Socialist Voice

Communist Party of Ireland
Páirtí Cumannach na hÉireann
Partisan Patriotic Internationalist
Number 172 June 2019 €1.50
www.commmunistpartyofirerland.ie

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Get politics out of the chambers and into the communities!

All elections are but a snapshot of the degree of political or class consciousness of the mass of the people, in particular of working people.

"The civilized states have a claim upon the uncivilized populations, as well as a duty toward them, and that claim is that they shall become civilized; and if they cannot accomplish their own civilization, then must they submit to the power that can do it for them."
John Burgess,
Political Science and Comparative Constitutional Law (New York, 1890)

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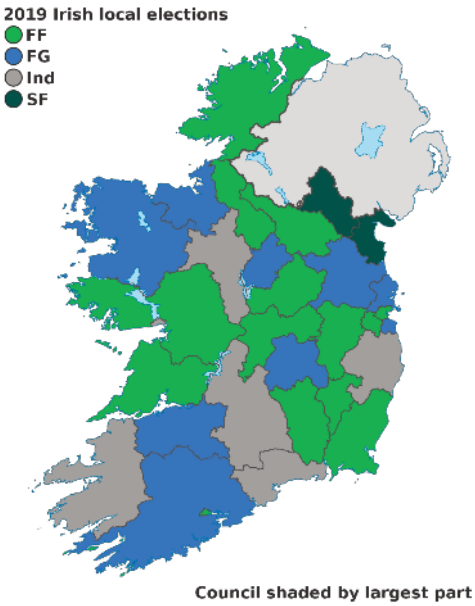
Socialist Voice
43 East Essex Street
Dublin D02 XH96
(01) 6708707

ISSN 0791-5217

It is clear from the turnout in the recent elections, both north and south, that large numbers of people (more than half) decided not to bother voting at all—a phenomenon that is not confined to Ireland but is an increasing trend in capitalist countries.

The re-emergence of the opportunist Green Party as a factor at both the local and the EU level is largely a reflection of growing concern by people about the environmental catastrophe facing us all. It was the actions and mobilisation of hundreds of thousands of young people in Ireland and Europe, demanding action from governments to save the planet, that galvanised public opinion. The growth in support for the Green Party is not a reflection of support for its policies,



which are not anti-corporate but are centred on changing life styles for those who can afford to do so, and punishing those who can't.

People well remember this party's role in government: bank bail-outs, the imposition of EU debt on Irish people, cuts in the minimum wage, and water and service charges. Working people need to be vigilant, as more of these policies will be coming wherever the Green Party has an influence on decision-making.

The left parties, including Sinn Féin, People Before Profit, and Socialist Party, failed to make the advances they had hoped for in the local elections or, in the case of Sinn Féin, lost heavily. A significant factor in these losses has been the manoeuvring and side deals with local power structures, which have not gone unnoticed by working people, such as the selling off of public lands, making deals in return for small quantities of "social housing," but never challenging the fundamental strategy of government policy.

In any case, working people realise that local authorities have little power, and the little they have is in the hands of the city and county managers, the local state apparatus. People see local government as being powerless, controlled by vested interests.

In particular, the effect of the mass mobilisation of working people on water charges, which benefited Sinn Féin, People Before Profit, and the Socialist Party, has now subsided. People Before Profit (Socialist Workers' Party) and Solidarity (Socialist Party) won 28 seats in the 2014 elections, now down to 11 seats in 2019. Sinn Féin won 15 per cent of the vote in 2014, falling to 9½ per cent in 2019, with the number of seats falling from 159 to 82.

The left grew when workers were in struggle and mobilised to advance their interests. Working people have begun to

Uaigh na mairtíreach

Dónall Ó Briain

I gceantar Bhaile na Lochlannach, ar bhruach thuaidh na Life, tá cnoc íseal a raibh coill bheag air tráth agus plásóg nó plásán ina lár. Thug na Sasanaigh "the Arbour" ar an bplásóg agus ansin Arbour Hill ar an gcnoc.

Timpeall na bliana 1840 bhunaigh arm Shasana reilig ar an gcnoc, taobh thiar den Bheairic Ríoga (Dún Uí Choileáin níos déanaí), agus ansin sa bhliain 1848 beairic choinneála (Príosún Chnoc na Plásóige anois).

Nuair a thosaigh Éirí Amach 1916 cuireadh an Ginearál John Maxwell go hÉirinn mar "ghobharnóir míleata." D'ordaigh seisean clais a thochailt i gclós na beairice coinneála a mbeadh slí inti do chéad corpán. Tar éis an éirí amach thionóil sé cúirteanna airm, faoi rún agus gan abhcóidí cosanta—coinníollacha a bhí mídhleathach fiú faoi dhlí míleata.

Gearradh pionós an bháis ar nócha rannpháirtí, cé nár cuireadh i bhfeidhm ach cúig cinn déag acu—ceithre cinn déag i mBaile Átha Cliath agus ceann amháin i gCorcaigh. I gclós na mbristeoirí cloch i bPríosún Chill Mhaighneann a cuireadh na hóglaigh chun báis, idir an 3ú lá agus an 12ú lá de Bhealtaine.

Chuir na himeachtaí seo imní ar rialtas Shasana, agus rinneadh iarracht ar stop a chur leo. Bhí aicme cheannais Shasana ag iarraidh na Stáit Aontaithe a tharraingt isteach sa Chogadh Mór, agus

The Irish left, like most of the left in the EU, peddled the illusion that "another Europe is possible," with "a People's Europe" and other such opportunist slogans.

realise that they won only a partial victory on water charges. They are beginning to see through the political opportunism of elements of the left, organisations that are all too willing to use working people's anger for short-term electoral gains. Many workers who participated in such campaigns feel let down by those who are prepared to enter government with Fianna Fáil, the Labour Party, or even Fine Gael.

It is not just in Ireland that the left suffered setbacks but in all the member-states of the European Union. The right has captured the frustrations of working people as expressed in their opposition to all things EU. It capitalises on this by exploiting the scares of capitalism, but it does not and will not challenge the source: monopoly capitalism, as now manifested in the European Union and its institutions.

The Irish left, like most of the left in the EU, peddled the illusion that "another Europe is possible," with "a People's Europe" and other such opportunist slogans. Much of the Irish and European left have positioned themselves as essentially left-liberals, rarely challenging the fundamental nature of the system that is responsible for the gross inequality, poverty, mass unemployment and super-exploitation experienced daily by millions of working families—a system designed to protect the interests of the 1 per cent. They minimise class antagonism and class struggle in favour of culture wars.

The elections to the fraudulent "European Parliament" have confirmed the local election results, with the establishment parties consolidating the middle ground, Sinn Féin losing a seat, and a number of progressive left independents winning seats. Sinn Féin's volte face in relation to the EU has sown a great deal of confusion within working-class communities, north and south, as well as among its own members. But opportunism will always reveal itself in the long run.

Brexit continues to sow division and confusion throughout the country but particularly in the north of Ireland. The election of the leader of the Alliance Party, Naomi Long, to the EU Parliament reflects the confusion within elements of the unionist professional and business classes about how they can promote their own material self-interest. The support for the Alliance Party—which advocates remaining in the EU—is consistent, following the results of the local elections, and may well herald the end of the Ulster Unionist Party.

The contradictions thrown up by Brexit are causing confusion among elements of unionism as they struggle to see how their interests are best served, with the DUP and Traditional Unionist Voice trying to out-unionist each other, steeped, as they both are, in bigotry.

At this juncture the future of the people of the north of Ireland is not being decided by themselves but by the split in the British ruling class and the crisis in the EU. The Brexit crisis has been damaging to both the European Union and the British Union; nevertheless the contending imperial interests of Britain and the EU have no concern for the welfare of the people of Ireland.

