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Time for change!

Many people in Ireland yearn for a change of government, to one that would govern in the people's interests and not renege on electoral promises once they enter Dáil Éireann. A noble dream it may be, but how real is it asks Jimmy Doran? *Page 2*

2018 is the 200th anniversary of the birth of Karl Marx

"The essential condition for the existence, and for the sway of the bourgeois class, is the formation and augmentation of capital; the condition for capital is wage-labour. Wage-labour rests exclusively on competition between the labourers. The advance of industry, whose involuntary promoter is the bourgeoisie, replaces the isolation of the labourers, due to competition, by their revolutionary combination, due to association. The development of modern industry, therefore, cuts from under its feet the very foundation on which the bourgeoisie produces and appropriates products. What the bourgeoisie therefore produces, above all, are its own grave diggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable."
Karl Marx *The Communist Manifesto*

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CLASS STRUGGLE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

LET'S BRIEFLY look at the Right2Water campaign. The Communist Party of Ireland recognised from the start that the class element of the water question was *ownership*—not water charges. It would be the ownership of that resource that would challenge capitalism.

It was the largest mobilisation of citizens for many years against a government policy, it was well supported, and eventually forced the issue onto the floor of Dáil Éireann. Alas, once there it became lost in the swamp of the committees and internal investigations that dog every progressive policy that finds its way there—as is intended. That is the system.

What are the results and findings of these committees of investigation? Sadly, it's not what we wanted and fought so hard for. *There will be no referendum on ownership,* water charges will be brought in through the back door by means of "excess usage charges," and Irish Water is still intact.

So when the Government gets more confident and regroups it will continue on its neo-liberal journey, free to sell off Irish Water to big business at a time of its choosing. This is how our democracy works.

What are we to learn from this "victory" on water? We should learn who our democracy works for. Is it for the people or those those who sponsor and control it—i.e. big business? If we use water as an example, the answer is quite clear; and now is the time for change, and it is time to change this failed system.

Does this mean that if we change the make-up of Dáil Éireann, i.e. the parties, and have a working progressive left government, things will change in the interest of the common good? Should that be our aim? Would this, or could this, lead to any real change?

I think not. Since the foundation of the state almost a hundred years ago we have had various arrangements in the Dáil, but all had one thing in common. This remains today, whoever they are: the establishment parties, Sinn Féin, the Green Party—from the left, the right or the centre, apart from a tiny minority of candidates, they all want to maintain capitalism, not to smash it.

And the people who vote for them are largely of the same belief. They may talk of change, wish for change, dream of change, even vote for change, but deep down they want the system to remain the same, if a little bit fairer. But there is no such thing as a nicer, fairer capitalism, as its foundation is greed and profit.

Our task is to change that outlook. It's not reforms that are needed, it's real, qualitative and transformative change for our citizens, which will empower them, not quantitative changes, which will make things easier while the balance of forces remains unchanged.

The battle over water is for *ownership,* not how we pay for it. With housing it is all about ownership too. The CPI has continually and consistently called for public ownership of housing: public housing, built by the state for our citizens, available to rent by them if they so desire, just as the state should provide public health, education, transport etc. as a right to all citizens.

Many groups on the left have been convinced by the "cost-rental model" for public housing, which is liberal capitalism's answer on how to water down the demand for public housing and allow it to compete with the market, rather than challenge the market to its very core by bringing into state ownership the provision and building of homes for all citizens.

We don't look at public health or education and ask how they should be self-financing from day to day. They are self-financing in the effects they have on our society, by looking after the health requirements and educational needs of our citizens so as to allow them to fill a productive role in their life and reach their full potential. Why should housing be any different?

Such a policy, by providing safe, secure homes for all citizens, will remove the effects of substandard homes and the precarious nature and uncertainty of private rented accommodation that is the reality of today. This, along with the extra money in people's pockets, now free from the strangulation of property debt, will benefit civil society immensely.

The challenge is to change the prevailing view on the manner of housing our citizens: to win that ideological battle, where nothing less than universally accessible *public* housing will be acceptable by the people, thus forcing a change in demand from something like "social housing," which supports capitalism, to one of universally available public housing, available to rent according to ability to pay, that challenges the system and will bring about a real transfer in the balance of power from the landlord class to the citizen.Some on the left seem obsessed with how such a system is to be financed within the confines of capitalism. The answer is to give priority in state budgets to building the required homes as part of a permanent housing programme—instead of working out new ways of letting business escape paying taxes on the surplus wealth that the citizens, their workers, produce daily in their businesses.

If they want to make use of our labour they will have to contribute to a safe, secure home for their workers, not to leech off us in their never-ending greed for extra profit and in tax avoidance.

If we are to defeat capitalism we must expose and exploit its weaknesses. This will not be done in Dáil Éireann: it will be done in the hearts and minds of our citizens. Only then can we truly have change that will allow all our citizens to fully benefit from the fruits of their labour.

In recent years, as capitalism has gone into overdrive, those weaknesses are becoming more and more obvious, with inequality going to levels not seen since the Industrial Revolution. Back then we settled for higher wages and better working conditions and a larger share of the wealth we produced as part of our struggle—only to see it all taken back, bit by bit, in the intervening years, to a stage where once again workers can't afford a roof over their heads on the wages paid to them by employers. Which goes to prove that any gains under capitalism are always only temporary, and at someone else's expense.

The time for change is now. It's a battle to lay bare the class nature of society as it exists today. The Government will not change the system; the transformative demands of the people can be the spark to tip the balance back in our favour. ★

Sinn Féin's wake?

At the time of the last general election in the South it was in vogue to remark that the only thing Sinn Féin were unsure of was whether they wanted to become the next Labour or the next Fianna Fáil. Now, in the light of the events of recent years, it seems that the latter is much more likely. Sebastian Müller reports.

SINN FÉIN'S move to the centre and to respectability—set in motion by Gerry Adams decades previously—has begun to bear fruit south of the border, and the prospect of the party being in government in both states is no longer as removed from reality as it once was.

The past two years have seen a continuation and deepening of this strategy, with Sinn Féin using the cover afforded by the Brexit referendum to soften, if not absolutely jettison, its anti-EU position. Its recent ard-fheis confirmed that Adams would step down to present a new (politically unburdened) face to the public, presumably that of Mary Lou McDonald.

Sinn Féin now challenges the lower-middle-class voters of Fianna Fáil. That the powers that be are rattled is evidenced both by unrelenting attacks from the media, and the Government parties backing down on a Christmas election.

While the rise of Sinn Féin has been the story of the left in recent times, and has consumed plenty of column-inches, what has been overlooked thus far is the other side of the political coin. Sinn Féin's march to respectability has left an unoccupied space in Irish politics, which may yet be occupied by reactionary forces.

The Republic is almost unique in Europe in that we have yet to see a major right-wing or fascist party along the lines of the Front Nationale, Jobbik, AfD, or even UKIP. One reason for this is the fact that Ireland has been ruled successively by virulently right-wing parties, both economically and socially. Another sometimes overlooked reason, however, has been the institutional presence of Sinn Féin.

As a broadly populist centre-left party with a strong anti-EU position, Sinn Féin was able to capture and mobilise post-crash anger in Ireland, particularly among the youth. This, combined with its uncompromising anti-racist position, has served to preclude the emergence of any such reactionary forces. Now, however, the game has changed.

The toning down of its anti-EU position, combined with a possible loss of influence in certain constituencies because of a move to the centre, stemming from the contingencies of electoral respectability, would weaken its broadly progressive message and provide room for a new right-wing force. More than that, if Sinn Féin were to enter government in the South (whether as a majority or minority party) it would quickly demonstrate the harsh limits of social-democratic reform, driving more people to search for solutions on the right.

