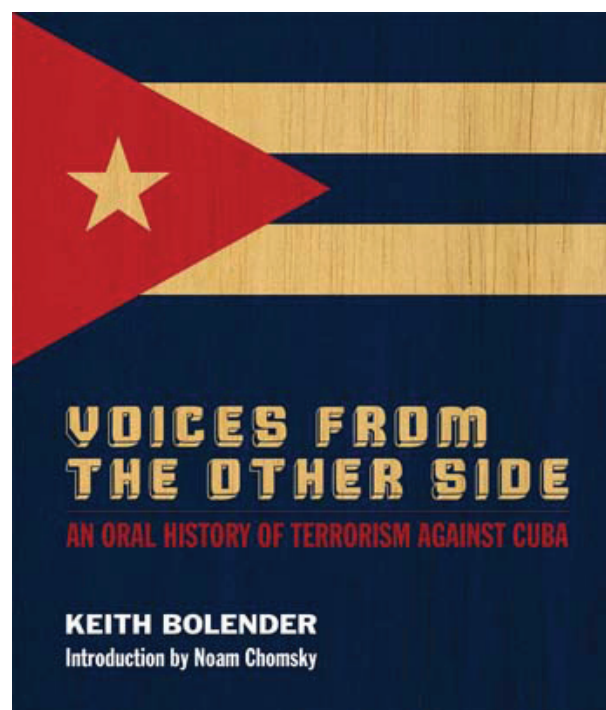
Talking to Bolender at the Dublin launch of his book, hosted by SIPTU Solidarity with Cuba Forum in Liberty Hall in September, he outlines that although the direct effects of the terror campaign are not to the fore in Cuban society nevertheless their mark remains.

“The Cubans don’t talk about the attacks on a daily basis. The Cuban government doesn’t exploit it, doesn’t propagandise on it. It’s not something that’s readily noticeable within Cuban society even though it’s been going on for 50 years, though the last physical attacks were in 1997”, Bolender said.

“But the government and the people have internalised the situation. The surveillance system that was instituted in the 1960s to prevent attacks has maintained itself. So if you went to Cuba, you would not see the direct impact of the attacks, but the individuals I talked to in the book still deal with it on a daily basis.”

But the testimonies do not deal exclusively with the personal, with political and social subjects also to the fore. In one of the most revealing accounts, Marina Ochoa, whose brother was one of the 14,000 Cuban children clandestinely sent to the US by middle class families between 1960 and 1962, states “The blockade, the terrorist attacks, have all been designed to make things so bad that the Cuban people will rise up and overthrow the government”.

Chomsky has advanced a related



“”
The Cubans don’t talk about the attacks on a daily basis. The Cuban government doesn’t exploit it

point, suggesting that the aim of those behind the terrorist offensive is to provoke the government to put in place civil rights restrictions to encourage revolt within the population.

This curtailment of civil rights is now one of the main criticisms of the Cuban government. The US government goes one further in its propaganda trying to frame these restrictions in terms of human rights. In reality Cuba is well advanced in the provision of the key human rights to food, housing, education and health care.

“Cubans do restrict certain civil rights. They have a surveillance system. This goes back to the very first days of the revolution. The CDR, the Committee for the Defence of the Revolution, was developed in the early months when there were so many anti-government activities, particularly in Havana”, said Bolender. “Is it justified? Absolutely. The intention of the American government was to overthrow the regime as quickly as possible after the revolution. Cuba couldn’t deal with this threat externally, they couldn’t invade the United States to stop it, so they had to deal with it internally. And like any other country in the world, including the United States after 9/11, the Cubans have used internal security systems and programmes to ensure the safety of citizens and of the government itself”.

He added, “The American war against Cuba has not ended so the validity of the CDR remains. It has changed substantially. Today, it’s more of a community association, involved in activities



like keeping the neighbourhood clean, and looking out for general criminal activities. It's changed considerably from its original purpose."

The Cuban authorities have met firm US opposition to their attempts to halt terror attacks such as in the case of the Miami 5, the Cuban intelligence agents who were sent by the Cuban government to infiltrate right-wing terror groups in Miami.

In 1998, FBI agents went to Havana, where Cuban officials gave them information gathered by the agents about terrorists based in the United States. Instead of arresting the terrorists, the FBI arrested the Cubans who had gathered the evidence, Gerardo Hernández, Antonio Guerrero, Ramón Labañino, Fernando González and René González.

The men were charged and jailed on conspiracy and espionage charges in September 2001. Despite calls for their release, including from

various Nobel Prize winners and heads of state, they remain incarcerated.

Bolender does not hold out much hope that the Obama presidency will bring the much-needed sea change in US/Cuba relations.

"Obama is under the same influences, the same pressures and the same geo-political realities as every President prior to him. Recently Obama signed the continuation of the Trading with the Enemy Act, which is the legislative justification for the embargo which goes back to the early stages of the revolution. This act can only be instigated at times of war under American law. The United States considers itself to still be at war against Cuba."

The core aim of Bolender's work is to give a voice to those affected by terrorism in Cuba who may have been hitherto largely unheard by the wider world.

"Knowledge is power and I hope my book brings that knowledge to

people who may have a general inclination of terrorism against Cuba but don't know the details or the extent, and certainly do not know the individuals who have been affected. The more people know about it the better, and it's difficult because the mainstream media don't speak of it".

solidaritybooks



43 Douglas St., Cork

Swedish elections – the rise of the far right

While working for the Social Justice party in the recent Swedish elections, Jimmy Dignam witnessed the disturbing emergence of far right anti-immigration sentiment in what until recently has been a country synonymous with social democracy.

The Sweden Democrats (SD) shocked many across Europe as they won 5.7 per cent of the national vote in the Swedish general election of September 19th, entitling them to 20 Parliamentary positions. The SD ran on a platform of opposition to immigration, heavily criticizing Islam and Muslims, and portrayed themselves as the party that defends elderly healthcare.

Much of the SD success can be attributed to the lack of alternative offered by the Left and in particular the traditionally working-class Social Democratic Party.

The SD started out in the late 1980s as an openly racist party, but have 'reformed' themselves into an 'immigrant-critical' organisation. The party has reneged on previous proposals to deport anyone who immigrated into the country since 1970, favouring instead incredibly harsh integration policies and much stricter punishment for immigrants found committing crimes, in a country where approximately one in five people have a foreign background.

Coupled with their new 'cleaner image', the right-wing media have resisted criticising the SD and in many cases have defended their

racist policies.