If the working class is to advance its own class interests, more than elections or electoral strategies are required. If we want radical change, this is not attainable through electoral cycles but rather through the mobilisation of the class as a political power of itself, not mediated through institutional structures designed to deaden and blunt any challenge to the system.

It's out of the chambers and into the communities: to build organisations to advance the interests of working people, to build working people's power.

"Don't be 'practical' in politics. To be practical in that sense means that you have schooled yourself to think along the lines, and in the grooves that those who rob you would desire you to think."—James Connolly ★

bhí a fhios acu láithreach go gcuirfeadh an marú déistin ar phobal Mheiriceá, agus go háirithe ar an bpobal mór Gael-Mheiriceánach. Ach d'fhreagair an Ginearál Maxwell go n-éireodh sé as a phost dá dtabharfaí ordú dá leithéid dó, agus ghéill an rialtas.

De réir ghnás arm Shasana, ceanglaíodh gach íobartach de chathaoir, agus greamaíodh blúire páipéir dá gcliabh mar mharc dírithe. Tairgeadh púicín dóibh freisin; dhiúltaigh beirt acu an púicín, cé nach eol dúinn cén bheirt.

Cuireadh na corpáin isteach in othar-charr agus tugadh go Cnoc na Plásóige iad. Leagadh sa chlais ansin iad san ord inar tugadh ann iad.

Ar an 10ú lá de Bhealtaine, nuair a bhí dhá dhuine dhéag de na príosúnaigh curtha chun báis, d'fhoilsigh an *Irish Independent* grianghraf den Chonaíleach mar aon leis an líne "Still lies in Dublin Castle recovering from his wounds," agus san eagrán céanna an t-eagarfhocal míchlúiteach a dúirt, "Let the worst of the ringleaders be singled out and dealt with as they deserve." (Go deireadh a shaoil mhaígh William Martin Murphy—úinéir an *Independent*, príomh-chaipitlí Bhaile Átha Cliath agus deargnamhaid an ITGWU agus an Chonaíligh—nárbh é féin a scríobh an t-eagarfhocal sin ach Tim Harrington, eagarthóir an nuachtáin.)

Dhá lá níos déanaí, ar an 12ú lá de Bhealtaine, tugadh an Conaíleach agus Seán Mac Diarmada amach agus lámhachadh iad. Nuair a fógraíodh an nuacht i bParlaimint Shasana thosaigh na feisirí ag bualadh bos—Páirtí an Lucht Oibre chun tosaigh.

Sa bhliain 1948 bheartaigh an Rialtas ar an suíomh a athchóiriú agus a leagan amach mar shéadchomhartha, agus críochnaíodh an obair sin i 1955. Ghrean Michael Biggs téacs iomlán Fhorógra Phoblacht na hÉireann i litreoireacht álainn ar an mballa aol-chloiche taobh thiar den uaigh, obair a chríochnaigh sé i 1964.

Ón mbliain 1919 nó mar sin d'eagraíodh an ITGWU paráid agus searmanas bliantúil i dtrátha an 12ú lá de Bhealtaine. Leanadh leis sin go dtí na 1960í, nuair a tugadh eagrú na hócáide do Chomhaile Ceardchumann Bhaile Átha Cliath. Bhí smacht faighte ar an gcomhairle ceardchumann ag dream frithnáisiúnach (Páirtí na nOibrithe mar atá orthu inniu), a raibh sé mar aidhm acu deireadh a chur leis an gcomóradh, agus faoi dheireadh d'éirigh leo. Ansin thosaigh Páirtí Cumannach na hÉireann ar chomóradh bliantúil a eagrú, agus leantar leis sin i gcónaí. ★

The dead hand of electoralism

EOGHAN O'NEILL

WITH THE local election results just in, why is the left seen as a marginal and ignored voice among a majority of people?

It seems that politics in Ireland is personality-based, and this has led to the situation where support for such politicians as Paul Murphy, Richard Boyd Barrett, Luke Ming Flanagan and Clare Daly—whatever the merits of the individual, the parties, and the type of politics they espouse—will be based on the strength of the individual and their personality more than on the politics that they champion.

The number of electoral fronts and the number of independent candidates is a clear sign of the individualist-style politics of the left, and its reliance on and obsession with elections.

It is very apparent that what we have are individuals advocating a movement that is on the fringe of society rather than a popular movement advocating individuals to represent them. This power relationship between individuals and a political movement needs to be inverted.

This is not intended as a criticism of those who run candidates in elections, or of the candidates. However, let's not fool ourselves into thinking that engaging in electoral politics can bring about the necessary and fundamental changes of state power and change the class forces that dictate our national and foreign policies. Let's not sink to being both opportunist and dishonest. Once we engage in the electoral process, whether aware of it or not, we are within the remit of bourgeois democracy; and bourgeois democracy will always be run in the interests of the ruling class, the owners and beneficiaries of capital.

Without trying to be patronising here, it is perfectly acceptable to choose either to engage or not to engage electorally, and it is up to the party to decide whether diverting resources to elections is the right strategy at a particular time. However, building an electoral platform has been the main focus of left parties, and everything else is secondary, so we do have to question whether left parties are so naïve that they actually believe in electoral politics as the motor of change in determining and changing class power and class rule; or are they hiding a revisionist agenda behind socialist rhetoric?

Either way, it does not and has not advanced the working class.

It can be argued that elections and electioneering have continuously and consistently weakened the working class and have stunted the growth of class-consciousness, because elections in Ireland (and elsewhere) are based on building a network around an individual, and not on individuals building a network around a movement.

Even worse, often parties and individuals cynically engage with the issues of the day (this is not to deny that there are honest politicians doing trojan work for the working class—it's just that they are in the minority), especially just before an election, and they dive head-first into declaring their support for this, that and the other campaign that they can add to their CV come canvassing time.

But what happens to the campaign and the movement once the dust settles after the election? It withers away; because the time, energy and resources needed to sustain a long-term campaign, building into a movement, is not focused on building political education, supporting and engaging community activists or work forces but on shaping, grooming and planting potential for future elections.

As a case in point, in 2016, at the height of its influence and after a number of marches that reached to more than 100,000 people, the Right to Water and Right to Change

movement had a hundred candidates endorsing its programme. At last month's local elections that number had been whittled down to a mere sixteen candidates; and come the next elections no doubt the figure will be reduced even further.

From what was the largest and most energised political movement of the past decades it now looks like becoming just a historical footnote, a "what might have been" in Irish labour history. It had all the ingredients for becoming a mass left movement, based on local engagement and self-sustaining in local areas. It had the potential to become a centre of organising, educating, and agitating; but the Triad movement (community, trade union and political) was—not to mince words—betrayed by those political parties that could not see past an orgy of votes come election time.

Once the movement was brought into the electoral swamp and taken off the streets and out of community organisations, the power of the movement was lost.

It was the many thousands of people over a sustained period, connected, talking, educating, and building, that struck fear into the heart of the Government, that was the real strength of the movement—not the candidates standing on its platform and getting elected to the Dáil.

Where is that strength now? Have we enshrined the public ownership of water in the Constitution? Where is that "left" now? And what can it deliver for the people?

The real tragedy of it all is that instead of a strong, militant and growing left movement that could have gone on to champion its further demands on the state and deepen its class-consciousness, the Right to Water and Right to Change movement has been shattered into a thousand tiny pieces. Even worse, this has allowed extreme right-wing and racist views to gain a foothold, attracting more attention than any left party running in the local elections. And the results make this very clear.