It is not so difficult to imagine that in a country still reeling from the savagery of the Troika, with thousands homeless and with growing anti-immigrant and anti-refugee sentiment, the cry of "looking after our own first" would be well received by a certain segment of the population.

We must also remember that Ireland is not immune to what is happening on the international scene; and with our institutional blocks to fascism weakened, it is not unreasonable to fear that we may see its resurgence in the coming years. Any such new right-wing forces would not be synonymous with the Southern reactionaries of old (see Renua's abortive attempt at a return to old-fashioned Catholic conservatism) but would find its inspiration in the modern right-wing movements in Europe, the United States, and further afield.

The "alt-right" reaction to gains made by feminists, LGBT activists and other marginalised groups, already prevalent on the internet, will find expression here too, particularly among young economically disfranchised men. Another financial crash or a major terrorist attack would be more than enough to open this Pandora's box. For a foreshadowing of such a future we only have to look to the erosion of the French Communist Party in the face of the Front Nationale after ceding the anti-EU ground.

We must also remember that the far right does not need to seize state power to pose a risk. The shadow of fascism provides a two-fold cover to traditional liberals for enacting much of their right-wing agenda. On the one hand it makes their own position more palatable (even among left-wingers) when compared with "blood and soil" fascism; on the other hand it affords an excuse for centrist regimes to crack down on non-conforming viewpoints more generally (today we see this under the rubric of "fake news").

These illiberal measures are unashamedly sold to us as necessary to defend liberalism. As Malcolm X once said of white American conservatives and liberals, "one is the wolf, the other is a fox. No matter what, they'll both eat you." France once again provides a ready example: Macron's fox is received jubilantly as the answer to Le Pen's wolf.

The risks of fascism, and the liberal response, make it more necessary than ever for us to redouble our efforts and to expound our principled opposition to the EU, in the hope of a more progressive and more socialist future. ★

LABOUR & CAPITAL

A future worth fighting for

IN 2016 James Wickham and Alicja Bobek produced a report for TASC into working conditions in Ireland in which they identified "enforced flexibility" as the major development in employment conditions for workers in all industries following the crisis.

This enforced flexibility comes in a number of forms. For some it is insecure-hour contracts; for others it is seven-day-week contracts, on-call expectations, or hours far beyond those specified in contracts. The report points to the increased intensification of work and pressure and a drive to get more from less, as capital seeks to increase its profitability. And the logic of capital dictates that this will not let up unless it is challenged in a collective and organised way.

The Trade Union Left Forum in its WorkersFuture campaign has called for secure-hour contracts as a central demand. It is one of a list of demands aimed at tipping the balance of power towards workers and labour away from big business and capital. It is a workers' programme for a future worth fighting and struggling for.

In recent weeks Mandate, which has been to the fore in drawing attention to the plight of workers facing insecure hours, has launched its own "Secure Hours = Better Future" campaign; and the Trade Union Left Forum fully supports this initiative.

In essence it is a struggle for the control of workers' labour power. This is all that workers have; and the more they can control the supply of labour the more they can demand for it. The more employers control the supply of labour the less they can pay for it and the more they can exploit workers.

As the Dunne's worker and activist Muireann Dalton puts it, *"on any payday, a Dunnes worker's wages can be slashed by up to 60% (more than €200). This makes it impossible for my family and me to plan our lives, and we're not alone. There are almost 10,000 workers in Dunnes Stores who have the same worries I do. Most of us are low-paid. Most of us are women. And most of us are on 15-hour contracts. So some weeks we will work 40 hours, but when a local manager takes a dislike to us, they can slash our hours to 15."*

And in a recent update, the assistant general secretary of Mandate, Gerry Light, called on the public to put pressure on the Government to introduce the promised legislation to tackle this issue. *"While there is significant support from the general public and trade union movement for what we are seeking—we need to continue to put pressure on all our legislators to act once and for all. Local delegations to lobby TDs and senators are being arranged through your Union in the coming days and weeks. We are asking all politicians to sign a pledge to support bringing legislation forward."*

It is important to note that this Government has already blocked legislation proposed by David Cullinane TD (Sinn Féin) that would have gone some way towards addressing this issue when in October it ruled the bill out, on the grounds that it would incur a cost to the exchequer. This blocking quite clearly shows where Fine Gael stand on the matter, if anyone had any delusions about that.

Fine Gael, along with Fianna Fáil, IBEC, ISME, the American Chamber of Commerce and other business interests see flexibility for capital as a good thing. In fact they want to give capital as much flexibility as they can, whether in relation to workers' rights, taxation, regulation, or pretty much everything. So a demand like this is a challenge and is worth fighting for. ★

Sign the TULF petition!
Sign the Workers' Charter at www.tuleftforum.com/workers-charter.
Sign up to Mandate's secure hours campaign at https://my.uplift.ie/petitions/secure-hours-now.

Tommy McKearney

IN THE unlikely event that any of our readers have invested in a significant number of shares in the British company Curry's PC World, they would be well advised to sell before too long

On a pre-Christmas visit to one of their larger stores I was surprised to find some shelves empty. The goods in question were neither perishable nor seasonal, yet at twenty minutes past opening time on the Saturday before Christmas this huge chain store was unable to offer items that were obviously popular.

Nothing surprising there, you might think. Indeed it used to be viewed as a sign of success when a shop was sold out of a certain range of goods as a result of the frantic Christmas buying spree. Not now, though, especially if your main competitor is operating over the internet and can deliver the same goods and simultaneously guarantee that the customer will not be disappointed.

In brief, the century-old method of chain-store retailing is being challenged by internet trading.

We are now experiencing a profound technological change that is having a massive impact on the working class and its trade union movement. Often referred to as the "gig economy" or "platform economy," the technology underpinning much of globalisation is presenting a new and different set of problems for organised labour. Moreover, this situation is not confined to retail industry but has an impact over a wide spectrum of service industries, ranging from taxi-drivers to teachers providing external tuition.

Nor is this phenomenon only occurring abroad. In the days before Christmas, for example, the *Irish Times* was reporting a plan by a company called Mick's Garage in Dublin to launch what it described as "an Airbnb for garage services," which would connect motoring customers with nearby mechanics. Investors in the project include wealthy builders, bookmakers, and builders' suppliers.

What is happening is having just as profound an effect on organised labour as the introduction of mechanised production lines had in the early twentieth century. Now we are finding that instead of having fixed and permanent work-places from where services are provided or delivered, the internet now offers consumers access without the need for a local physical presence. This facilitates the casualisation of labour at a rate unprecedented since the end of the nineteenth century.

Some of the implications of this were demonstrated recently by two decisions made in London in relation to the taxi app Uber.[1] Last September the regulatory body Transport for London refused to renew Uber's licence for the city on the grounds that it had failed to properly vet its drivers' competence or security clearance.

This was followed in November by a ruling by the Employment Appeals Tribunal that declared in effect that the company was an employer, and not simply an information platform, as Uber likes to claim. Incidentally, the tribunal's verdict was seemingly endorsed in December when the EU Court of Justice made a similar ruling.

Before we congratulate these institutions for having provided a major advantage for people forced to work in the gig economy, it is important to consider a few facts. In the first place, Uber is only one company working within this system; other companies, such as Deliveroo[2] and Airbnb, continue as before, with the former recently

New problems for organised labour

getting the green light to maintain its existing British practices as a result of a ruling by the Central Arbitration Committee.

Secondly, Uber, with a market valuation of nearly $70 billion early in 2017, is using its vast financial resources to appeal these decisions. Backed by a clever advertising campaign that claims that forty thousand drivers in London were in danger of losing their jobs, the company collected almost a million signatures demanding that the decision of the Employment Appeals Tribunal be overturned.

Uber is also drawing support from other interested parties in the field. And it is these supporting parties that could prove decisive if they are not counteracted.