Historically, Sweden has followed a social-democratic model investing heavily in the welfare state, especially in the 1960s and 1970s. The Social Democratic Party has held office virtually continuously since its inception in 1889. Sweden has, on most social issues – housing, education and healthcare – has been one of Europe's most progressive societies.

However in the September election the Social Democrats recorded their worst result since 1914, only narrowly holding their position as the country's biggest party. Even though the Social Democrats claim to still represent the working class, many people have become disillusioned with their increasing shift towards neo-liberal policies.

In the lead-up to the election, the Establishment parties divided themselves into the Red/Green Alliance and Blue Alliance, neither offering any kind of genuine alternative to the 8% unemployed or policies to counter an impending housing bubble collapse. The SD, on the other hand, proposed a very simple solution to very difficult questions. They appealed to many disillusioned voters facing increasing economic uncertainty.

“The day after the election, 20,000 people demonstrated against the SD on the streets of Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö.”

Per-Åke Westerlund, the Chairman of Sweden's Socialist Justice Party, summed it up when he stated, "I think that the most important thing is the insecurity about the future for more and more people. There is an increasing gap between rich and poor, increased inequality, and there has been no real anti-racist reply against this racist party".

All the main parties took a stand against the SD, which probably increased their 'protest vote', but in no way organized against them or offered a viable solution to Sweden's economic problems. The Blue Alliance has managed to win a slim victory without gaining a majority. It appears now that they will rely on the SD to achieve that majority on certain issues in Government, as they have done repeatedly already in local councils across Sweden.

The day after the election, 20,000 people demonstrated against the SD on the streets of Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö. This shows the potential for a movement against the SD and racism. The principled Swedish Left is trying to build a strong anti-racist movement, uniting workers and young people regardless of their religion or ethnic background. The struggle needs to be based both on fighting against racism and simultaneously struggling for high quality jobs, education, health care and housing. Despite the SD's efforts to disguise themselves as the party defending the elderly against healthcare cuts, they voted in favour of them at local council level. It is up to the Swedish Left to now show it offers the only real alternative to the fear and uncertainty parties such as the SD prey upon.

23 **lookleft**

Ag Tochailt – ar do Cheirtlín Féin?

Nuala Ni Dhomhnaill

13 Deireadh Fómhair 2010: tugadh 33 fear a bhí sáinnithe thart ar 700 méadar thíos agus 5 cileaméadar ó bhéal mhianach copair San José in aice le Copiapó i Chile go leibhéal na talún slán tar éis 69 lá. Is ar an 5ú Lúnasa a tharla an timpiste.

16 Deireadh Fómhair 2010: Pléasc ag mianach Yuzhou i gCúige Henan, 430 míle ó dheas ó Beijing, 276 mianadóir faoi thalamh. D'éalaigh 239. 30 corp aimsithe faoin 18ú. 7 ar iarraidh.

Agus gliondar mhuintir na Sile agus briseadh croí na Síneach ag dul i bhfeidhm ar dhaoine, a bhuíochas cuid mhór de chumhacht na meán, tháinig dáta eile a bhain le cúrsaí mianadóireachta chun cuimhne. 21 Deireadh Fómhair 1966: Uafás Aberfan sa Bhreatain Bheag. Ghluais carnán dramhghuail faoi luas agus bhuail 120,000 méadar ciúbach smionagair baile beag Aberfan, í clúdaithe le draoib 40 troigh ar doimhneacht. Scriosadh tithe agus buaileadh Scoil Shóisearach Pantglas áit a raibh na gasúir ag dul ón halla go dtí na seomraí ranga ar an lá deireanach roimh an briseadh meántearma. Lónadh na seomraí le draoib 30 troigh ar airde.

Maraíodh 116 páiste agus 28 duine fásta. Ba pháistí idir a 7 agus a 10 bliana d'aois a bhfuirmhór – beagnach leath de líon iomlán na scoile. Féadtar crá croí na dtuismitheoirí a shamhailt agus iad ag tochailt lena lámha ag iarraidh páistí a thabhairt slán. Níor tugadh ach cupla páiste amach ón smionagar ina mbeatha. Baineann tubaistí mianaigh don chuid is mó, agus bhain i gcónaí, le saint agus cíocras na n-úinéirí agus a neamhsuim i gcúrsaí sábháilteachta. Neamhsuim freisin sna hoibrithe, idir fhir agus bhuachaillí, a thug faoin obair dainséarach sna mianaigh seo mar go gcaithfidís slí bheatha a bhaint amach.

Is é Lord Robens of Woldingham a bhí ina chathaoirleach ar an NCB ag an am – oifigeach sinsearach ceardchumann sna 1930adaí, agus ansin ina fheisire de chuid an Lucht Oibre ina dhiaidh sin. Ní dheachaidh sé láithreach go dtí ionad na tubaiste. Bhí sé á inshealbhú mar sheansailéir ar Ollscoil Surrey agus chuaigh sé chun cinn leis an searmanas agus níor thug aghaidh ar Aberfan go dtí an tráthnóna ina dhiaidh sin. Agus é sroichte thug sé preasagallamh á rá nach bhféadfaí a bheith tar éis aon cheo a dhéanamh le sciorradh an charnáin a chosc. Ach níos measa fós, ina dhiaidh sin dhiúltaigh sé airgead an Bhoird Ghuail a úsáid leis na carnáin eile os cionn Aberfan a thabhairt ar shiúl. Thóg sé suim mhór ó chiste

poiblí faoisimh na tubaiste le hóc as an obair sin, airgead a bhí dlíte do ghaolta na marbh agus dóibh siúd a gortaíodh nó a tháinig slán. Ach ag Binse Fiosraithe Davis ag deireadh na bliana sin, ar laethanta deiridh an fhiosraithe a mhair 76 lá, ghéill Sir Robens go raibh an locht ar an NCB. Chinn an Binse Fiosraithe go raibh an locht go huile agus go hiomlán ar an mBord Guail mar nach raibh aon pholasaí nó beartas dumpála acu. Íocadh £500 in aghaidh an pháiste leis na teaghlaigh. Níor gearradh aon phionós ar aon duine sa Bhord Guail faoinar tharla. Thairg Robens éirí as ach níor glacadh lena thairscint. Ba í an tuairim oifigiúil go raibh ag éirí le Robens tionscal an ghuaile a chúngú gan stailceanna móra. Theastaigh sé mar gur oir sé don rialtas.