The CPI, to its credit, has never put electoral politics above the task of developing class-consciousness within the working class. It has always stood firm on the importance of political education over political elections, even if that has been to the detriment of the growth of the party by not engaging in crass opportunism and using campaigns and issues as a way to increase the profile of potential candidates.

This can be seen in the many articles over the years in *Socialist Voice* warning about such opportunism, and those within the movements warning against such exploits. Time and time again, campaign after campaign, we have witnessed multiple parties of the left explicitly using campaigns as a way to springboard their own profile.

One sure way to kill off any campaign such as the Right to Water, Right to Change, the various housing campaigns, workers' solidarity campaigns, and many others, is to allow them to be taken over by political personalities seeking to increase their political stock, clambering over each other for photo ops. Once that political opportunity is gone, or has served its purpose, there is no need to direct resources to it; and the activist network, left standing, starved of the opportunity of developing class-consciousness from engagement with the campaign, will eventually—through burn-out, disillusionment, inactivity, and betrayal—abandon the campaign and be left to just wither away.

It is high time that people began to mature politically, wake up from their unconsciousness, and abandon the electoral fetishism and individualism that is prevalent in Irish politics. Once the fanfare of these local elections is over, can we not sit down and really begin to do the work that needs to be done to repair the damage done to the potential in the water movement?

Let us analyse today's concrete situation and our concrete conditions so as to set about the task of building a movement that is solidified around a left programme and unifying those involved with that programme.

Movements, if they are to reach their objective, cannot be driven and decided by individual personalities—on the contrary, the individual who represents it needs to be decided, directed and driven by the movement. ★

The EU tightens its grip

EUGENE McCARTAN

OVER THE course of the many referendums fought on the various EU treaties, the Irish establishment always sold the idea that neutrality and foreign-policy decisions would remain with the Irish state. But, as time progressed, those forces that strongly opposed these treaties and argued that there was only one direction that the EU was headed in have been proved correct.

The latest example of the creeping control, or what the EU calls "competencies," is in the area of foreign policy. Until now the pretence has been maintained that EU foreign policy was agreed by consensus. That particular fig leaf is now going to be dropped, with a proposal by the EU Commission to introduce "qualified majority" voting to ensure that the bloc speaks and acts with one voice.

The EU Commission is arguing that such a change can be brought about by invoking an obscure "passerelle" clause (allowing the alteration of a procedure without a formal amendment) in article 31 (3) of the EU treaty, which permits the EU to "further extend qualified majority voting in common foreign and security policy matters if member states unanimously agree to do so."

The Commission's proposal is supported by the two most powerful EU states, France and Germany. A senior Finnish diplomat has stated that the Finnish government was open to "having a look at qualified majority voting on foreign and security policy," a view shared by many in the diplomatic services of member-states.

This would only further reduce the capacity of the people of Ireland to change or influence Irish foreign and security policy. ★

Jimmy Doran

LAST MONTH we saw the largest housing demonstration in Dublin so far, under the banner of Raise the Roof, as more than 20,000 citizens took to the streets.

This campaign, launched by the ICTU, is going from strength to strength as the trade union movement takes the lead, uniting with community activists and various political groups to demand public housing for our people and for the right to housing to be guaranteed in the Constitution of Ireland. The large numbers on the march clearly demonstrate the importance of the trade union movement being in the forefront of the campaign and involved in the solution to the housing emergency.

Within the ranks of broadly based campaigns such as this there will always be individuals or groups who insinuate themselves with the sole purpose of lessening the demands to something that the establishment is willing to concede. Despite this, speaker after speaker at the demonstration demanded that the state build public housing, and stop paying subsidies to private landlords and property speculators.

The fact of the matter is that the provision of a home, even at market value, costs half what private landlords are subsidised for doing. We must go much further than the state buying houses off property developers at inflated prices: we need not only to "raise the roof" and draw attention to the housing crisis but to raise the demands to a permanent solution.

We need publicly built and publicly owned homes, on public land. This removes the profit element of financiers, solicitors, estate agents, architects and builders from the cost of supplying a home. It makes no sense to involve the private sector in the equation, whose sole purpose is to extract profit from the provision of homes, resulting in fewer homes.

The next barrier that needs to be removed is an income-level qualification for public housing. For public housing to be taken out of the category of accommodation of last resort it must be made universally accessible to all citizens, no matter what their income. This will result in a wide social mix, with residents of public housing no longer ghettoised in public-housing estates, inhabited only by low-income families.

At present, income restrictions in Dublin impose a maximum earning threshold of €35,000 per year for a single person and €42,000 for a couple with children, with an average 15 per cent lower outside Dublin.

The next barrier is the narrative that public housing is giving people a "free house." This has to be exposed for the lie that it is. It is utter nonsense, circulated by the property class in their own interests.

In 2017, public-housing tenants paid rents of €351 million to local authorities. In Dublin, the total rent paid to local authorities was €78 million. Average rent

The face of monopoly capitalism

Aisling Joyce

AMAZON IS Europe's largest internet retailer, with a turnover twice that of its twenty largest competitors. In 2017 its chief executive earned $2.16 million per hour, while Amazon workers receive the statutory minimum wage, which in the EU varies between €1.42 and €11.27 per hour.

In 2018 the company generated a global turnover of about €210 billion—an increase of more than 30 per cent on the previous year. Employing more than 600,000 workers around the globe, it now has a market capitalisation of more than €730 billion, with its operating profit amounting to approximately €11 billion.

Ireland is not the only country in the European Union to do sweetheart deals with transnational corporations, such as Apple, Amazon, Facebook, Google, and Microsoft, among many others. Thanks to a deal with the government of Luxembourg (when Jean-Claude Juncker was prime minister), Amazon did not pay any tax on 75 per cent of its turnover between 2003 and 2014.

These companies are notorious for the super-exploitation of workers and the elimination of competitors through unfair (and often illegal) business practices, as well as for the environmental impact of their excessive packaging and the destruction of goods that are returned in perfect condition.

Amazon generates its massive turnover by being (a) one of the biggest on-line retailers, (b) the operator of by far the largest on-line market for third-party suppliers, (c) one of the largest providers of on-line services, and (d) the distributor of the products ordered.

Because of its monopoly position in some sectors, many independent traders depend on Amazon for reaching their customers. Not satisfied with this monopoly position, and the vast profits that it is able to make, its strategy now is to drive more independent retailers and manufacturers out of business through its sheer market power, for example through copying products and undercutting prices.

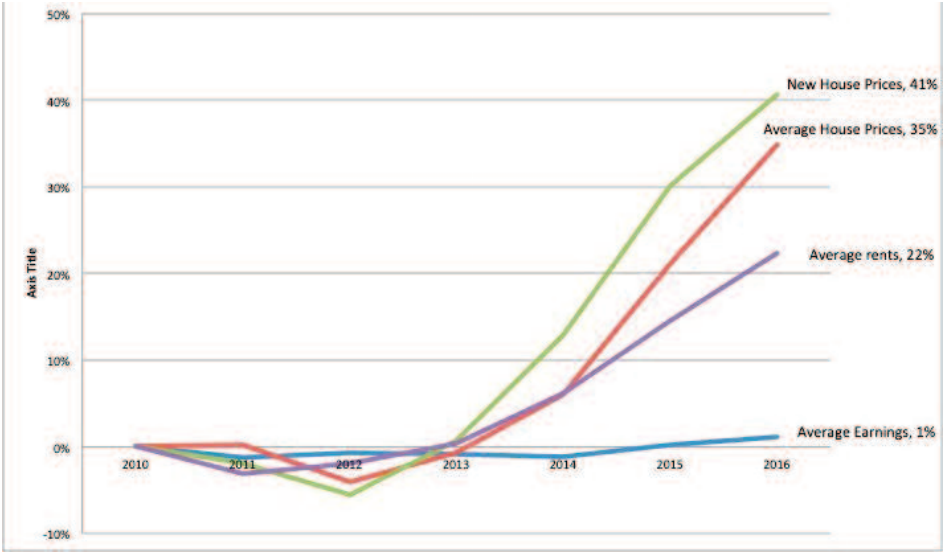
With this uneven power relationship

is €272 a month. This is income-linked at 15 per cent of household income, including social welfare payments, shift allowance, overtime, bonuses, etc. The only income that is exempt is child benefit, charity payments, and fuel allowance. So it is a long way off a "free house."