The attraction of the gig economy for capital is obvious. As is apparent with the Uber company, this system transfers competition and risk from the capitalist to the worker, reducing wages in the process. The outcome of this type of widespread casualisation will be the creation of a situation not unlike that experienced by dockers in the nineteenth century, when men often fought each other for a day's pay. Clearly, too, forcing worker to compete with worker for income undermines class solidarity and thus damages one of the essential requirements for a healthy trade union movement.

So how do we deal with this latest manifestation of capitalism in action? Let's be clear from the outset that it is neither possible nor desirable to prevent the advance of science and with it the emerging technologies that make such things possible. The first step must always be to understand what is happening and to recognise both the problems and the opportunities presented by new circumstances.

Explaining the technology and its impact on working people's terms and conditions is relatively straightforward but should nevertheless be done as a priority by all those interested in protecting and promoting the cause of labour.

Also, every opportunity has to be taken to counter the insidious populist propaganda that promotes lower prices as the be-all and end-all. All too often a small benefit to the consumer comes at the cost of poverty wages for the worker.

Thereafter, it is important to disabuse working people of the notion that the solution to this problem lies purely in legislation, or in appeals to the ruling class. What appears to be concern for working people is at best enlightened self-interest or, more likely, cynical opportunism. Realism dictates that capitalism will not surrender such an advantage that offers the opportunity to increase profits.

Ultimately the answer lies in the working class taking the means of production, distribution and exchange into its own hands through the guarantee of a Workers' Republic. In the meantime, the left must not overlook the importance of this issue. We must search for creative means of counteracting this latest encroachments of capitalism, and continue working within the trade union movement and beyond to strengthen solidarity throughout the working class. ★

1 Uber Is a Smartphone application that allows any car-owner to offer a taxi service without the requirement for a nearby office, radio centre, or, usually, any detailed police clearance.
2 A British on-line food delivery company founded in 2013 by two Americans.

Teaching is now precarious employment

Johnny Gaffney

MOST OF THE campaigning on zero-hour contracts and precarious work has dealt (rightly) with the retail industry, with Mandate leading the way.

The education sector, however, has increasingly been hit by very similar conditions, which is an example of the growing impact of the state's neo-liberalism.

Part of the neo-liberal agenda is to reduce the state's spending and its involvement in all services, essential or otherwise. This has resulted in the demise of full-time, pensionable teaching posts. In many cases, when older teachers retire their posts are divided up to create two or more posts.

To get a contract of indefinite duration (CID) a newly qualified post-primary teacher has to be employed by the same education and training board (formerly VEC) or school for two years. Again and again, however, many young teachers are let go after one year, resulting in their being on low-hour and insecure employment for years.

The modus operandi of many schools is to offer a teacher perhaps seventeen hours' teaching per week in the first year, but in the second year only a small fraction of the hours, if any. Out of frustration, and a vague hope of eventual permanence, many post-primary teachers opt for contracts of four hours a week or, in some cases, a two-hour contract.

An example is that of a teacher from Galway who has a CID of ten hours in a school fifty miles away. The hours are in multiple subjects, and the classes are spaced out throughout the week, making the job in reality full-time, five days a week, but for ten hours' pay.

Post-primary teachers believe this is a deliberate state policy. Principals then have more teachers for doing extra unpaid activities, in the vain hope of getting better contracts or being kept on.

Teaching, once viewed as a good, secure, lifelong career, has now become part of the growing class of jobs that can be classified as precarious employment—a feature of neo-liberal economics.

To add insult to injury, the NUI has abolished the one-year teaching diploma (HDip) and introduced a two-year master of education degree, at twice the fee—a whopping €12,000. Besides having to work free for an extra year, the students have to find their own placements in schools, where they are obliged to carry out extracurricular activities.

According to a trade union source, students are voting by not enrolling. Normally hundreds would have taken up the HDip course in each university; however, only seventy-five students in the whole country have registered for the new master's degree to be introduced in September 2018.

Until the state's new neo-liberal ideology is challenged, precarious employment will remain the lot of many young teachers. Insecure employment reduces the pension bill and ensures that post-primary teachers in vulnerable posts will carry out extra work without pay.

A knock-on effect for these teachers is that it debars them from getting a mortgage and buying their own home; they then become part of the housing crisis also. ★

The wage system and the capitalist illusion

Eoghan O'Neill explores how the wage system hides the class nature of our society, where one section—the capitalist class, the owners of finance and industry—exploits working people, the wealth-producers.

It is this class that enforces the wage system, as they are the paymasters at the end of the day. Working people enter into a contract whereby work—the combination of effort and time—is exchanged for wages.

The working class have endured capitalist rule as they exchange their labour-time for an amount equivalent to a social necessity for the maintenance and reproduction of the worker, based on the level of development of the particular country. The class nature of society, however, is not revealed within this relationship; and so the worker and their main organising body, the trade unions, concentrate on the level of wages needed to maintain this social necessity, rather than on the relationship between capital and labour.

Struggles to increase the level of wages have been and will continue to be a feature of the system; but are workers and their trade unions, which concentrate on the level rather than the system of wages, blinded by what is going on when we exchange our labour time for wages?

The purchase of labour power for the capitalist is a commodity purchase, just like factories, machines, and stock. However, what separates labour power from all other commodities is that it is the only commodity to add greater value for the capitalist. Therefore it is the purchase and productivity of labour power that generates an accumulation of wealth for the capitalist class.

If you are to talk to anyone earning a minimum, living or average wage they wouldn't necessarily see themselves being exploited; but you can be sure they will say they don't earn enough. It's pretty obvious that employers and employees have different interests. One wants to continually increase their level of wages, while the other wants to continually decrease the costs of labour. Whoever has the greatest social power in this relationship will increase their share of total wealth.

If we set up a situation where instead of a wage system we have a barter system, in a perfectly competitive market, people will enter the system knowing the value of what they are willing to part with. In this process, on aggregate an exchange of equivalents will take place, as it would be nearly impossible for someone to continually accumulate items of greater value than what they started with. In this scenario the accumulation process would not be able to take place unless done through other means, such a slavery or robbery.

If I then add to this scenario a money form: I am willing to give someone a number of hours a day in the form of work in exchange for money. I will know that if the person buying my labour time is getting greater value from the product of my labour, then the next time I go to exchange my labour time I will demand the equivalent value. I then use the money I earn to exchange it for my needs and wants, each time exchanging equivalents. In this scenario both parties will leave happy, knowing that they got what they paid for. On aggregate, the share of wealth will be much more evenly spread out.

'. . . what separates labour power from all other commodities is that it is the only commodity to add greater value for the capitalist. Therefore it is the purchase and productivity of labour power that generates an accumulation of wealth for the capitalist class.'

Marx described this process as *commodity–money–commodity,* or C–M–C, where workers produce commodities in order to receive money so as to be able to pay for

New public-sector union to come i

THE MERGER of Impact, the Civil, Public and Services Union (CPSU) and the Public Service Executive Union (PSEU) will create a new 80,000-member, largely public-sector union, to be called Fórsa, in 2018.

Towards the end of 2017, 86 per cent of Impact members who voted supported the merger; 76 per cent of CPSU members who voted backed it; and 70 per cent of PSEU members who voted supported it. So it has the clear backing of a majority of voting members.

Fórsa will represent workers throughout the civil service and public service, commercial and non-commercial state-sponsored bodies, community and voluntary organisations, and private companies in aviation, telecommunications, and elsewhere. It will be the second-largest union in the country (after SIPTU) and, according to Impact, will be "the strongest and most influential trade union voice in the public service and semi-state [state-sponsored] sector."

Impact, the biggest component, argued for this merger on the usual grounds: that it will have more resources and therefore be stronger, with €85 million in assets, including a €50 million dispute fund.