An tSile

Tá traidisiún fada mianadóireachta i Sile – bhí sí ar siúl ó lár na naoú aoise déag. Táirgeadh thart ar 19,000 tonna i 1810, an bhliain ar bhain an tSile neamhspleáchas amach. Bhí 51,803 tonna i gceist i 1869 agus í ar an táirgeoir ba mhó ar domhan. Tháinig forbairt mhór uirthi sa bhfichiú aois. Cheannaigh na Guggenheim sean mianach copair Chuquicamata i 1912 agus tháinig an Chile Exploration Company ar an saol. Tosaíodh ag tógáil i 1913 agus ag táirgeadh i 1915. Bhí 200,000 tonna á dtáirgeadh faoi 1937. Inniu is í Chuquicamata an mianach a chuir an méid is mó copair ar fáil ar domhan, thart ar 29 milliún tonna.

Cuireadh tús le próiseas an náisiúnaithe sna 1950adaí chun smacht éigin a chur ar chorparáidí ilnáisiúnta. Le linn don Uachtarán Eduardo Frei Montalva a bheith i gcumhacht i 1966 d'athraigh sé Oifig Chopair na tíre go dtí Corparáid Copair na Sile (Codelco) chun smacht an stáit ar thionscal an chopair a mhéadú. 1969 shínigh an tUachtarán conradh faoinar ghlac an tSile 51% de dhá mhórchuideachta mianadóireachta, agus an ceart go ndaingneodh Codelco díolachán idimnáisiúnta chopar na Sile. Bhí an próiseas seo ceaptha gan conspóid a chruthú leis na Stáit Aontaithe. Ní raibh lucht na heite clé sa tSile sásta leis seo agus bhí sé go mór i gceist le linn toghchán na hUachtaránachta. Nuair a toghadh Salvador Allende gheall sé go ndéanfaidh sé náisiúnú láithreach ar an tionscal, rud a rinne i 1971. Coinníodh mianaigh na Sile faoi smacht an Stáit fiú tar éis coup d'état Pinochet i 1973, mar ainneoin an seasamh a bhí ag Pinochet i leith na Stát Aontaithe déanann Codelco rannaíocht mhór le státchiste na Sile.

Is le cuideachta mianadóireachta San Esteban mianach San José – cuideachta bheag a bhfuil drochtheist sábháiltea-



chta uirthi. Idir 2004 agus 2010 gearradh 42 fineáil uirthi faoi rialacháin sábháilteachta a shárú. Dúnadh an mianach i 2007 nuair a chuir gaolta mianadóra a maraíodh an dlí ar fheidhmeannaigh na cuideachta ach osclaíodh arís é i 2008 cé nár chomhlíon sí na rialacháin go léir.

Tá mianadóirí copair na Sile ar na mianadóirí is airde pá i Meiriceá Theas – agus ainneoin a bhfuil ráite faoi easpa sábháilteachta i mianaigh sa tSile is annamh go mbíonn drochthimpiste iontu, go háirithe mianaigh ar le cuideachta mianadóireachta copair an Stáit, Codelco, nó cuideachtaí ilnáisiúnta iad. Ach bíonn na caighdeáin sábháilteachta níos ísle i mianaigh bheaga mar San José. Íocadh pá thart ar 20% níos airde le hoibrithe ansin ná mar a íocadh i mianaigh eile sa tSile de bharr a dhrochcháil sábháilteachta.

An tSín

Tá tionscal mianadóireachta na Síne ar an gceann is dáinséaraí ar domhan agus tá ceannairí na tíre tar éis iarracht mhór a dhéanamh le blianta beaga anuas chun an sábháilteacht a fheabhsú. D'ordaigh an Príomhaire Wen Jiabao an samhradh seo go gcaithfeadh ceannairí mianadóireachta dul isteach sna mianaigh in éineacht leis na hoibrithe – agus ón mhí seo amach gearrfar pionós dian orthu siúd nach ndéanann amhlaidh.

Tá roinnt mianach mídhleathach dúnta ag údarais na Síne le blianta beaga anuas, rud a d'fhág gur tháinig laghdú ar líon na ndaoine a maraíodh iontu, ach mhéadaigh siad arís ag tús na bliana seo. Tuairiscíodh ar an nuachtán People's Daily gur dhún Rialtas na Síne breis agus 1,600 mianach guail beaga i mbliana. Dar le staitisticí Rialtas na Síne féin faigheann 2,600 bás i dtimpistí mianaigh



chuire bhliain, ach is dóigh go bhfuil an fíor-fhigiúr i bhfad níos airde. Bhí an bhliain ba mheasa acu i 2002 nuair a maraíodh 6,995 i dtubaistí.

Tharla an tubaiste ba mheasa sa tSín in Aibreán 1942 nuair a maraíodh 1,549 mianadóir i mian-ach guail Honkeiko gar do Benxi i Manchuria.

Is sa bhFrainc a tharla an timpiste ba mheasa san Eoraip tráth ar maraíodh 1,099 mianadóir, páistí óga san áireamh, i Courrieres i 1906. Níor mhiste stair thubaisteach thionscal an ghuail agus na mianadóireachta go ginearálta a choimeád in aigne agus scéal mianadóirí San José á phlé. B'fhéidir go spreagfadh muid iarracht ar leith

i dtreo na sábháilteachta mar aon le héileamh go dtabharfaí éisteacht d'ionadaithe/do cheardchumainn na n-oibrithe féin.



Belfast rally against the cuts on 23rd October, which was organised by the Irish Congress of Trades Unions and attended by upwards of 15,000 people.

Obituary: Gerry McDonnell

Gerry McDonnell spent all of his adult life in The Workers' Party. He was a Marxist, not as some trendy tag but as one who had studied, who read the works of Marx and saw in Marxism a guide to action, a means to redress the injustices and oppression that he saw all around him. Gerry was well read; books and literature were a central part of his life. He had a keen interest in the arts, music, theatre and particularly film. He took great delight in sharing these passions with his friends and comrades. Any visitor to Gerry's home was likely to leave with some part of his massive collections of books, music and films for their enjoyment, as well as a

strongly expressed opinion on the state of Tottenham Hotspurs.

Gerry was no detached theoretician or academic, although his intellectual ability was not in doubt. He saw the need for action, he knew that a better world would not come about of itself but would have to be fought for. That's what made him a Leninist, one who understood the need for a Party of the working class.