The lessening of demands comes in the form of the "cost-rental model," which we have written at length about in *Socialist Voice* and is now being called for by Raise the Roof. The cost of this model comes in at €1,500 a month in St Michael's Estate, which is ridiculous, and unaffordable, and puts the full cost of building and maintenance on the tenants, who will never actually own the home.

This policy model needs to be dropped. It is put out by those who want to see the private gravy train of HAP, RAS and subsidies continue for their class. Under the present system, household income would have to be €120,000 a year to warrant rent levels equal to this. Are the councillors who champion this policy going to raise the rents of existing tenants, which would inevitably happen if this model was allowed to slip into the public housing system?

Others who claim to be on the left want everything to be "fully costed" and "within budget." The point they are missing is that this would be the neo-liberal budget. If the working people of Ireland are to regain any level of equality in their lives, neo-liberalism must be smashed, not tinkered with.



House prices, rents and earning in Ireland

If proof was needed, the housing emergency demonstrates the failure of neo-liberalism for the ordinary working people of this country. Incomes have stagnated; property prices have soared, along with rents. The vast majority of work is now precarious work, and now so too is shelter.

For the first time in our history, private rented accommodation is the main form of tenure in our cities and towns. At the same time, 53 per cent of all properties sold last year were paid for in cash.

This is the reality of neo-liberalism: the widening divide and inequality that is devastating communities. A new super-rich property class has emerged, along with the influx of huge international finance corporations coming into Ireland to feed off the misery of our people who can no longer afford a home.

Profits available on rented accommodation in Ireland are among the highest in the world, as the politicians have fulfilled their plan to make Ireland "the best little country in the world to do business in"—to benefit a tiny elite, at enormous cost to the rest of us.

and its monopoly control, Amazon can impose huge burdens on those traders that wish to use its services, demanding a large percentage, thereby forcing tighter margins. The result is a constant downward pressure on workers' wages and conditions, competing with workers around the globe who never see or know each other.

According to Union Network International, an international umbrella organisation for service unions, Amazon's company strategy is based on brutal piecework, carried out under permanent control, using advanced monitoring technology.

Amazon workers can cover distances of 16 to 20 km in an hour and lift 50 tonnes of packages per day, and may be expected to handle three hundred packages per hour. Taking breaks is often not possible, even to go to the toilet, forcing some to urinate instead in a bottle at their work station. Because of work-place accidents, ambulances had to be called six hundred times during a period of three years to Amazon's warehouses in Britain, where 87 per cent of its workers reported suffering chronic joint pain.

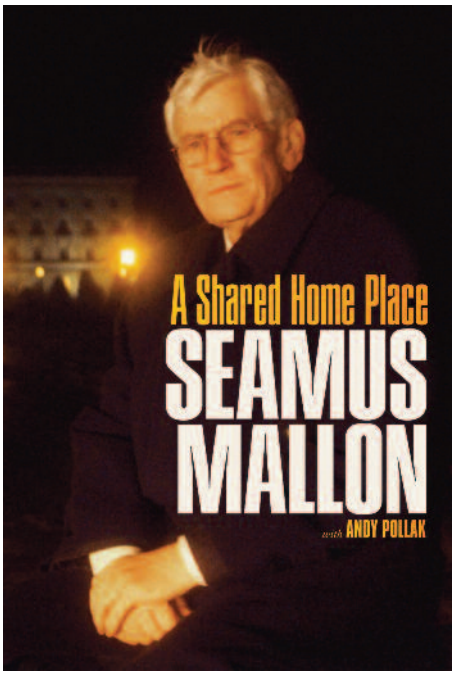
Amazon exploits every possible legal loophole: in deciding what break times workers are entitled to, in defeating strikes, and in the way temporary workers are hired. Safeguards are reduced to a minimum. Through "sector shopping" (classification in more favourable sectors in different countries), the company chooses the lowest possible costs. To this end it claims to be a logistics (i.e. delivery) company in Germany while in France it operates as a "small trader."

Throughout Europe there are growing efforts to organise Amazon workers, resulting in numerous strikes. In May 2018 in Germany, where the company has eleven warehouses, employing a permanent staff of 13,000, the United Services Union organised a strike in several branches, as the company was not paying a living wage.

In Italy a collective agreement with Amazon on wages, shift work and working hours was introduced for the first time in 2018, and this was taken as a model.

In November 2018 Amazon workers in Britain, Spain, France, Italy and Germany went on strike against their working conditions. Union Network International has successfully established the UNI Global Amazon Alliance as a network straddling fourteen countries, and struggle is certain to continue.

An unhelpful contribution



Seamus Mallon's recently published book *A Shared Home Place* is not merely an unhelpful contribution in a difficult situation but is positively dangerous argues **Tommy McKearney**

THANKS TO his profile as a former leading member of the SDLP and former deputy first minister, he is gaining publicity for an ill-conceived and poorly thought-out proposal that might otherwise be dismissed as the musings of an old man.

Mallon insists in his book that in the event of a border poll a return of "50 per cent + 1" in favour of unity should not be sufficient to end partition.

Not only would this be yet another perversion of democracy but it would have consequences even more damaging than those envisaged by Mallon.

The northern state was created in the first place by riding roughshod over the expressed wishes of an overwhelming majority of the Irish people. Thus founded, Northern Ireland's ruling elite continued to govern for decades, with little or no concern for democratic norms. To once again set out a constitutional template giving precedence to the wishes of a minority would have continuing and dangerous implications for democratic governance in Ireland.

Bear in mind that Seamus Mallon is not alone in advocating this position: Leo Varadkar said much the same last year in Belfast, while the former Taoiseach Bertie Ahern is also on record as saying that 50 per cent + 1 ought not be enough to end partition. If unionism is not bound by adherence to a universally understood application of democracy, might a property-owning elite not adopt a similar position in the event of a socialist government coming to power in Ireland?

However, apart from these admittedly important philosophical questions, there are serious practical issues that have to be considered when discussing this matter.

The first difficulty thrown up by the Mallon line is that we no longer know what percentage is required to bring about change. If 50 per cent + 1 is not enough, what arbitrary level should be acceptable? And what message would this send to dangerous and intransigent elements within unionism? Telling those reactionary elements that threatening or practising violence secures their place within the United Kingdom would guarantee that very outcome. If ever there was such a thing as a self-fulfilling prophecy, surely this is one.

Anybody with even a superficial understanding of Northern politics knows only too well of an almost irresistible tendency within unionism for its leaders to be pushed towards the "not an inch" and "no surrender" position. Terence O'Neill, Brian Faulkner and David Trimble all fell foul of what we might now describe as Orange populism. So, instead of encouraging "understanding and reconciliation" within Northern society, Mallon's proposal would simply give an incentive to irreconcilable loyalism.

As a consequence, it would undoubtedly marginalise and intimidate the emerging unionist middle ground, leaving it subject to well-practised accusations of Lundyism or possibly worse.