Unions usually merge less for political and industrial reasons than for pragmatism and survival. Research in Britain suggests that the main reasons for mergers are declining or stagnating membership and struggling to organise in new areas. The promise is that cost savings and efficiencies will release funds for new organising initiatives.

Again looking at Britain, this has largely failed; and while unions have secured themselves financially in the short term and have carried out significant internal restructuring (often with loss of jobs for union staff), no major inroads have been made in organising.

Other research also suggests that mergers do nothing for improving the attitude and activism of the membership within the new structure. Rather than inspiring them, it seems that members become even more distant from what they perceive as a more bureaucratically controlled, top-down union that identifies less with workers on the ground than their previous union.

their needs and wants at a given place and time. People will be able to accumulate a level of wealth based only on the productivity of their labour, and this will vary according to their skill, talents and level of development in a particular place and time.

In our wage system, however, at least two processes run simultaneously. Workers are engaged in the C–M–C cycle, while capitalists are within the M–C–M' cycle, where the capitalist enters with a sum of money, commodity production within the labour process takes place, and then the capitalist leaves with a surplus—the portion of wealth extracted from those who labour.

This dual process is why workers don't see the exploitation taking place, as all that is revealed to them is the C–M–C cycle, where they believe they are being paid an equivalent for their labour time. This is an illusion, a trick of the capitalist class.

What is hidden from the worker is the non-equivalent of exchange, which is what the capitalist pays to the worker in the form of wages and what they keep as their profit. The wealth is created by labour, but the product belongs to the capitalist; and through the laws, customs and standards of the private-ownership system this wealth is extracted and then divided. The strength of labour will determine what portion of the wealth they created they are able to keep.

By keeping the means of production in private hands, the capitalist class are able to maintain the wage system and therefore to maintain the exploitation of the working class, while also keeping this exploitative system hidden from the majority of the working class.

The level of M or money is what the trade unions are interested in; and this is important, in that it protects workers' purchasing power and living standards. But struggling inside the imposed wage system will never challenge or change the exploitation that workers are subjected to under the non-equivalents of exchange.

Marx outlined the limits to trade unions if they deal solely with the wage system and not the class struggle, for the overthrow of the capitalist system. He writes, in the final paragraph of *Value, Price, and Profit*:

"Trades Unions work well as centers of resistance against the encroachments of capital. They fail partially from an injudicious use of their power. They fail generally from limiting themselves to a guerilla war against the effects of the existing system, instead of simultaneously trying to change it, instead of using their organized forces as a lever for the final emancipation of the working class, that is to say the ultimate abolition of the wages system."

As we face into 2018, the working class, and the trade union movement especially, have many battles ahead. If they fail to begin to engage in political education of this nature, rather than being centres of resistance for the working class, they will become redundant for the working class—a warning the CPI issued in 2015.

As outlined above, the class nature of society will reveal itself only through the development of class-consciousness; and this can only be done through directed and targeted political education.

We need to make 2018 a year of deep study in fertile soil, and sow the revolutionary seeds once again. ★

into being this year

Traditionally, the left has supported and encouraged union mergers as strengthening solidarity and unity and strengthening the hand of workers. However, as research tells us, union mergers are not always perceived as positive by members after the merger and often fail to deliver on their promises.

Connolly, writing in *Forward* in 1914, said:

Recently I have been complaining in this column and elsewhere of the tendency in the Labour movement to mistake mere concentration upon the industrial field for essentially revolutionary advance. My point was that the amalgamation or federation of unions, unless carried out by men and women with the proper revolutionary spirit, was as likely to create new obstacles in the way of effective warfare, as to make that warfare possible.

It is the old story of adopting the letter but rejecting the spirit. The letter of industrial concentration is now accepted by all trade union officials, but the spirit of working-class solidarity is woefully absent. Each union and each branch of each union desires above all things to show a good balance sheet, and that that might be done every nerve is strained to keep their members at work, and in a condition to pay subscriptions.

The politics and ideology of the new union are far more important than the size of its assets. And nothing in this new union suggests anything different or more progressive than its constituent parts, which hardly inspire revolutionary advance.

In fact, acting as one with a combined membership will surely prevent any opposition to public-sector agreements that smaller unions might try to muster. It may mean that a deal with Fórsa is essentially a public-sector deal; so where will this leave nurses and teachers, who have very real and legitimate grievances against the Government?

And what about organising political opposition from a left viewpoint? This will surely be harder in a more tightly controlled, unified and top-down structure.

Time will tell. One thing is certain: that class struggle within our trade unions remains critical to any general advance for working people. ★

Shiny mask

Seán Ó Deoráin

IT'S ALMOST eight months since Emmanuel Macron took up residence in the Élysée Palace after a second-round "victory" over Marine Le Pen's Front Nationale. This "victory" was accompanied by a historic vote for Le Pen, dwarfing that of her father's in 2002 against Chirac. Macron did not have the support of even a quarter of those who turned out in the first round.

This did not deter France's new president from claiming an irrevocable mandate to push through his deeply reactionary, anti-worker agenda. The new force of French politics was a triumph of "centrism" and "reasonableness" in the face of "extremes"; except that it wasn't so new at all. It was simply the French big bourgeoisie's electoral recalibration to suit its interests, collapsing the vacuous opposition between social democrats and the traditional right.

The biggest bubble of all time?

SPECULATORS NO longer know where to go with their money. The German share index DAX stands at more than 13,000 points; on the eve of the financial crisis, in July 2007, it was 8,000.

Property prices shoot up; art becomes almost priceless. For $450 million Leonardo da Vinci's *Salvator Mundi* was sold in mid-November in New York.

The neo-liberal counter-revolution made this possible. The boldest dreams of the thought-leader of the economic right, Friedrich von Hayek, are about to be realised; the last relic of state sovereignty—the creation of money—should become a simple speculative object.

The "cryptocurrency" bitcoin has increased in value by more than 1,200 per cent since the beginning of last year. A fictitious coin cost more than $10,000 last month. According to calculations by the web site coinmarketcap.com, which records the market capitalisation of cryptocurrencies, the value of all bitcoins is now about $180 billion. This makes it almost as expensive as the American soft-drinks giant Coca-Cola, which is valued at about $195 billion.

But it is not a "general equivalent." Neither central banks nor states draw money here. The price alone determines supply and demand. Bitcoin is based on the so-called blockchain technology, in which information is stored, forgery-proof, in a database.

The capitalists are in trouble. Money is not only exchange value but wants to be hoarded by them as well. What if the price crashes by more than 1,000 per cent in the coming year? Who is the lender of last resort? Who is the last to stand up for the debts of others? With money, the fun stops.

The bitcoin bull market reflects a lack of profitable investment opportunities. Significantly, where the highest profit margins exist, in China, the cryptocurrency has been banned since September. The Chinese government justified this by saying that trade "seriously disturbed economic and financial order." The Bundesbank (German central bank), however, went to sleep again last week. The price explosion at Bitcoin does not worry them. In Germany there is no indication that the speculation with cryptocurrencies is financed by credit, said the bank's vice-president, Claudia Buch.

Incidentally, the same applies to the price explosion in the property market—which is "exaggerated" by up to 30 per cent, but nothing more.

A hedge-fund manager told Reuters about bitcoin development: "It's going to be the biggest bubble of our lives." While he may be right, it doesn't just affect the computer currency market.★

teeth don't a vicious bite

A series of defections from these two formations swelled the ranks of Macron's new party, La République en Marche (The Republic on the Move), in time for the legislative elections, coupled with its running dozens of candidates from civil society, few with any political experience or convictions—the perfect bunch of yes-men buying in to the illusion that they were part of a crusade to reform French society.