Much has been written about The Workers' Party's transition from a narrow nationalistic and militarist organisation to a modern democratic socialist Party. Gerry was totally conscious of the necessity of this transition and played a central role in bringing it about, both in his work within the Belfast party and crucially in the role he played in bringing into being the Irish Democratic Youth Movement later

to become Workers Party Youth. His talents as an educator played a major role in shaping the political consciousness of generations of Workers' Party members.

He was among those who had the foresight to recognise the futility of militarism and the cul de sac of sectarianism that it led to. He had a lot of time for young people, for he shared their idealism and ambition for a different and better world. He saw young people as the future. It was the future that he looked to: after all that was the whole point of his political involvement. He had no time for those who wanted to relive a mythical and discredited past, one dominated by what he called "a ghetto mentality."

He was also an Internationalist, and alongside his great friend and comrade the late Seán Ó Connaith, he played an important role in the Party's International Department, and was active in support of the ANC in South Africa, the PLO, the miners in Britain and countless other struggles around the world, with the defence of the Cuban Revolution a cause close to his heart.

A devoted husband and father, and a staunch and loyal socialist who dedicated his life to class politics, Gerry will be sorely missed by his family and his comrades in The Workers' Party.

Obituary: Margaret Hetherington

During her 88 years Margaret's commitment to the struggle for social justice saw her join the battle against the Nazis as well as tirelessly campaigning with The Workers' Party to build a better Ireland.

Margaret was born and reared in Barretts Buildings on the Northside of Cork City. Still in her teens, she left Cork for Belfast to join the Women's Royal Air Corps to help the fight against the Nazis in World War Two. After time as an anti-aircraft gunner, she became the first female dispatch rider in the British Army. Her commitment and expertise saw her recruited to undertake the

History is not made by the great but by those who do great things not for fame but due to strong personal beliefs; Margaret Hetherington was one such person, writes John Bowen.

dangerous task of fighting behind enemy lines in France with the Resistance Movement there. Towards the end of the war Margaret became an army staff driver for senior officers. After the war, with high unemployment in Ireland, Margaret emigrated to Canada and the U.S., working in hotels and restaurants, a career she continued on her return to Cork, right up to her retirement.

Margaret's strong opposition to injustice led her to socialism, and in the early 1980's she joined The Workers' Party, believing that it was the party best equipped, in terms of ideology and organization, to lead a transformation of Irish society. She remained an active

member of WP's Cork North Central Branch for over ten years.

Margaret was also a member of the Ireland – USSR Society and visited the Soviet Union on a number of occasions. She also visited Cuba and was a strong supporter of the Cuban Revolution and its leader Fidel Castro.

Margaret did not see her dream of a society where human need is put before greed and selfishness achieved. This was not for the lack of endeavour on her part. We need more like her to achieve this.

Died Friday 9/7/10

Reviews

Humanzi, Workman's Club October 2

Brian Morrissey

In another era Humanzi would have by this stage in their career been far beyond playing a venue the size of 'The Workingman's Club'. It is hard to think of another Irish band in recent times that could touch these boys when it comes to great rock'n'roll songs. From their first album alone *Out On a Wire* and *Fix the Cracks* will go down as genuine classics.

But this night was about the moment, not the past of 'what have been's', or the future which is uncertain given front man Shaun Mulrooney's

declaration, "We don't know if this is the last song we'll ever play together or not", before finishing a rocky set with *Get Your Shit Together*.

The venue's intimate feeling is priceless in terms of live music. There was sweat, spilt beer, broken glass and an atmosphere, a real rock'n'roll atmosphere.

The set took songs from their two albums *Tremors* and most recently *Kingdom of Ghosts*, and also a few new surprises, which suggests fans can live in hope that we may see them again. The night was summed up by the stage invasion for the last song with the band handing mic duty to the delirious fans.

Damien Dempsey, Workman's Club September 15

Donal Fallon

Before launching into a set spanning his career from debut album *They Don't Teach This Shit In School* to his next release, Damien Dempsey began his *Workman's Club* debut by inviting a young piper on stage. As we were told, this venue has seen some impressive traditional music sets in its previous life, and it was a touching mark of respect to the actual workers' club that once stood at Wellington Quay.

Any Dempsey gig goes much like this. The crowd sing every word back to him. 'Colony' which deals with international imperialism, receives a rousing reception. Dempsey introduces the song by telling the audience their gripes are with the ruling

class, and the ruling class alone. 'You'll never kill our will to be free', the crowd continue to sing, after the song's end.

In another song Dempsey pays homage to socialist leader James Connolly - "Tell him that it wasn't in vain. He made us strong, for the fight against wrong. A dream that strong can never be slain."

There is a positive message at the core of his music, themes from drug addiction to lost romance are challenged with an attitude that makes it clear a better future is possible for Dublin and her youth. "Change yourself, but to begin" they sing in union, and even after the concert stretches well over its proposed ending time they scream for more, before a satisfied bus ride home.

Dole TV

Sam McGrath

Dublin Community Television (DCTV), the co-operatively run socially-aware television station, has launched a new series called *Dole TV* aimed at the "unemployed, frustrated and bored", and those who are "sick of how the state, employers and media are framing the recession". It's about time someone has stepped up to provide a media outlook for the angry and dispossessed.

The first episode, which runs at just over 20 minutes, contains an interview with Sam Nolan (Trade Unionist) who was involved in the unemployed workers movement in the 1950s, a music video from Dublin hip-hop outfit *Street Literature*, and a comedy skit about Brian Cowen's drinking habits.

The second instalment includes more hip hop, this time from *Lunitic* (who sadly passed away last year) and a

fitting acoustic song from Paul O'Toole. There are also reports from protests on the cutting of Community Development Programme funding and a hilarious interview with TDs in the immediate aftermath of 'CementGate', when frustrated property developer Joe McNamara parked a cement truck outside the gates of Leinster House.

The third episode showcased a talk from David Brown (South West Inner City Local Employment Centre), Dublin hip-hop from *Terawrizt* and traditional music from Mark O'Toole.

Dole TV's producers don't want their audience to play a passive role in the production of the series, and have put out an appeal to all "talented video editors, graphic artists, writers, music producers" to send in their media and ideas into the show. You can reach the show via doletv@dctv.ie

Policing Dialogues

Barry Healy

The stories of young people's experiences and attitudes toward the Gardaí was at the heart of the 'Policing Dialogues' exhibition by the 'What's The Story? Collective' which recently completed a six week residency at The LAB gallery in Dublin.

Following an extensive programme of workshops, dialogues and meetings, varieties of stories from young people in Dublin's Rialto, aged 16 to 21, were collected to feature in the *Policing Dialogues* project. They recount recurring feelings of harassment, victimisation, isolation and an overwhelming sense of powerlessness toward the guards.