Moreover, and apparently overlooked in this discussion about unionism's response to a poll favouring Irish unity, is the reaction from within the republican/nationalist population in the Six Counties.* What might be their response if told that nothing changes after gaining a democratic majority is surely the second and possibly greater flaw in Seamus Mallon's thinking.

Left abandoned by the Southern state in 1921, and subjected for decades thereafter to the systemic injustices of the Orange state in the North, there is little affection within the republican/nationalist community for the political entity that is Northern Ireland. This community is unlikely to remain indifferent or passive if denied what has long been promised, i.e. that a vote to leave would be respected.

This throws up at least two unpalatable scenarios.

For a start, there is the obvious fact that even a slim majority in a border poll would be reflected in the make-up of any devolved administration. Under existing arrangements, this would mean a non-unionist first minister in charge of an administration with an anti-partition majority elected by a disgruntled community. Faced with an aggressively hostile unionism, and in order to appease its electorate, the assembly would probably introduce nationalistic legislation.

Imagine the tremors that would convulse many unionist circles when parity of esteem would be granted to Irish, to flying the Tricolour, and to enhancing all-Ireland institutions. How could peace and reconciliation prosper in that climate?

And this is the more benevolent scenario. It hardly needs pointing to something still more serious. There is the distinct possibility, indeed probability, of an intense republican armed campaign. How would a British government then defend its decision to ignore the democratically expressed wishes of the majority of people in Northern Ireland? How long could London sustain support for such a position? And what scale of catastrophe might ensue if it were forced to withdraw in the face of domestic and global condemnation? How, indeed, would a Dublin government respond to such a situation?

Ideally it would be best if 100 per cent of the North's population were to vote Yes in a border poll. Common sense indicates that this is a pipe dream; and therefore the next-best option, even if deemed the least-bad one, must prevail. Standing firmly over the democratic norm of 50 per cent + 1 offers the only viable option. It brings clarity and therefore reality to the process. Avoiding the ambivalence of a movable, arbitrary ceiling would force all concerned, including both states and people, to think seriously about the future.

Moreover, and contrary to Mallon's jeremiad, by making it clear that a majority vote would be vigorously upheld would offer positive benefits. In the first instance it would become clear that violent resistance is futile while simultaneously strengthening the case of those advocating positive engagement.

Finally, though, none of the above removes the enormous onus that is on those advocating an end to partition to engage positively with the unionist population. Let us keep in mind that many in that community view the prospect of constitutional change with deep apprehension and fear. It is important, therefore, to argue persuasively and to convince them that socialist republicanism does not view this step as crude annexation by the "Free State."

It is vital that our unionist neighbours (and indeed all workers) come to understand that they are being invited to join in the building of a new and better political entity in Ireland—a workers' republic.

It has to be made clear that such a republic will not only guarantee freedom of conscience but will also provide a better standard of living for all. To do this requires the development of a programme encompassing these objectives.

In January of this year many of our readers and their friends gathered in Liberty Hall, Dublin, to celebrate the centenary of the first Dáil and to promote a Democratic Programme for the 21st Century. This initiative offers the opportunity to address these issues, but it must be developed and built upon by working at the grass-roots level to involve people meaningfully at the heart of political and economic life. We have to demonstrate to people what a progressive and thoroughly democratic Ireland will look like.

Let us therefore lay to rest the profoundly undemocratic notion being promoted by Seamus Mallon in *A Shared Home Place*. The elderly politician waited eighty-two years before writing this, his first book. It would be helpful if he waited another eighty-two years before writing a second. ★

*Republican/nationalist: Neither term is perfectly accurate in all cases, but it is used here for the sake of brevity.

The robbery of Irish resources continues

ON 28 MAY the Department of Communications, Climate Action and the Environment granted consent for an exploratory oil and gas well off the Kerry coast under the Petroleum and Other Minerals Development Act (1960).

The department received an application last November from CNOOC Petroleum Europe (a subsidiary of the Chinese National Offshore Oil Company) and Exxonmobil Exploration and Production Ireland (Offshore South) Ltd for permission to drill an exploratory well in the Porcupine Basin area.

The proposed well is within an area of 1,300 sq. km where CNOOC and Exxonmobil already have an exploration licence until February 2033.

A letter from the minister of state, Seán Canney, grants consent for the placing of a temporary well head and associated infrastructure on the seabed. The minister says that the development of Ireland's indigenous oil and gas resources has the potential to "deliver significant and sustained benefits" in securing an indigenous energy supply over imports, economic development, and financial return.

But it will produce little for the Irish people only potential vast profits for global oil giants and their shareholders. ★

Lessons from the Cuban Revolution

GRAHAM HARRINGTON

THE CUBAN Revolution did not begin as a socialist revolution; in fact the original Cuban communist party, the PSP (People's Socialist Party), denounced the attack on the Moncado Barracks in 1953 as a "putsch," and, while engaging with the rebels during the guerilla campaign, it did not fully align with them, believing instead in building mass support in the cities.

After the overthrow of Batista, the PSP and the 26th of July Movement moved closer together and eventually formed the Communist Party of Cuba.

The Communist Party, then as now, is not an electoral party; it does not stand candidates in the national, provincial and municipal elections held regularly in Cuba. Its members, however, do work within the mass organisations, such as the Federation of Cuban Women and the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution, which have a presence in nearly every Cuban street and tower block. This has made the Communist Party keep its guiding role within society, without a reliance on electoral success—something to ponder on for those in Ireland who maintain illusions about a parliamentary road to socialism.

Education is one of the pillars of the Revolution, with all education provided as a right to all citizens, free of charge. Cuba spends more of its GDP on education—13 per cent—than any other country in the world. It also leads

US peace movement defends the Venezuelan embassy

LAST NOVEMBER a very impressive peace conference was held in Dublin: the First International Conference against US and NATO Bases. The main impetus for this conference came from the peace movement in the United States.

Many of the participants showed their seriousness and determination in organising the Embassy Protection Collective to defend the Venezuelan embassy in Washington from being handed over to the impostor created by the US government.

As the puppy puppet Juan Guaidó failed in his third attempt to organise a coup against the democratically elected President Maduro, and as the US government stepped up its illegal economic war against Venezuela, these peace activists moved in to the embassy, at the invitation of the legitimate Venezuelan government.

The US government wishes to hand over the embassy to the self-proclaimed "interim president," Guaidó, whom it trained and promoted as its agent. Unusually—though it is well experienced in organising coups in Latin America—the United States is quite open in its

the world in medical care, with the emphasis on preventive medicine, provided by doctors who live among the people they serve.

Women make up a majority of parliamentarians, the second-highest proportion in the world. More than 60 per cent of university students are women, as are the majority of professionals. This is assisted by state-subsidised abortion and child services as well as education programmes that make men share the domestic duties, such as cleaning, cooking, and looking after children—something that has allowed Cuban men also to break free of the negative effects of traditional roles.

These achievements make the Cuban standard of living very attractive to those living in the Global South. Travelling through Cuba, one will not find people living in overcrowded barrios, run by armed gangs peddling drugs and prostitution—in fact drugs of all kinds, including marijuana, are illegal; instead one will find people content to socialise in their communities, with children playing even into the late evenings in the back streets of Havana, free from concern. This is in stark contrast to the everyday life of others in the Caribbean and elsewhere.

Cuba, a small country of 11 million people, has always lent the hand of friendship to other peoples. Cuban internationalist volunteers were instrumental in preventing apartheid South Africa and the West from defeating the national liberation movements in Angola and Namibia, with the Cuban-led military victory at the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale being a turning-point in that conflict and contributing to the downfall of apartheid. Cuban medical volunteers keep up that tradition, whether it be those who took part in Operation Miracle in Venezuela or those who assisted in treating Ebola victims in Africa.