To characterise Macron's manifesto as a departure from that of his political mentor, François Hollande, would be a mistake—not surprisingly, one might say, given Macron's role as an economic adviser and minister in the Hollande government. The repeal of hard-won labour laws dating from the time of the communist involvement in post-war governments continued apace, dismantling the independent health and safety committees required by law in companies employing more than a certain number of workers.

Deaths at work will result directly from this measure, in industrial and agri-food sectors in particular. Employers of fewer than twenty workers will be able to conduct elections for employee representatives by a show of hands. The expansion of contracts of indefinite determination, relative only to a specific project or mission, defined by the employer, will increase precariousness in formerly well-paid technical and manual sectors, consigning young workers with appropriate qualifications to a sort of pariah status within any company that may hire them—for one specific project at a time.

Contrary to its fallacious self-image as a founder, promoter and defender of civil rights and bourgeois-democratic liberties, Macron's tenure has thus far been marked by an increasingly authoritarian turn by France's ruling class.

The Fifth Republic's constitution was born out of a state of unofficial war with Algerian guerrillas fighting for independence. Even by the poor standards of classical liberalism, France falls far short. No proper separation of powers exists, with the judiciary and the legislature muzzled by the executive, and the intransigent upper echelons of the civil service ensuring administrative continuity, in true technocratic style.

By far the most egregious example of the deep state's clampdown on political dissenters in recent years has been the state of emergency adopted after the terror attacks of 2015. Macron plans to revoke the state of emergency in the new year—while transcribing essential elements of it into ordinary statutes, including such powers as the arbitrary detention of suspected "terrorists." This vicious legislation has already been used to arrest trade union activists protesting against the labour reforms.

The great lie of a grander EU-wide project of integration promoted by the latest French government, encompassing co-operation, enhanced security and other empty slogans, was laid bare after the steadfast support lent by the French state to its Spanish counterpart in the aftermath of the latter's brutal crackdown in Catalunya. France has a vested interest in opposing self-determination, as swathes of the "national territory" would be clamouring for similar treatment should the Catalan independistas succeed in breaking away from Madrid's clutches.

Yet what has been most conspicuous of all is the complicit media, particularly foreign correspondents, trumpeting the gains of France's premier. Any reader familiar with the *Irish Times* will have surely remarked the fawning coverage of Macron by the besotted Lara Marlowe. He is a "pragmatist" and yet a visionary, still on a "winning streak"—just a few of her latest plaudits. His opponents are quasi-Luddites, afraid of that most meaningless concept that punctuates so much of accepted discourse, "globalisation." She is but one example.

Make no mistake: the ruling class of the EU's second-biggest economy is very much on the offensive. Lackeys such as Lara Marlowe undermine themselves by ignoring its ever more unnerving excesses. They are far more afraid of an organised working class that could strike back. ★

But we are still neutral?

From *junge Welt* (Berlin)

IN ITS ELECTRONIC newsletter in mid-December the web site German Foreign Policy (german-foreign-policy.com) reports on the launch of the European Union's new "Military Union" strategy.

The report states: "The German Government has announced that the EU Military Union will be officially launched this Monday, with the EU Council formally adopting 17 projects aimed at creating joint EU military structures. Germany is in charge of the establishment of a European Medical Command, considered an indispensable element of future EU military operations, alongside the European Air Transport Command, which has existed since 2010. Berlin is also establishing logistical structures that would facilitate rapid interventions.

"The German Bundeswehr is also active in both fields within the NATO framework. The operational preparation for future military missions is influenced by a fierce power struggle between Germany and France. According to the German ministry of defence, the military union is not only aimed at reaching more 'independence' from the United States, but also at advancing EU 'integration,' which is difficult to achieve with civilian means."

junge Welt

Lichtenberger Lügenmeister

Just another confirmation—if another one was needed—of the arguments put forward by the CPI, the People's Movement and PANA regarding the direction in which the European Union was heading during the numerous referendums that the Irish state was forced to allow the people to vote on.

We rejected two of the treaties but then of course had to vote again in order for the state to get the right result.

And still the Irish establishment claim that we are neutral. ★

Understanding land value tax

In Ireland our cities and towns are littered with derelict sites and dilapidated buildings, while we continue with the outward sprawl of the greater Dublin area into adjoining counties and beyond, with its ever-increasing house prices and rents and its impact on the environment and on family life. Eoghan O'Neill reports

AFTER HEARINg the minister for housing, Eoghan Murphy, declare the Government's response to the housing crisis—namely changing planning regulations and restrictions for developments and the clear impact it would actually have—it reminded me of a small pamphlet that I picked up in Connolly Books back in 2008, *Land Value: For Public Benefit*, by Jerry Jones, which is the theme of this article.

Eoghan Murphy's answer, rather than solving the crisis, will more than likely make it worse, as easing restrictions will act as an incentive for developers to hold off building, as the value of land would increase because of increased density in housing units. It is clear that the minister is listening to those vested interests, who want to see the price of land continually increase.

The recently established Campaign for Public Housing is quite clear on what it argues is needed: the building of universally accessible public housing. But what is our response to the hoarding and unproductive use of land by landowners, which has a direct effect on house prices and rents, a foundation-stone of our housing crises?

Note: Most of what follows is taken directly from the pamphlet. I have added my own initial thoughts and have placed it more in the Irish context.

Land value tax (LVT)

The first thing to note is that land, unlike labour and capital, is (relatively) fixed. While its supply is finite, it is more resilient to wear and tear: it can be used and reused for different purposes. A dump one year can be the site for a housing estate the next; agricultural land can be turned into residential land. Land that is built on is the most valuable of land: think of Dublin city centre compared with a field in Co. Longford.

The demand for land, with its limited supply, gives it its value. The demand and therefore its value depends on many factors, including fertility, its natural resources and natural beauty, its proximity to work, markets, and transport services (railway lines, motorways, airports), and its access to services (water, electricity, gas, shops, schools, hospitals, etc.). The use of the land—residential, commercial, or agricultural—will determine how valuable it may be.

The value of land is not created by landowners but by nature and by the community and society at large, through their economic and social activity. But land is largely privately owned, and it is the landowners and their associates (banks, estate agents, solicitors) who benefit from rising land values, at the expense of society as a whole. It is in the interests of landowners, therefore, to use their influence to direct policies that increase the value of land.

Introducing an LVT would make more efficient use of land, because landowners would have to pay the tax according to the value of their land; a rate would be set that would make sure that hoarding for speculation would become unviable. If a landowner could not make best use of the land in line with prevailing planning regulations they would have every incentive to sell it on as quickly as possible to someone who could make more economic use of it.

This would end the wastefulness of derelict land and decaying buildings standing empty for years on end that blight some districts. Furthermore, it would more or less end speculation in land, as it would become too costly to hold on to land for that purpose. By gradually raising the rate of LVT—and at the same time reducing other taxes—land ownership would begin to lose its significance.

The only point now of owning land would be to use it in a productive way. In other words, the income from land would derive solely from the particular economic activity or buildings on the land. There would be no gain simply from owning land, receiving economic rent, as now, which is at the expense of the rest of society.

How does it work?

The first thing that would need to be done would be to separate valuing land from developments on the land. Valuing land is less complicated than valuing buildings, because the only factors that need to be considered are location and potential use consistent with prevailing planning regulations. Modern technology, including computer-aided mass assessment and geographical information systems (GIS), can be applied by the authorities to track national land values.

A simple method of calculation (residual value) is to start off with the known market value of the property as a whole, then deduct the value of the buildings (estimated rebuilding costs for insurance purposes, adjusted for depreciation) to be left with the remainder, being the value of the land.