By far the most interesting part of the exhibition is the inclusion of a film 'The Day In Question' in which Gardaí themselves read out some of the young people's testimonies about the actions of some of their colleagues. These include harrowing stories of strip searches, raids on family homes and threats by Gardaí, leaving some guards genuinely moved.

While the accounts are anonymous this is far from an exercise in Garda 'bashing', they are personal, insightful and thought provoking. Many may dispel this projects findings but brushing things under the carpet has never gotten this country anywhere. Shocking as it may be for some this is the reality of how many young people view the police and furthermore these feelings of alienation, distrust and presumption of guilt by the Gardaí are most likely to be found with young working class people the length and breadth of Ireland.

There is genuine concern conveyed by numerous accounts that the Gardaí's attitude and approach is having a detrimental effect on their communities, allowing real crime such as drugs to flourish wreaking havoc in their areas.

This feedback collected from inner city families as part of this arts project will apparently be used to inform future Garda and community relations in the long run. On the evidence of this project it's not before time and it may take a huge effort on both sides to overcome these obstacles.

For more details see:

www.section8.ie



Blue Ireland?

Ireland has few enough indigenous enterprises but does the country really need its own porn industry, wonders Annajoy O’Gorman.

A new magazine was launched in Ireland this summer, Ireland’s only totally Irish-run pornography magazine, Blue Ireland. Edited by Wexford woman Ami O’Brien, the rather poorly produced magazine aims to bring the ‘the girl next door, (to) your store’.

In interviews O’Brien defends the publication, frequently asserting that Ireland had, in her words ‘grown up a lot’, and is ready for Blue Ireland. But with Playboy on the Republic’s shelves since 1996 along with countless UK and other US titles readily available in newsagents, was there really a need for another publication like this?

Pornography is a tricky issue. O’Brien has claimed in all her interviews that the models featured in the magazine are there by choice and enjoy what they do. In an interview on TV3’s morning show, O’Brien appeared with one of the women who had taken part in the first issue. The woman in question claimed that her particular body type and look would not be considered for other types of magazines, as she had several tattoos and piercings. She seemed totally comfortable with the photographs and said that she had really enjoyed the experience.

As a fully signed-up feminist, I am conflicted on the issue of pornography. Blue Ireland is to all appearances a sound venture, the models taking part have said they enjoyed the experience, and it would be hard to complain about a magazine that seeks to give a voice to an apparently thriving sub-culture. But does pornography have a negative effect on women? I have wrestled with this question several times.

It is easy to simply say that there is good porn and bad porn. Good porn is like that of Blue Ireland, willingly created by people with, it appears, a healthy attitude to sex and what turns them on, for the pleasure of others. Bad porn is where women (mostly) are coerced into doing something they don’t want to and are debased and abused for the sadistic pleasure of others. The majority of unregulated porn on the internet, it is important to remember, is made with women who are not even free; they are commonly bought and sold by the makers of these films.

Today pornography is infinitely available. The internet has provided a free point of access to unlimited amounts of the stuff. The pornog-

“**The women who take part do so in such a way that almost universally courts the male gaze**”



raphy industry generates massive profits each year. In 2003 the sex industry, including adult films, magazines and websites grossed an estimated \$34 Billion world wide and in excess of \$8 Billion in the USA alone.

These are huge figures and one can only assume they have increased since this study was released. But the regulated industry has seen a recent decline due to piracy and the simple difficulty in trying to compete with the amateur porn business, which has found its natural home on the web.

As someone who has grown up in the age where internet access was a given rather the exception, I can’t really imagine a reality where people don’t see sex for the first time on the internet. Countless studies have been carried out on my generation to try to figure

out what exposure to pornography has done to our minds and whether it has had lasting effects. I argue that it does, and that it is women who suffer as a result.

The fact is that pornography is overwhelmingly made for male consumption; the women who take part do so in such a way that almost universally courts the male gaze, and the masculine ideal of sexuality. And Blue Ireland is no exception, despite O’Brien’s claims to the contrary. Its first issue featured a woman on the cover in clichéd school-girl garb – I don’t think I am out of line in suggesting that most women are not turned on by school girls.

The success of this magazine is yet to be seen; the second issue is on shelves at the moment. The debate over the problematic nature of such publications is not over yet and hopefully will continue to be hammered out in public for as long as necessary.



Revolutionary Stomp - Backstage with Alabama 3

Preaching the gospel of revolution to a backing track of stomping acid house techno and melancholy country music while fighting for those wrongly accused, Francis Donohoe steps into the righteous world of Alabama 3.

They're not from Alabama, and the band numbers well more than three but that's the type of contradictions that the globe's leading practitioners of acid house gospel thrive on. Here's another, Alabama 3's most famous tune - Woke Up This Morning - the theme to the Sopranos has become synonymous with the machismo gun culture of the hit TV series. But the song is actually an ode to a particular type of female empowerment, being inspired by the case of Sara Thornton who killed a husband she accused of years of violent abuse.

Alabama 3 came together in the mid 1990s when founding duo Rob Spragg and Jake Black decided a fusion of country and dance music was just what was needed to reboot an increasingly commercialized dance music scene.

When LookLeft caught up with the lads prior to their October concert in Dublin's tripod venue we were half expecting to meet the two southern drawl hipsters - Larry Love and The Very Reverend Dr. D. Wayne Love - who front the Alabama 3 posse on stage.

Instead we met the men behind the personas, whose upbringings in tight knit working class communities in the Glasgow docklands and pit towns of south Wales continues to define their world view and as Rob makes clear, in his energetic Welsh twang, their music.

"The energy we very much pick up on was the acid house warehouse scene which was about young people collectivizing around a sound system in disused industrial buildings, it was post capitalism, futurist...for a brief time, before it got re-appropriated by the mainstream established dance music industry, and it was for a period quite a radical movement."

It certainly was seen as a threat by the British Conservative government who introduced a 1994 Public Order Bill specifically aimed at banning open air events which featured music with "repetitive beats".

If marrying radical politics and dance music makes sense, for Alabama 3 so did the blending of an "acid house stomp and a country stomp."

"I'm the son of preacher whose father was a miner, Jake's father worked in the docks, it was part of our culture, you would go down to the pub and hear country music. It was a transferred genre, Miners pretending they were cowboys, it was ridiculous, but there was a community feel about it", Rob explains

As Jake puts it "every time you stuck yer heid round the pub door looking for yer ma and da there was somebody up the corner with keyboard and cowboy hat singing a country and western song, I'm I right or I'm a right?"