These achievements, impressive in any context, have meant that Cuba is a prime target of US imperialism, which has maintained an illegal blockade on the country since shortly after the Revolution. The blockade differs from an embargo, in that it prevents third-party countries from trading with Cuba, meaning that the importing of materials as diverse as oil and pencils is either extremely expensive or, in some cases, impossible.

The cost of the blockade is in the hundreds of billions, and prevents Cuba from achieving even more successes, not to mention depriving the world of Cuban expertise in the fields of health and education.

The linchpin in the transformation of the Cuban Revolution from a democratic to an explicitly socialist revolution was the experiences of the people in the democratic struggle itself, with the role of the United States in propping up Batista becoming more and more obvious, as was the role of the criminal Cuban bourgeoisie as a dependant on foreign capital.

The Agrarian Reform, one of the first major policies of the revolution, proved to be much more than a mere reform or tinkering with the system. It eliminated large landholdings and thus, to quote an article in *Granma,* the Communist Party's daily paper, "led to greater transformations within the Revolution and, for some scholars, established its agrarian, anti-imperialist, democratic-popular character, since the awarding of land to those who worked it affected not only Cuban latifundistas [big landowners] but foreign owners of huge estates as well, especially from the United States."

This was a transformative demand, which matched where Cubans were in their political consciousness but also allowed them to increase their standing in society and give them the confidence to challenge the system at its strategic weak points.

This allowed the revolution to combine political-economic demands with a patriotic position. It was the unfinished business of the Cuban War of Independence, which ended in 1898, and in keeping with the life of José Martí. It was the risen people who came from this struggle that endured the "Special Period" (the disastrous effects of the overthrow of socialism in the USSR and eastern Europe in 1989–91) and today continue to build a socialism that, while proud of its past, is looking to the future.

Successful revolutions are never-ending, and the Cuban Revolution does not plan to moderate any time soon.

determination to take over control of Venezuela's oil and mineral resources and to reverse the social progress of the Bolivarian Revolution. Its spokesperson, John Bolton, said so explicitly, quoting the Monroe Doctrine and stating that American companies would better manage the oil industry.

The police tolerated the harassment mounted by a violent and abusive mob of Venezuelan émigrés, who abused and assaulted supporters and stopped food being delivered to the occupants. The police arrested and beat supporters for throwing food to those inside. Their electricity and water were disconnected, though they had been paid for.

Finally, the police moved in and arrested the four remaining occupants of the embassy, showing that the Trump regime has no more concern for US law than it has for international law. The Embassy Protection Collective was acting entirely lawfully in holding the embassy building.

The brave action of the Embassy Protection Collective has received little publicity in the corporate media. Exceptionally, there was one report by Suzanne Lynch in the *Irish Times*.

The United States, with its allies in the European Union and its client states in Latin America, wishes to supplant the elected president with its own appointee. However, the existing government continues to be recognised by the majority of countries in the United Nations. Therefore the peace movement activists can put up a strong legal defence of their action. They have been upholding the basic principles of international law, and they deserve the support of all who value the sovereignty of nations and the preservation of peace.

Clothing and super-exploitation

AISLING JOYCE

AT THE END of May 2019 a study published by the Stern Center for Business and Human Rights at New York University drew attention to the demeaning conditions in the global clothing industry.

The report shows how monopoly capitalism (imperialism) exploits countries, both large and small, that try to develop economically, in particular impoverished countries that seek foreign investment by declaring themselves "open for business" and offer a vast and willing cheap labour force, suitable for exploitation.

The story and the strategy are similar all over the world. Monopoly capital is driven to scouring the world, seeking competitive advantage, establishing factories or local subsidiaries to compete against each other in securing orders, with unfair trading practices imposed by the imperial powers, such as the United States and the European Union. Factories are built, stuffed full of mainly young uneducated women recruited from villages, seeing factory work as a way out of poverty.

Ethiopia built the state-owned Hawassa Industrial Park, about 140 miles from Addis Abeba, in 2015–16. It is estimated that more than 25,000 people now work in the numerous factories, manufacturing garments for such global brands as Levi, Guess, and Tommy Hilfiger.

The Ethiopian government promotes this site as a place for securing cheap workers. A government brochure for potential foreign investors advertised: "Cheap and skilled labour: a seventh of China and half of Bangladesh." In fact global retail companies can secure Ethiopian workers for even less. Some are being paid $26 a month, not much more than a quarter of the $95 a month minimum wage in Bangladesh.

The influx of workers to these factories has driven up the cost of accommodation: a single bare room within a few miles of the industrial estate costs about $52 a month.

The report states: "One young woman showed us the concrete ground-floor room she and three fellow-workers rent from a home-owner. There is no toilet, only an open-air latrine nearby. The woman said she and her room-mates work different shifts, and she'd had some of her belongings stolen. Sometimes there is no food left for her when she returns from the factory.

Moving statues

DAN TARAGHAN

EARLIER THIS year there were attacks on Karl Marx's grave in Highgate Cemetery in London. Around Europe since the fall of the Soviet Union there have been attempts to destroy or remove any statues or other monuments commemorating those who fought fascism during the Second World War, or previously in the International Brigades in Spain.

These attacks are part of a neo-liberal trend that seeks to reinterpret history and to denigrate Marxism and anything associated with it. In one part of Europe, however, Karl Marx is still honoured.

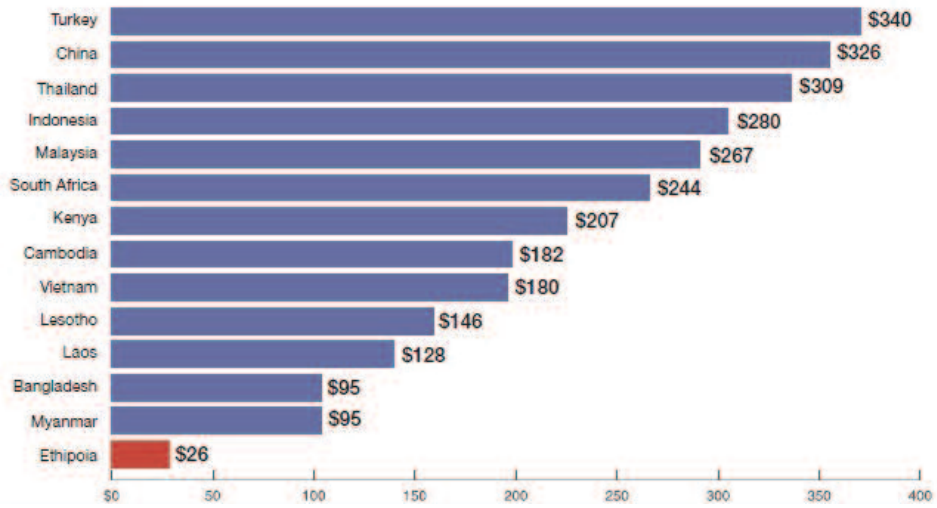
Karl Marx was born in Trier in 1818. He is the most famous person born there, and he features prominently in the local tourist industry.

An 18-foot (5.5 m) bronze statue of Marx (left) sculpted by Wu Weishan and donated by China was unveiled in 2018. The statue was to commemorate Marx's life and legacy two hundred years since his birth, and it looks outstanding. Originally it was intended to place it near the Karl Marx Museum, but, given its size, it was decided to place it in its present position near the Ponta Nigra, a bridge over the Moselle.

Marx grew up in this district, and this is also where the City Museum and tourist office are. Marx was born at the other end of town, where the Karl Marx Museum is housed. About 50,000 Chinese visitors—70 per cent of the visitors to the museum—visit Trier each year. On the day of the visit of two communists from Ireland we were told that comrades from Mongolia had also made the pilgrimage to Trier.