The authorities can then begin to "map" out land values. One such technique, known as "land-value-scape," instead of showing contour lines on a map representing topography shows lines marking off localities and zones with equal land values. Once it is operating, the recording and tracking of property sales throughout the country could be done continuously. More information and data could be incorporated in the series for refinement, to include such things as proximity to amenities, transport hubs, businesses, congested roads, etc.

The valuation of land needs to be conducted regularly, because land values can change considerably from year to year. These are affected by various factors, such as its use—residential and commercial being more valuable than agricultural. Changing from one use to another by the planning authorities can have a huge effect on the value of the site and also the surrounding area.

The demand for land, and therefore its value, is highly dependent on the health of the economy and on the availability of credit. We witnessed with the great recession the fall in demand for property and land, thus causing a fall in property prices and land values.

It must be said that in Ireland today we have a situation in which generally people don't have access to credit (unlike the "Celtic Tiger" years). It is very difficult for a working family to obtain a mortgage, yet we have seen and continue to see increases in house prices and rents. (A further 20 per cent increase is expected between now and 2020.) What we have to consider here is that credit is available but it isn't available for ordinary working people.

It is the wealthiest in society that have the means to purchase property, along with large foreign vulture funds and property companies, which are driving these increases, with their unique access to credit because of their wealth status and their ability to purchase land and property, which has also caused a huge shift from people owning their home to having to rent their home. We are witnessing a new wave of absentee landlordism.

Property-owners are accumulating more land and property and in effect, thanks to their own demand, they are increasing the costs for society, whose level of income cannot meet the continuous increases in rents and mortgage payments. The consequences of this are clear when we turn to our homelessness and housing crisis.

What happens to rent and property prices when an LVT has been introduced?

The higher the rate of LVT, the more this will tend to lower the market value of land, or its price, but it will have no effect on total land values, including the amount going to the community in the form of LVT, because the total value of the site is equal to the market value (what it is sold for) plus the rate of LVT (the amount of tax revenue going back to the community in spending).

In other words, the higher the rate of the land value tax the more is taken away from the landowner and put back into the community. If LVT was at 100 per cent, owning land for the sake of earning rent would be abolished. Even lower rates might have the same effect if the rate of return on land is lower than using the capital for real productive uses.

LVT and general tax policy

Generally speaking, people do realise that governments need sources of income to cover their expenses: the provision of services and amenities from which everyone benefits. However, different taxes have different effects, some tending to enhance economic activity and contributing positively to society, others having the opposite effect.

Having a tax system based on land value would encourage house-building and other productive activities, because not making optimal use of the land would be penalised. Rents and house prices would stabilise, as speculation would no longer be an option, and therefore house prices would not inflate to the position where people are becoming homeless; whereas if you just tax on development or on existing buildings themselves, this might not have the desired effect and might even be a disincentive to develop.

Clearly the main burden of tax is imposed on working people, but the benefits are captured by the landowners and the owners of the means of production (quite often the same people). But as the Government needs to raise revenue and cut expenses, it punishes the largest contributors of tax—working people—which has adverse economic and social costs, such as displaced families and communities, homelessness, mental health issues, and urban sprawl and its environmental impact.

Governments are very quick to tax goods where the impact of a price increase won't affect its demand, such as tobacco, alcohol, and petrol; but the best example of a commodity whose supply is almost inelastic (not affected by variations in price or cost) and therefore a good candidate for tax is almost completely ignored by economists and governments, namely land.

If land is taxed according to its value—mainly determined by the demand for land—there would be no dead-weight loss (taxes that disincentivise people or society to work, invest or consume and therefore have an adverse effect on welfare). According to this argument, land should be the most heavily taxed item of all.

The advantages of tax on land value are huge. There is huge potential for a continuous revenue stream for government expenditure. This would allow the state to have the revenue to establish (among other things) an all-Ireland housing enterprise, dedicated to meeting the people's needs in housing, from planning to completion, while also having the means to purchase lands.

In addition, an LVT is inherently a fair tax, because the value of a site on which the tax would be based is determined not by the owner or occupier but by its location, and the social and economic activities of society as a whole, which should be shared by all.

LVT is fairer because it is practically impossible to avoid. People do not end up having to pay more tax to compensate for those who evade it, which is becoming more and more of a problem globally. There is a whole "shadow economy" and a whole army of tax-avoidance experts geared to helping people and businesses evade tax. But you cannot siphon off land into an offshore tax haven.

In short, an LVT could become the core source of finance for public expenditure, which would be topped up by other taxes that also benefit society in various ways.

What we must be mindful of is not to replace a radical transformative strategy with a reformist one, based solely on LVT as a panacea for removing the class struggle in our day-to-day campaigns. What we can insist on within the short and medium term is that the state becomes an active purchaser of sites that become available because of the disincentive to hoard and its increased revenue from LVT in order to increase its share in the ownership of land and of housing stock, allowing it to become more of a price-maker, stopping the constant increases in house prices and rents and the endless housing and homelessness crisis. ★

Housing models in the Irish context

Ideology has dominated the Irish housing sector since the outset. There is no period in history, even during times of relatively robust state house-building, that could be said to have had a stable or working housing system argues Daithí Ó hAirtrí

Dublin's Henrietta Street originally housed the city's gentry but fell into disrepair during the 19th and 20th centuries, with the houses being used as tenements. Wikimedia.

FROM TENEMENTS to failed housing experiments to bubbles, the Irish story of housing provision is littered with errors.

In this article I outline a proposal for how the CPI should think about housing, and explain why we may need to think about our terminology.

The existing Irish housing model operates in what is called a "differential rental" system, where social housing is financed by tenants paying a percentage of their income in rent to the local council. This model has large funding shortfalls, because of the fact that it is only a safety net and is not intended to be an alternative to the provision of private housing. It can never be self-financing, since it is only ever a house of last resort, and there are no well-off people seeking these houses from which higher rents can be leveraged.

The well-off pay for these housing differences indirectly, through general taxation, which leads to housing costs being seen as a burden to be borne, and constantly cut by right-wing governments.

The rents are "differential" in two senses, in that the rents differ from person to person but also in that the private housing system is kept distinct, hermetically sealed from "contamination" by the public housing system.

The reason for this red line between private and public housing is that if the state is seen to interfere in the private housing market, undercutting it and forcing landlords out of the market because of the state's increased scale, that is illegal state aid and would lead to fines under EU law.

These flaws have led to the counterproposal of a cost-rental system, where the costs of the building and maintenance of housing is pooled. Over the lifetime of the house the cost price of building, the largest cost of a home, is reduced as a total of the cost of servicing the debt used to finance the building of the home, because of inflation. This is called "maturation." It is the maturation that allows cost-rental models to operate. Older buildings cost less, and this lower cost is what allows the relatively higher cost of new buildings to be subsidised.

These schemes are very easily self-financing, since the rents are literally the sum of the costs divided by the number of tenants. However, these schemes can lead to housing poverty, even among those who are in the social housing system. For this reason it is necessary to also have housing credits for those who are unemployed or on fixed incomes,

A nice country to

Kieran Crilly

IN THE early 1950s US companies wanted to invest in Ireland so that they could expand into the European market; and Irish corporation tax policy was adapted for them.

In 1956 export profits tax relief was introduced. Exports of manufactured goods were zero-rated (no tax); so American companies that exported all their output paid no tax on their profits.

This rate of tax applied to all foreign companies, and many European companies set up subsidiaries here to avail of it before Ireland joined the EEC, as it was then. Ireland joined to give American transnationals tariff-free access to the EEC countries' markets, and agreed to phase out the zero-rate corporation tax.

In 1980 a 10 per cent tax on manufacturing activity was introduced, with EU approval. In 1987 a 10 per cent tax on financial services was introduced, again with EU approval. In 1996 the EU withdrew its approval for these tax incentives, and they were phased out between 1996 and 2010.