The father Jake would search the pubs for was a senior figure in the Communist Party of Scotland. Jake's own form of "teenage rebellion" saw him join the Trotskyite Militant tendency, but his father's non-sectarian Left politics inform his own.

"My da was in the CP all his life, he had a thing he used to say, we sit in the pub and argue with the SWP, we argue with the trots we argue with this we argue with that, the bosses don't they are 25 years down the road."

Anger is still evident when the Glaswegian describes the destruction of the self confident working class community he grew up in. He places emphasis on the 1984 Miners Strike, during which he served as a flying picket backing up striking workers across Britain, as the culmination of a worked out establishment agenda.

"What we saw was the manufacturing base being decimated and nothing replacing it. In the early seventies when we had the three day week and that, we put them back (Tory Prime Minister Edward) Heath resigned in '74, but they came back in '84. By that time they had ten years over us."

"They had made deals to buy coal elsewhere, they did it with this American business man Ian MacGregor, Thatcher's advisor, who all of a sudden became heid of the national coal board and he's there to get Mr Scargill and the rest of the union leadership. They were successful in '84."

Rob saw the destruction of the mining industry first hand, and with the end of these jobs "the valleys



Jake Black, Sean Garland and Rob Spragg on stage in Dublin

“”
The band came together in the Brixton area of south London which according to Rob Spragg "was basically run by the Jamaicans and the Irish... pubs with all the fucking Celtic supporters in one room singing rebel songs and all the Rastas in another smoking dope."

filled with smack." Jake, who witnessed the emergence of similar problems in Glasgow, believes it was more than coincidence that working class communities were now under attack from many fronts - "these were systematic moves... drugs became epidemic as the manufacturing base was being decimated and working class institutions were also being eaten away at. That isn't some daft conspiracy theory, I've always agreed with Gramsci when he says what is a conspiracy? A conspiracy is what you call incorporation and mediation, people incorporate and group and then take on somebody else's business, they send in middle men who mediate then take the assets and destroy them and subsume the company," Jake sees such systems in play in the decline of the organized working class.

Alabama 3 have committed themselves to doing what they can to see their class reorganised currently playing a series of concerts in conjunction with Bob Crowe's RMT union. As Jake puts it "We try everyday to make people aware it's no a daft idea tae benefit from the sweat of your labour, it's no a daft idea to have a minimum wage, it's no a daft idea to have a manufacturing base, it's no a daft idea to have a 35 hour week."

Rob believes that the Left must also change "I'm not sure if we'll ever return to a manufacturing base and that kind of solid constituency were you can mobilise support, but I think what's interesting is that young kids might not be organising necessarily around what



was formally the work place but what is happening now is organising on a lot more global level.”

“If you look at the G8, G20 protest people are using the internet to organise around a collection to micro causes, how do you harness that? It’s very difficult if you’re used to traditional ways I think young people need an approach to what you could call Marxism or whatever to see socialism remains a fucking option. Everybody wants to shoot the banker now and I think it is imperative to the left to find some language or means by which you can harness that attitude and organise it.”

Jake concurs that young people may not find socialism the same way as his generation did “reading Marx, Lenin, Trotsky”, a version of one of the later’s famous maxims “if you can’t familiarise a man with the rationale of dialectic materialism, familiarise his head with the pavement,” he especially treasures.

“They might not find socialism through that but they might find ideas about monetarism and other things other ways, it is up to people that understand socialism to take that mantle and explain it.”

But the Alabama 3 are not about forcing messages on their audience, rather it’s backdrops of Lenin on a mobile phone, or samples of political speeches by which they promote their message, “the politics of seduction” as Rob terms it.

“There is no point standing up on your soap box at a gig and telling them about dialectical materialism you get their arses moving on the dance floor and then perhaps at the end of the night they’ll be asking who was Mao se Tung, why are they on about the Tendency and Chomsky. Ultimately our only agenda is to tune in these micro communities of dissent on to it if they want to.”

Although Jake is confident “We are seeing the death throes of monetarism,” the lads except that pessimism can still overshadow the Left, as Rob points out “on a Tuesday after a hard weekend you can nearly feel like a Tory.”

Before going on stage for a rapturous set, during which the band is joined by Sean Garland whose campaign against extradition they support, we end the interview with the lads posing a couple of their own questions.

Rob feeling that the form of resistance pursued in earlier decades will not return – “but what are the next clothes of resistance we are going to wear?”

Jake believes that; “there is still enough there to build a new broad left, we don’t know what the answers are but we’re trying to find them.”

Review: The Wounded Platoon (Documentary, US, 2010)

Ultan Gillen

“It’s Just Another Dead Hadji”.

The Wounded Platoon traces the effects of the war in Iraq on a group of American soldiers based at Fort Carson, Colorado. It tells the story of the 42 men of the 3rd Platoon, Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 506th Infantry, during their time in Iraq and back in the United States. During World War II, the 506th Infantry included the troops whose stories are told in the TV series Band of Brothers.

The film-makers chose this platoon not for the resonance with the Band of Brothers but because after their return to Colorado, 3 soldiers from the platoon murdered another soldier. The murder formed one part of a larger crime spree. Other returned soldiers from the platoon have been jailed for lesser crimes or have tried to commit suicide. In the last five years, 36 soldiers from Fort Carson have committed suicide, while 14 have been convicted of or charged with 13 murders and manslaughters. The documentary explores the effects of the war and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) on the cannon-fodder of the imperialist adventure in Iraq.

Although the documentary is focused on US soldiers, it does not shirk the fact that those whose story it is telling are themselves responsible for murder and

other crimes committed against Iraqi civilians. The soldiers themselves confess to killing civilians, although only some acknowledge these as murder. One soldier, although denying murdering civilians, admitted that a dead Iraqi civilian meant nothing to him “because to us they’re all guilty ... they’re not humans, that’s how you look at them”. Another confessed that “we’d open up on anything”, and described how the soldiers kept scores of those they killed. Unsurprisingly, the US army said it could find no evidence for any murders committed by the platoon.

The film reveals some of the reasons for the attitude of the troops towards Iraqi civilians. By the time of the military “surge” in 2007, 20,000 US troops in Iraq and Afghanistan were prescribed powerful antidepressants and sleeping tablets such as Ambien and Seroquel, with side effects such as rage and lowered inhibitions. The film also describes how a desperate US military recruited criminals and people with substance abuse problems, and broke its own rules in keeping on active duty soldiers who were drug-dependent, diagnosed with serious PTSD, or charged with serious crimes. The soldiers lacked any respect for the Iraqi people, as their own words make clear. Their lives and deaths meant

nothing to them.