Trier itself is a fascinating place. It is the oldest city in Germany, founded by the Roman emperor Augustus. At the time of Marx's birth the population was about 15,000; it is now over 114,000.

Monthly minimum wage, selected countries



"All four women sleep on thin mattresses on the floor, and when it rains, water seeps into the living space. We heard from others at the park [industrial estate] that some employers hand out plastic sheets, which employees place between their mattresses and the concrete floor in an attempt to stay dry."

Rural workers in particular, not being used to the monotony of factory production, find the conditions of life very hard. During 2017–18 attrition hovered at about 100 per cent, meaning that, on average, factories were replacing all their workers every twelve months.

The American firm PVH was among the first to move from Bangladesh. This is one of the world's largest clothing chains, producing for such labels as Calvin Klein, Izod, and Tommy Hilfiger, with more than two thousand factories in forty countries. It has an annual income of $9.7 billion.

In Bangladesh, workers' wages have increased a little over the last three decades, leading to the possibility that Ethiopia could become a permanent pool of cheap labour.

This is monopoly capitalism at work, securing massive profits from super-exploitation.

So the next time you cross the door of your trendy boutique, or you shop for cheap clothes in Penny's, take a moment to think of the sheer exploitation it has taken to make the latest fashionable item.

There are numerous Roman structures, such as walls, baths, and Porta Nigra itself. These are the streets that Marx walked in the first seventeen years of his life. If he had not been influenced by his surroundings in this beautiful city he would have to be quite dense.

This is predominantly a wine-growing region, and this seems to have been the main source of employment, around which other trades developed in the town. Karl Marx tourism is now an important source of income for the local hotels and bars.

Another important aspect of Trier is that for the twenty years before 1815 Trier was part of France. This meant greater freedom of expression, other rights for citizens, and the influence of French rationalism. From 1815 Trier came under the control of Prussia. Marx's father converted to Christianity in order to continue his occupation. For unknown reasons, he became a Protestant, though Trier was predominantly Catholic.

Marx went to the local school and was confirmed in Trier. The transfer from France to Prussian control had a profound and negative effect on Marx for his whole life.

The Karl Marx Museum is well worth a visit. It shows Marx's development. Little is known about his early education; he was probably educated at home before going to school. When he left Trier to go to university his father had wanted him to become a lawyer. His doctoral dissertation, however, was on "The Difference Between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature." He was also becoming involved in politics. Any criticism or even implied criticism of the state was deemed by the Prussians to be an attack. Marx was unable to find work in academia and had to turn his hand to journalism.

Despite moving to Paris, Brussels, and eventually London, the Prussians continued to hound him, either by influencing governments to expel him or by spying on him, as they did in London. In 1842 Marx wrote: "A censorship law is an impossibility because it seeks to punish not offences but opinions."

The museum shows that for his whole life Karl Marx annotates, takes excerpts and provides a commentary on an incredible number of texts. In order to grasp the bigger picture he reads widely. He works meticulously and scientifically. He questions everything. He observes and studies everything: philosophy, law, economics, mathematics, biology, chemistry. He also communicates with a wide body of correspondents, especially with Engels. In this way he is constantly refining and developing his ideas.

The museum also shows his influence on subsequent communists, such as Lenin, Mao, Luxemburg, and others, down to our own day.

Karl Marx was one of the last great universal scholars. He was grounded in the traditions of French rationalism and Enlightenment thought, together with German idealism. He was much more than a mere intellectual: at various times in his life he engaged in struggle against the forces of oppression. He could have followed an academic career and kowtowed to the Prussian authorities; instead he chose to fight for the underprivileged, and in the course of his life he forged a weapon for the working class to fight capitalism: dialectical and historical materialism.

Renaissance man

Leonardo da Vinci, the oldest of the Italian High Renaissance artists, died five hundred years ago, on 2 May 1519.

JENNY FARRELL

LEONARDO WAS born on 15 April 1452 near the village of Vinci, from which he takes his name. His mother, Caterina, the daughter of a poor farmer, worked as a servant. She was not married to Leonardo's father, a professional notary, with whom Leonardo was living by 1457. He later lived with his paternal grandfather. It was during the seven years with his grandfather that Leonardo learnt to read, write, and calculate.

Leonardo's grandfather died when the boy was twelve, at which time he returned to his father. As he was not the legitimate heir, Leonardo was not sent to further his education in a secondary school, and so he never learnt Latin, Greek, or higher mathematics; instead he took up an apprenticeship and ended up in the workshop of a master painter in Florence. This is where his career really began.

Florence in the fifteenth century, like much of Italy, was a violent place, where rival merchant dynasties fought each other for power. It was one of the largest cities in Europe, and it was the centre of the Italian Renaissance.

As a man of the people, rather than an aristocrat, all his life Leonardo had to seek employment with princes in order to earn an income. He designed weaponry for them, acted as a political adviser, designed costumes, and devised various entertainments, played music, and recited verse.

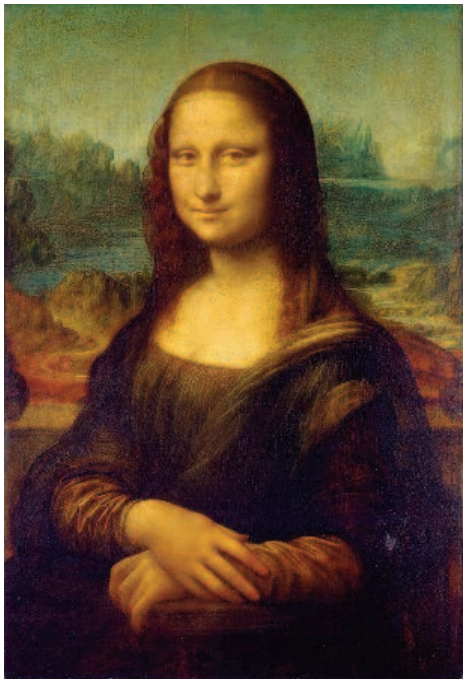
He was also a scientist. Modern science, based on experiment and experience, was emerging. Leonardo wrote in the Introduction to his Treatise on Painting: "To me it seems that those sciences are vain and full of error which are not born of experience, mother of all certainty, first-hand experience which in its origins, or means or end has passed through one of the five senses. And if we doubt the certainty of everything which passes through the senses, how much more ought we to doubt things contrary to these senses, such as the existence of God or of the soul or similar things over which there is always dispute and contention."

He pioneered this empirical approach in his anatomical drawings, which gave him, for example, an understanding of the circulation of the blood centuries ahead of his time. Other interests included the cardiovascular system, the head, and the eye, with a realisation that light enters the brain through the eye—the opposite to contemporary medical thinking.

Visual records of dissections were rare at the time, and Leonardo's drawings were unprecedented in their detail and accuracy. He composed these depictions at some considerable danger to himself: not only was he exposing himself to bacteria, he was also violating church law, with the threat of severe punishment.

He was also an architect and town planner. He was an engineer, who thought about linking rivers by means of canals, and came up with plans for building tunnels through mountains. He developed war machines as well. He discovered laws governing optics, light, and gravitation. He closely observed the flight of birds and made plans for building a flying apparatus.

Moreover, Leonardo was one of the first artists to make extensive use of paper. The demand for paper had increased dramatically following the invention of typesetting for the printing of books. Before this, writers and painters had used parchment. The arrival of cheaper paper meant that artists could draft and discard many ideas.