Between 1996 and 2003 there was a phased reduction in the general rate of corporation tax, from 32 per cent to 12½ per cent to apply equally to all corporate taxpayers on trading income, and to 25 per cent on non-trading income.

The present rate of corporation tax is 38.9 per cent (soon to become 20 per cent) in the United States, 34 per cent in France, 30 per cent in Germany, 19 per cent in Britain, and 12½

to ensure that they can afford to live in the social housing system.

The increasing sums in the cost-rental collective coffers over time also give local authorities a financial clout that is separate from the central government. The administration of these vast reserves is perhaps an explanation of why it is popular among both policy wonks and some elected officials.

The tensions here seem obvious. The cost-rental model is not financed in a progressive way. It does not take into account ability to pay. For all the faults of the current differential-rental model, once you get a council house there is no housing poverty within the housing system: your rent is adjusted so that you have the ability to pay—the issue being that getting a council house is so difficult.

The issues with the differential model are that there just aren't enough houses built, it is underfunded, aimed only to ever be social housing, and is prevented by EU rules from taking on the private rental market.

For this reason we need to come up with a new terminology for what the CPI's demand is: publicly built and owned housing for all, with rents determined by ability to pay.

This is the tension that will bring our class into conflict with the landlord class and the EU (in its position as guarantor of rent-seeking capitalism). We need to take what is good from the differential-rental model, the lack of housing poverty—but it needs to be expanded to be a housing solution for all who live in Ireland.

In an ideal world, if a public housing system for all was implemented, the rents leveraged on high earners would subsidise the lower rents given to the unwaged, pensioners, and the precarious. This would be supplemented by taxation where needed. The explicit aim of such a housing policy would be to provide a public home for everyone. In this way it would cease to be "differential" in the second sense outlined, in that the aim is to squeeze the private system out of existence.

In 1945 the British state established the National Health Service. Posters at that time read: "Your new National Health Service begins on 5th July. What is it? How do you get it? It will provide you with all medical, dental and nursing care. Everyone—rich or poor, man, woman or child—can use any or part of it. There are no charges, except for a few special items. There are no insurance qualifications. But it is not a 'Charity.' You are all paying for it, mainly as taxpayers, and it will relieve your money worries in the time of illness."

It is this universalist principle that we need to bring front and centre. Public housing is not charity. It is the provision of a public need in the pursuit of public good, by the public.

The cost-rental model is economic appeasement. It is about depressing the housing market through the use of non-profit aims. But it is not a challenge to the private housing market. It dovetails into the private housing market. It is, by design, a unitary system that attempts to improve standards and reduce costs in the housing system as a whole through market mechanisms.

With respect to the good people in many of the voluntary groups who have done good work in researching this area, as the Communist Party we should be aiming for better.

In *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946) George Bailey runs a family-owned building society that pools money together to build nice houses for his community. In the alternative reality, where he doesn't exist, we instead get Potterville, where slums run rampant.

While cost-rental systems might be better than Potterville, we must keep one thing in mind. *It's a Wonderful Life* was a Republican Party vehicle for warning against the excesses of capitalism; instead they preferred the compassionate face of localism and the petit-bourgeois. We should fight against both. ★

be a shareholder in

per cent in Ireland. In a tax haven like Jersey the rate of corporation tax is 0 per cent.

So, if a transnational can shift its profits from, say, France to Ireland, it reduces the tax rate from 34 per cent to 12½ per cent. And they have been doing this since the 1950s.

The savings can be immense, especially if an American transnational operating from Ireland can reduce its rate of corporation tax to about 0 per cent, as Apple has done in the €13 billion case taken by the EU Commission. If €13 billion is the tax you pay at 12½ per cent, then the profits involved would be over €100 billion. As the corporation is an American one, it would pay €38.9 billion tax on these profits if they were declared in America. So there is a saving of €25.9 billion by declaring in Ireland and not declaring in the United States. That is, if they paid the €13 billion to the Irish government. As they did not, the saving was €38.9 billion.

The people who gain from all this are the shareholders of transnational companies; because if the companies pay no corporation tax, then shareholders pay no corporation tax.

If shareholders receive dividends (income) from companies each year, they have to declare them to the tax inspector. The method of declaring the dividends is self-assessment. Dividends, paid out of profits after corporation tax, are also subject to income tax.

What's left after dividends are taken from profits and after corporation tax is called retained earnings, and these are ploughed back into the company. They cause the share price to rise, but again the method of collection is self-assessment. But there is a loophole. If shareholders buy their shares on the internet, national governments will not know about their ownership of shares. The shareholders will be able to avoid declaring their dividends or capital gains. So they could end up paying no corporation tax, no tax on their dividends, and no tax on their capital gains—no tax at all.

Because of this the Irish government has introduced a withholding tax on dividends of 20 per cent. This applies only to resident Irish companies. If a company that shareholders invested in is abroad, it is unlikely that the Government will get any tax from the shareholders.

This excludes the multi-millionaire shareholders who are resident abroad for tax purposes. They pay no tax in Ireland, even though they wield a lot of influence here.

Compare this 0 per cent tax with the current PAYE tax rate of 49 per cent for people earning over €33,800 in 2017, or on the annual average earnings of €37,419 in the third quarter of 2017. These people pay 49 per cent on each extra euro they earn.

Compare the shareholders' 0 per cent tax with the current PAYE rate (26½ per cent) for a person working 40 hours a week on the minimum wage of €9.25 per hour. When tax and USC and PRSI are taken into account, the person on the minimum wage pays 26½ per cent on each extra euro he or she earns.

It surely is a nice country to be a shareholder in! ★

From Burns to Liebknecht

Every so often, history presents us with an amazing affirmation of our humanity, a sense of continuity, the passing on of the torch. Jenny Farrell suggests that this applies supremely to Robert Burns's song "For A' That."

ROBERT BURNS, born on 25 January 1759, lived in an age of revolution: the American War of Independence, the French Revolution, the anti-slavery and anti-colonial revolution in Haïti and an agrarian revolution in Scotland, to name some landmark events. Modernised agriculture brought with it financial gain on the one hand and social polarisation on the other—wealthy tenants versus a rural proletariat.

A class struggle in the modern sense ensued. Those owning the means of production, providing food to the battlefields and the industrial centres, made enormous profits. The poor had too little to live on; financial crisis, hunger and tuberculosis swept over Scotland.

The dispossessed of Scotland, among them Robert Burns[1], warmly welcomed the new ideas coming from across the Atlantic—"We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal"—joined a few years later by the French declaring a new era of liberty, equality, and fraternity. Not long before his early death at the age of thirty-seven in 1796, Burns wrote his most famous song, "For A' That," a song celebrating and affirming the idea of the universal brotherhood of the dispossessed.

Is there for honest Poverty
That hings his head, an' a' that;
The coward slave—we pass him by,*
We dare be poor for a' that!
For a' that, an' a' that,
Our toils obscure an' a' that,
The rank is but the guinea's stamp,†
The Man's the gowd‡ for a' that.
*we pass by the coward who is ashamed of his poverty
†aristocratic rank is only the face stamped on a coin
‡gold

At the heart of all Burns's poetry are the concerns of the ordinary people of Scotland. By addressing the specifics of their lives, Burns achieves a universality that applies to all working people. He gives voice to milkmaids and ploughmen, weavers and farmers' wives, soldiers and travelling musicians, creating a cosmos in which ordinary folk can recognise themselves as part of a whole community.

Such a complete and realistic portrayal of the people asserts their humanity and engenders pride in themselves, and a hatred for their enemies. Depictions like these help Burns's readers to feel the conflict between their humanity and the misery they endure. Ultimately, this portrayal of the ordinary people points to the need for revolutionary change.