This documentary shows imperialism at its most arrogant and cruel. Its foot-soldiers are taught to despise those who they come into contact with, and to regard their lives as worthless. They are in turn abandoned by their own leadership. The documentary reminds us that Iraqi civilians suffer the most, but also that in the pursuit of its goals, imperialism robs its own soldiers of their humanity. It should be seen by all those interested in the war in Iraq.

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Barry Healy

Max Tannone –
Dub Kweli

New York producer ‘Max Tannone’ has returned with another spell binding mash-up album, Dub Kweli. The brainchild of Jaydiohead and Mos Dub, mashing Talib Kweli’s intelligent and insightful political lyrics over the feel good vibes and rhythms of old school reggae and dub cuts.

<http://www.dubkweli.com/>

We Are Losers EP

‘We Are Losers’ is the latest side project from Super Extra Bonus Party guitarist Gavin Elsted. It’s a big shift from the Kildare natives Bonus Party duties, absorbing, warm, scuzzy indie designed to paste smiles on faces.

<http://growuptobelosers.bandcamp.com/>

Captain Moonlight –
Agroculture Trilogy

Kilkenny’s Captain Moonlight is without doubt Ireland’s premier purveyor of hip-hop and has just made his exceptional Agroculture Trilogy available for free. He’s one of the few musicians willing to speak his mind on serious and controversial political issues while producing intelligent, honest, hard-hitting, often humorous hip-hop.

<http://growuptobelosers.bandcamp.com/>

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Chasing the Dream

For decades youngsters have chased the dream of professional football success in Britain, but would it be better for them – and the development of Irish football – if there was greater regulation at home, **Frankie Lally** reports.

Every year many youths travel to Britain with hopes and dreams of making it as a professional footballer – very few actually do, and many are instead left without an education or a job.

There have been many success stories too. Big-name players like Shay Given, Richard Dunne, Damien Duff and Robbie Keane did go across the Irish Sea at a relatively young age and make the grade in one of the toughest and most demanding leagues in the world.

But why were these players forced to go abroad so young? Surely it would be beneficial to all – the player, his family and the FAI and IFA – if these top quality players stayed at home longer. They could develop an education and help to progress their domestic leagues at the same time, but sadly this isn't the case. Bohemians manager, Pat Fenlon, one of the most successful managers in Irish football history, has been managing for eight years in the League of Ireland and every year he faces a struggle to hold onto the young players who haven't already packed up and left for Britain. Despite the lure of a professional contract in their home country and a decent wage, some players see it as a failure if they can't make it in Britain.

"The problem here is that we don't have anything to offer them for a full-time set-up in Ireland," explained Fenlon. "We do have FÁS courses but I don't think they're the way forward. We have lost a fair few out of the game, if you look at John Paul Kelly for example [former Liverpool under-17 captain, Bohemians and Drogheda United player], he's just gone out of the game.

"I think they [FAI] have to look at whether whatever money is being allocated to FÁS courses should be allocated to League of Ireland teams. I know we had it before and it was abused by the clubs, but that can't be allowed happen again. I think there should be a structure put in place where the players are coached, and not just coached but where they can learn about life too. The FAI can oversee that. I think that is the way forward."

Fenlon also believes the people in charge at the FAI are perhaps not the people who should be overseeing the decisions made on youth football. The 41-year-old thinks money allocated by the FAI should

be geared towards players who are in the youth set-up at Irish clubs.

"The problem we're having is that we're losing players at the ages of 15 and 16. I think it needs to be looked at. The problem I have with the people making these decisions is that they're not football people, they probably work in an office. They need to involve football people in these decisions.

"You're not going to stop them all but if you can stop the majority from going abroad then we're going to make our own league better because we'll have better players. Off the pitch and on the pitch it would help the players with their education and in growing up basically."

Perhaps what is most startling about the exodus of young players to Britain is how this is seen as the norm. Rather than spending a couple of years in Ireland, players feel they must pack up and leave home to make it as a professional.

This was certainly the case for Karl Sheppard, who left his Portmarnock home at the age of 16 to link-up with Everton, but he soon found out life in England was not what he had expected it to be. Things like homesickness and pressures from the academy coaches all hampered the young Dubliner's progress. The striker also found it difficult to settle in and to make friends with his peers – he felt the English players saw Irish and indeed other foreign players as competition for their places.

Sheppard is currently taking the League of Ireland by storm with his performances for Galway United this season, but like many others who went abroad at such a young age, he came close to quitting the game.

"I didn't really settle in well," he admitted. "I think 16 is too young to go over. I think there should be some sort of rules brought in where you have to be at least 17 or 18 because at 16 you're still only a kid. When you're 16 you haven't fully developed yet both mentally and physically but when you're 18 I think you know a bit more about life.

"I don't think anything can prepare you for properly leaving home at that age. When you're over there, there are a lot of things which don't help you settle in. Even trying to make friends with the lads that had already been at the academy for years is hard, because they already



Carlsberg don't do FAI CEOs, but if they did...

have their cliques set in, and if you're trying to come in and take their place I don't think it really settles well with people. I think things like that can go against foreign people going over to England to play.

"A month or two before I came to Ireland I was looking at it going 'there's nothing going for me at the moment and I'm stuck over here – should I just pack it in altogether?' Thankfully then the Irish season started and Sean [Connor, the Galway United manager] got in contact with me so I came over here. There are a lot of people that come back and then you don't really hear about them. They don't have the love of the game any more and I was almost close to quitting myself.

"Failure over there is really a crushing thing because you think your whole world is over and unless a player is guaranteed to go over and go straight into a first-team, I think the people in charge should have a look at it. Players should be advised to stay in Ireland," he said.

The FAI have begun to make moves to try and restructure the youth set-up but when the Chief Executive Officer of the association, John Delaney, concedes that the best players "will always go abroad", it's hard to see any real changes in the near future or a fight to hold onto these players. Our players will continue to be exported to Britain and the responsibility of developing these players for the international sides will simply be passed on.

Speaking at the launch of the League

Failure over there is really a crushing thing because you think your whole world is over



of Ireland season some eight months ago, Delaney had this to say on the matter of young Irish players continually going abroad: "I think the best players will always go abroad. The likes of Damien Duff, Robbie Keane, Richard Dunne and Shay Given will always go and play for the bigger teams in England. That's their natural habitat and that's the way it's always been."