Portraits of women painted by Leonardo
ABOVE: *La Gioconda*
RIGHT: *Cecilia Gallerani*
MIDDLE RIGHT: *Ginevra de' Benci*

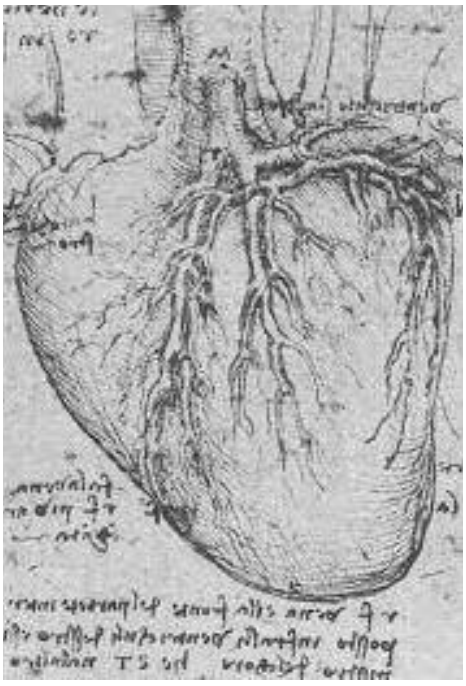
Another Renaissance innovation that Leonardo made use of was oil paint, rather than the previously favoured fast-drying egg tempera.

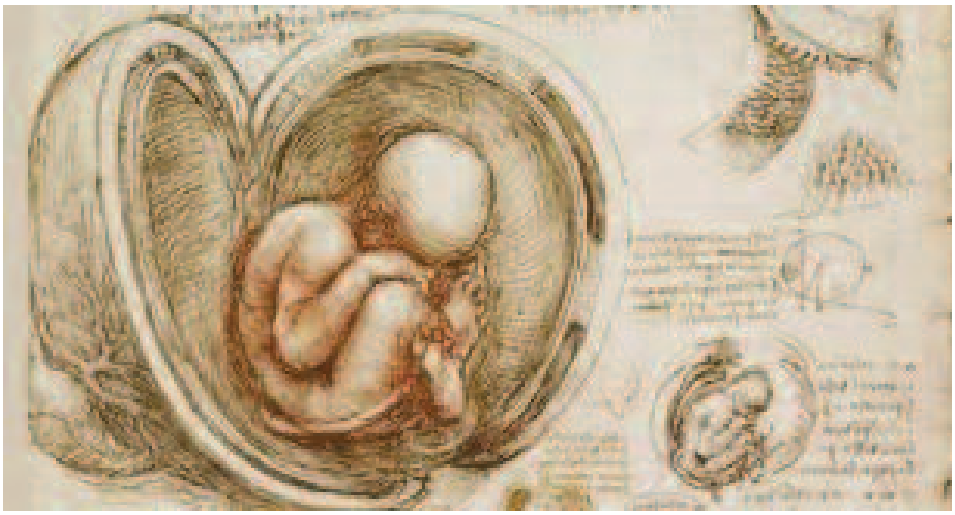
But of course Leonardo is best known for his paintings, and in particular *La Gioconda,* known in English as *Mona Lisa.* The portrait is not very large: 77 × 53 cm, painted on poplar wood.

With his portrait of Ginevra de' Benci in the mid-1470s Leonardo broke with the traditional genre of female portraiture in Italy. The sitter is not painted in profile, as was then standard, but, like a man, in a three-quarter pose. She is capable and intelligent, and is painted outdoors. This is also true for *La Gioconda.* However, comparing the features of the two women, it becomes apparent that by the time he painted Mona Lisa he had a far more developed understanding of anatomy.

La Gioconda is a woman of means. Slight hints of columns on the edges of

‘Leonardo’s smokiness captures supremely and scientifically the way the eye sees living nature in continual movement and change; we might call it the dialectics of nature.”





the painting and a balustrade indicate an aristocratic country villa, as does the elevated balcony. This house overlooks a landscape of water and the mountains, emphasised by towering clouds. A road to the viewer’s left and a bridge across a river on the right mirroring the road indicate human activity, though no other human form is present. The suggestion is that the countryside belongs to this woman’s family.

Different from his portraits of Ginevra de’ Benci and Cecilia Gallerani, Leonardo now softens the facial outlines and contours, using his technique of *sfumato* (smokiness). Slower-drying oil paint enabled him to blur edges and create a lack of definition that suggests movement. Similarly, the landscape is hazy.

Leonardo developed this technique through close observation and scientific thinking about how the eye perceives things, based on the filtration of sunlight through particles in the air, affecting the reflection of light by objects. Sfumato enabled him to produce a vivid, apparently moving image of a living thing—person, plant, or animal. His treatment of atmospheric light creates an impression of infinite changeability.

In the case of the Mona Lisa this movement and energy is particularly apparent in the facial muscles. And here lies the secret of her smile: sfumato shading and slight blurring create an uncertainty round her mouth and lips, a subtle transition between smile and no smile. Leonardo’s smokiness captures supremely and scientifically the way the eye sees living nature in continual movement and change; we might call it the dialectics of nature.

Sfumato is used for everything around the figure. Not only could she be “living” but so could the nature around her. Her image and the countryside in the background are not “photographic” images: they are depicted as the human eye perceives them, a person and external nature as seen by a human being. This is a truly revolutionary standpoint.

The painting enacts everything that Leonardo knew about life—as an engineer, a scientist, and an artist. It expresses the very essence of Leonardo’s dialectical understanding, all his insights into nature and humankind. It captures perfectly the spirit of the High Renaissance.

LETTERS

Stop the Bray War Show!

Dear editor,
The "Stop the Bray War Show" campaign is very concerned about the Bray Air Display, due to take place on 27 and 28 July 2019.

The campaign has no objection to an air show that does not include military aircraft. However, the Bray Air Display, as it is constituted at present, is wrong and immoral. It glorifies war and the senseless killing of the innocent by showcasing warplanes in a false family-friendly fashion.

Warplanes have been much in the news since the beginning of the second Iraqi War in 2003, the first major conflict instigated by Western powers as part of the phoney "War on Terror." Many people have fallen victims to the bombs dropped by warplanes of Britain's Royal Air Force and its allies. These planes have been involved in acts of war "directed to the indiscriminate destruction of whole cities or vast areas with their inhabitants."

Military aircraft scheduled for deployment as part of the Bray Air Display include the BAC Strikemaster and the Royal Air Force Tucano, both of which are supplied by Britain to brutal totalitarian regimes in the Middle East, such as Kuwait, Oman, and Saudi Arabia, the latter being the principal backers of a genocidal war in Yemen, which has killed over 100,000 people directly and displaced over three million Yemenis. The Royal Jordanian Falcons also represent another repressive Middle Eastern theocracy.

The European Union is now formulating its project to build an EU army from the ranks of the people of the EU. This state has jumped on the bandwagon of increased military spending, and, according to the National Development Plan, spending on defence capital projects will increase from €77 million in 2018 to €125 million in 2022.

The "Stop the Bray War Show" Campaign would be grateful to have your active support as part of our activities in opposition to this war show. We intend to organise public meetings before the event, and so will be looking for speakers. We also aim to target local radio, print media and local representatives as well as staging counter-actions on the weekend of the War Show along Bray strand. If you have any contacts among peace activists, left-wing musicians etc. we would also be very keen to make use of them.

This will be the fourth year that we have organised a campaign against the Bray War Show. We are not opposed to the show per se, but both the political and environmental factors should not be ignored because the event is considered a "good money-spinner" for local businesses. The show could be just as successful without aircraft whose purpose is killing.

If you wish to assist in any way, however minuscule, we would welcome your participation. You can contact the co-ordinator at Stopbraywarshow@gmail.com. Thank you.

Paul Doran
Stop the Bray War Show activist

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