This logic lies at the core of Burns's poetry, and perhaps most outspokenly in "For A' That." This song reflects a sense of dignity, a scorn for the rich and a longing for universal brotherhood. The ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity are no abstract slogans but already exist, rooted in the lives of the people, logical projections of their humanity.

Neue
Rheinische Zeitung
Organ der Demokratie.

Then let us pray that come it may,
(As come it will for a' that,)
That Sense and Worth, o'er a' the earth,
Shall bear the gree,* an' a' that.
For a' that, an' a' that,
It's coming yet for a' that,
That Man to Man, the world o'er,
Shall brothers be for a' that.
*take the prize

Ferdinand Freiligrath, a poet of the German bourgeois revolution of March 1848 to July 1849 (and later a renegade), first translated "For A' That" into German, as "Trotz Alledem," in 1843. Freiligrath, who knew Marx and Engels, was a member of the Bund der Kommunisten (Communist League—founded in London in 1847) and a member of the editorial board of the revolutionary daily *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, published by Marx and Engels between 1848 and 1849.

At this time Freiligrath picked up Burns's torch of revolution, changing the text of "Trotz Alledem" to suit specifically the German situation while retaining the title, rhythm, and main idea. It was printed in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*[2] on 6 June 1848, and this text survives in the German political song movement to this day.

On 8 November 1918 the German sailors' mutiny in Kiel sparked revolutionary revolt throughout the country. When it reached Berlin, Karl Liebknecht proclaimed a free socialist republic of Germany. On 9 November, Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg founded a new daily revolutionary paper, *Die Rote Fahne (The Red Flag)*, as the paper of the Spartacus League, of which they were the leaders, and shortly afterwards of the Communist Party, founded on 1 January 1919.

Two weeks later, on 15 January 1919, both Liebknecht and Luxemburg were murdered.[3] Liebknecht had written his editorial for 15 January the previous day. It is his final public statement, and his legacy. The article, seizing the torch of revolution, is entitled "Trotz alledem" ("For all that"), and it ends:

The defeated of today will be the victorious of tomorrow . . . The German working class's way to Golgotha is not over . . . we are accustomed to being plunged from the peak into the depths. Yet our ship keeps a straight course firmly and proudly to its destination.

And whether we will still be alive when this is achieved—our programme will live; it will govern the world of liberated humanity. For all that! ★

1 Burns was highly regarded in the USSR
2 The final edition of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, printed in red ink. Its editors were threatened with arrest or exile. Marx emigrated to London.
3 The window *above* can still be seen in the former GDR Council of State building in Berlin.

Cocky Abdul

Gabriel Rosenstock introduces and translates another poem from the Indian subcontinent, a poem that sings of man's hope and despair and the never-ending disparity between the privileged and the poor.

Abdul Sotalach

Rahul Rai

Samhlaigh le do thoil sotal Abdul bhoicht:
Arsa Abdul bocht: "Bead i m'fhear mór lá breá éigin."
Arsa Abdul bocht: "Raghaidh mé ar scoil."
Arsa Abdul bocht: "Íosfaidh mé go dtí go mbeidh mé lán."
Arsa Abdul bocht: "Is mian liom a bheith saor."
Arsa Abdul bocht: "Is fuath liom an ricseá a tharraingt."
Arsa Abdul bocht: "Is fuath liom ragobair."
Arsa Abdul bocht: "Ní maith liom na saoistí ag tabhairt amach dom."
Arsa Abdul bocht: "Ní maith liom obair gan phá."
Samhlaigh le do thoil sotal Abdul bhoicht,
a liacht sin éileamh aige, ainneoin é a bheith beo bocht.

Cocky Abdul

Rahul Rai
Just imagine the cockiness of poor Abdul:
Poor Abdul says: "I'll be a big man one day."
Poor Abdul says: "I'll go to school."
Poor Abdul says: "I'll eat till I am full."
Poor Abdul says: "I want to be free."
Poor Abdul says: "I hate pulling the rickshaw."
Poor Abdul says: "I hate overtime."
Poor Abdul says: "I don't like being scolded by the babus."
Poor Abdul says: "I hate unpaid work."
Just imagine the cockiness of poor Abdul,
so many demands, despite being poor.

Patrick Pearse: A revolutionary democrat

Graham Harrington

PATRICK PEARSE is an often misunderstood revolutionary leader. He is seen more as a romantic nationalist when compared with James Connolly. Indeed even today some on the left criticise Connolly for making an alliance with Pearse and the Irish Volunteers in 1916.

The problem with this simplistic view is that it completely fails to understand that Pearse was as much of a revolutionary as Connolly.

Lenin said that the great misfortune of the Irish was that they had risen too soon, before the revolutionary upheavals elsewhere in Europe had time to occur. The Great October Socialist Revolution had a massive influence in countries such as Ireland, with mass rallies to celebrate it and the occupation of work-places around the country having a powerful effect on Irish political consciousness. This created the conditions that allowed some of those involved in the national liberation struggle to form the first Communist Party of Ireland in 1921.

Pearse began his political life as part of the Irish-language movement, joining Conradh na Gaeilge at the age of sixteen and becoming editor of its paper, *An Claidheamh Soluis*, at twenty-three. He took inspiration from such Protestant republicans as Wolfe Tone and Robert Emmet, embracing the Irish republican ideology which was, of course, founded by Presbyterians. This is contrary to the idea that Pearse was a fundamentalist Catholic.

Indeed, at a graveside oration to Wolfe Tone, Pearse reiterated the United Irishmen's definition of Irish nationhood as being beyond religion or ethnicity, that in Ireland "there must be not two nations or three nations but one nation, that Protestant and Dissenter must be brought into amity with Catholic, and that Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter must unite to achieve freedom for all."

At the time of Pearse's political awakening, republicanism was the most revolutionary ideology in Ireland. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels had supported the Fenian prisoners, and the Fenian movement were the Irish representatives in the First International. Pearse would later be one of the leaders of the Irish Republican Brotherhood.

Pearse had a radically different understanding of education from the prevailing views. His experiments at his own school, St Enda's, were completely different from those of the "Murder Machine," as he characterised the British schooling system in Ireland. He saw the task of the education system as preparing young people for participation in democracy, as an environment in which it was necessary to create "freedom to the individual school, freedom to the individual teacher, freedom as far as may be to the individual pupil." His understanding of education was completely revolutionary, and has many lessons for today.

What did Pearse think of the trade union movement, then in its formative years? He was firmly on the side of labour against capital. He wrote in response to the Dublin Lockout in 1913: "My instinct is with the landless man against the lord of lands, and with the breadless man against the master of millions. I may be wrong but I hold it a most terrible sin that there should be landless men in this island of waste yet fertile valleys, and that there should be breadless men in this city where great fortunes are made and destroyed."

He later wrote in *From a Hermitage* (1914): "There were many men of money among the Volunteers of 1778–1783: it was one of the weaknesses of the movement. Those who have are always inclined to hold, always afraid to risk. No good cause in Ireland appeals for help in vain provided those to whom it appeals are sufficiently poor."

As for politics, Pearse wrote in *The Sovereign People* that "no private right of property is good as against the public right of the nation. But the nation is under a moral obligation so to exercise its public right as to secure strictly equal rights and liberties to every man and woman within the nation . . . It is for the nation to determine to what extent private property may be held by its members and in what items of the nation's material resources private property shall be allowed . . . Let no man be mistaken as to who will be lord in Ireland when Ireland is free. The people will be lord and master."

Pearse was a revolutionary democrat. His alliance with Connolly was complementary for both leaders. His vision of a risen people, taking what they are entitled to, is still our demand in our own country, where the denial of democracy has led to partition and two states caught in the vice-grip of imperialism, with inequality and oppression being the norm. The only solution is the socialist republic, the republic of Tone, Connolly, Pearse, Marx, and Lenin. ★

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