Delaney did give some hope for the future though, explaining how the Emerging Talent programme is being implemented across the country. The programme, which aims to provide players with the opportunity to train within their own area in a more structured environment as well as to provide a higher quantity and quality of players for domestic and international teams, could prove to be a major step en route to fixing youth football in this country but the results are yet to be seen.

The FAI boss explained, "What I would like is for players to stay for a longer period of time in Ireland and get a proper education. We have the Emerging Talent programme where we have development squads around the country, not only in the leagues but in the regions – the best playing against the best. We're providing an under-age structure and hopefully an under-19 league so the best players can stay playing with their League club and go then play in England or Scotland if that's what they choose to do," he explained.

The FAI also introduced a welfare officer in November 2008 to

aid young Irish players playing in Britain.

Former Stoke City and Republic of Ireland player Terry Conroy was handed the role. Still based in Stoke-on-Trent in England, Conroy spends his days visiting young Irish footballers around Britain. He has dealt with over 80 young players since his appointment in 2008, most of the players ranging from the ages of 16-18.

Conroy, who has over 300 appearances for Stoke also signalled homesickness as one of the major problems Irish players face when going abroad, but does insist clubs in the UK have recognised this and have made steps to try and rectify it, but he still insists that players are almost forced to move young if they wish to make it in England. "Well let's say a young player said 'I'm not going to go until I'm 18' well then he may miss out on playing professionally. At 18 the club that was interested in him at 16 may not be interested any more. That stretch of water, the Irish Sea, between themselves and home is a huge barrier. Whereas you get kids over here who live down south and go to the very north of England and yet they don't feel as isolated yet they're probably living further away. "They make allowances for youngsters to go home. It could be every six weeks and at some clubs

it could be every two months so there is an awareness there from the clubs. 95% of youngsters who go abroad will feel that pang of homesickness. It's overcoming taking on training, a new culture, new accommodation – whether it be digs or hostel-type accommodation which some clubs have."

Just like Sheppard, Conroy believes the best way forward would be if players did not leave until they were at least 18-years-old. "Ideally I would say and if I had my way and was a supremo heading youth football in Ireland, I would make sure they didn't leave home until they were 18. They would be much more mature, developed and sensible," he insisted.

However, despite the guidance players receive while in England, it seems very little is actually given to players still in Ireland who are pondering moves to British clubs. Ray McCann, who manages one of Dublin's most famous nursery sides, Belvedere, believes it is very hard to advise a seventeen-year-old not to follow his dream and go abroad.

"Well over the last four years I've seen about one or to go over every year. I can't really cross that line of telling a player not to go. I'd give them what advice I can but that decision really has to be between them and their parents."



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Hard Working Class Heroes 2010

The 'Hard Working Class Heroes' festival (HWCH) has become an important fixture on the Irish music calendar in recent years, showcasing the talents of over 100 emerging bands and artists from across Ireland. This year's festival took place October 7th – 9th across a variety of venues in Dublin City; The Button Factory, The Mercantile, The Grand Social, The Sweeney, Twisted Pepper and The Workmans Club.

Barry Healy

Interestingly this year saw the inclusion of 'HWCH and the City', a selection of free gigs in locations across Dublin bringing the music out from its comfort zone to the people of the city. There was also the 'HWCH Industry Conference 2010' aimed at challenging and engaging with people about the future of music in Ireland. These were just little added bonuses; it was all about the evening shows. Thursday's proceedings kicked off with a hotly anticipated show in Twisted Pepper from Irish/Swedish duo Kill Krinkle Club but unfortunately something was awry. The show failed to transfer the nuances of their excellent debut record to a live setting. The underwhelming performance wasn't helped by the subdued crowd and disjointed stop start nature of their set. There's certainly talent here, the album is testament too this, if they can iron out those live show wrinkles they may be a force to be reckoned with.

There was a major shift in tact following a short walk to the Grand Social where Enemies blasted out their smashing post-rock, jumping from melodic meandering to climactic rocking crescendos. It was much the same for Richter label mates Jogging whose blisteringly set of raw punk rock was hugely impressive, it's easy to how they've steadily garnered a fan base around Ireland based on word of mouth. The evening was brought to a close by Nouveaunoise whose slick, lush and infectious electro beats had the place dancing.

Friday and it was back to Twisted Pepper for Derry native Conor Mason, armed with only his guitar, harmonica and distinctive vocals. A lucky crowd was treated to some beautifully, harmonic and uplifting songs. Hopefully the next time he travels from the maiden city to Dublin more people can be treated to his music.

The Lost Brothers, Mark McCaus

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land and Oisín Leech with added assistance of a double bass player endeared themselves to a hushed and respectful crowd. It was an intimate set of meticulously crafted, plucky acoustic songs with gorgeous vocal harmonies – they aren't going to break new musical bounds but they've perfected what is a timeless sound.

One of the largest crowd of the festival was congregated in the Button Factory for Multi-instrumentalist R.S.A.G (AKA Jeremy Hickey). The Kilkenny man is one of the most unique and compelling live performers in the country. Nestled safely behind his drum kit and silhouetted on a stage engulfed in smoke he pounded out rhythmic and funky beats, a one man band somewhere between Talking Heads and Joy Division. The frenetic set went down a treat and was helped in no small by some of the most impressive visual you're likely to see.

Saturday and it was straight to the recently opened Workman's Club for We Are Losers, the latest side project from Super Extra Bonus Party guitarist Gavin Elsted. As the gig progressed it was hard to believe this was actually their first gig together as they grew in confidence with each passing moment bashing out warm, scuzzy lo-fi. On this evidence the future is bright, watch this space.

With just enough time to grab your breathe and it was over to the Mercantile for Kid Karate. These guys make one hell of a racket for a guitar/drums duo, their rather special blend of Rapture-esque disco-punk meets the gruffness of Arctic Monkeys and The White Stripes went down a storm. It was a performance full of energy, intensity and conviction which finished up with the frontman in the crowd while two happy punters were recruited to aid drumming duties. Audience participation how are you? One of the most exciting prospects to emerge from this year's HWCH.

The line-up was a formidable mix of emerging talents from across Ireland. Certainly on the weekend's offerings the Irish music scene is alive and well and probably hasn't ever seen such an eclectic mix of styles, genres and tastes. While economic prospects may look bleak, the future of Irish music looks decidedly brighter.

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