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"I recommend people not to employ Roman Catholics, who are 99 per cent disloyal."

Basil Brooke, minister of agriculture, later prime minister of Northern Ireland

A century of division, repression and discrimination

Eugene McCartan
on the partition of Ireland

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A century of division, repression and discrimination

MAY THIS year is the centenary of the establishment of the Stormont regime and the institutionalising of violent division, mass repression, mainly against the Catholic minority, and the use of some of the most repressive legislation in the world. This was aimed at suppressing the nationalist minority and at intimidating and coercing members of the working class from a unionist political background into identifying with and supporting unionist employers and big farmers, and

acquiescing in suppression and discrimination against the nationalist minority.

This was all done to secure the needs and interests of the unionist capitalist class, in alliance with and subservient to the superior needs and interests of British imperialism.

The birth of the Orange state was marked by widespread pogroms and violence against the minority community.

The establishment of the Stormont regime was the strategy adopted by the British, using their willing allies in the

Unionist capitalist class as the best means of thwarting the struggle for national independence being carried on by the Irish people, which the British were determined to prevent.

The Government of Ireland Act, implemented from 23 December 1920, was an essential building-block for preventing independence and fracturing the forces engaged in the struggle of the people of Ireland for our freedom. It also ensured that the economic and political interests of Britain's closest ally in Ireland, unionism, were secured for the empire. Before the passing of the Government of Ireland Act it needed to have a manageable territory that unionism could politically hold and secure and also that would provide the British with the pretence that they were simply acknowledging the real situation in Ireland.

Between the second and third reading of the act in 1919 and 1920 reactionary unionist violence in working-class communities was sanctioned and organised by the Unionist leaders. During these pogroms the Unionist employers directed the attacks and drove out militant trade unionists from the shipyards and engineering factories, killing two birds with the one stone.

Political Statement National Executive Committee, CPI 10 April 2021

FOLLOWING ITS most recent meeting, the National Executive Committee of the Communist Party of Ireland, is calling upon the trade union movement and progressive forces to demand that the Government break with the failed approach of allowing the EU Commission to control vaccination strategy and instead to obtain additional supplies of vaccines from countries that have a proven vaccine record. The shambolic nature of the vaccination programme, and allowing the EU bureaucracy to decide where we should secure vaccines, is only the most recent example of the servile nature of the relationship of the Irish Government to the EU Commission and EU institutional power and control.

The party also calls for a more vigorous campaign by the trade union movement to protect the interests of workers as the economy begins to reopen; that workers' health and safety are not compromised for the sake of profits, to demand a people's stimulus to help workers to find work, retrain, and upgrade their skill, and to extend the moratorium on rent increases and evictions.

The NEC further discussed the recent violence that erupted in some unionist communities in Belfast and other areas within the Six Counties, a result of a number of processes working themselves out on the streets and certain elements attempting to stir up inter-community conflict. The source of this violence is the role of "loyalist" paramilitaries that control communities through various community projects and their role in long-standing criminal activity, including protection rackets and drug-dealing, and intimidating anyone who opposes their control.

Unionism has nothing to offer the working class in the Six Counties except division and the resulting violence. It is clear from the historical experience that these paramilitary organisations have in the past been useful tools in the hands of the British state, as demonstrated by their intimate relations with Military Intelligence. It is hard to believe that these riots are the spontaneous reaction of "disaffected teenage youths."

What is ignored by and covered up by unionism is the fact that systemic poverty and social inequality have been used by cynical unionist establishment politicians to raise the false flag of identity politics, to cover their subservience to the needs and interests of British imperialism. It is also clear that, given the deep and long-standing links between the British state and these organisations, the state was aware of the pending organised violence and intimidation to be adopted.

That the DUP has played a role in promoting and stoking violence behind the scenes, using paramilitary elements

Partition ensured a century of reaction in our divided country and has allowed two parasitic and dependent ruling groups to govern over two failed political and economic entities, operated in alliance with the imperial powers of Britain, the European Union, and the United States

These pogroms resulted in more than 23,000 people being driven from their homes in Belfast and nearly 500 killed, more than 90 per cent of them civilians and a significant majority Catholics, while Catholics barely made up a quarter of the population of Belfast. Over a period of two years it was estimated that more than 50,000 people fled the Six Counties, that is, one in ten of the nationalist population.

This became a tried and trusted method of instilling fear and compliance in what would become regular and periodic pogroms in the hundred-year existence of the Orange state, also securing an economy based on mass discrimination, with employment opportunities limited to those most loyal and with membership of the Orange Order and the various unionist paramilitary police forces securing a worker's employment and future.

These sectarian economic practices would last for fifty years, before the mass mobilisation behind the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association. The mass struggle for civil rights shattered the power of unionism and forced the British to step in again to protect their imperial interests. The role of the British in this violence was further illustrated when the

imperial state recruited the pogromists into the Ulster Special Constabulary.

The Government of Ireland Act succeeded in securing British interests and preventing Irish self-determination. The British ruling class, with the Unionists playing a subordinate role, partitioned Ireland according to the needs and interests of imperialism and its profoundly reactionary agenda.

It was the British who peddled the lie that they were only facilitating self-determination for unionism. Then, as now, any solution has to be in line with imperial needs and interests. The British state has always shown disdain and mistrust towards the Irish people. The century of Stormont has been a century of cynical manipulation and violence, a century of evasion and suppression.

The British have been successful in constructing and maintaining the illusion that they have no strategic interests in Ireland, merely keeping two "tribes" apart and protecting the "self-determination" of the unionist population. The British state successfully sold this illusion to the Irish establishment, which is all too willing to obey their orders and to protect its own class interest. Even some former opponents of British rule have bought in

to this great illusionist trick. As James Connolly put it so well, "Ruling by fooling is a great British art, with some great Irish fools to practise on."

Partition failed the economic and political needs of the people of Ireland when it was imposed a century ago, and continues to fail the people's interests today, while the beneficiaries have been the British and their parasitic Irish and Unionist elite allies.

Partition has weakened and divided the forces for national independence. The Government of Ireland Act consolidated the influence and control by the settler community in the Six Counties, who rejected and opposed the civic Irish nation promoted by Wolfe Tone and the United Irishmen with the institutionalising of a sectarian statelet—a state and its oppressive laws and apparatus envied by the South African apartheid regime.

Partition ensured a century of reaction in our divided country and has allowed two parasitic and dependent ruling groups to govern over two failed political and economic entities, operated in alliance with the imperial powers of Britain, the European Union, and the United States. It is they who now decide the destiny of our people. ★

to advance its own political strategy, is nothing new. The promotion of division within the working class and the use of sectarianism and violent repression have been the primary methods in the unionist arsenal from before and since partition.

It is no surprise either that this violence has erupted within working-class communities, which have been marginalised, impoverished and run down for decades and have been led down an economic, political, social and cultural cul-de-sac vis-à-vis unionism, wedded to British imperialism and the capitalist mode of production.

The CPI calls on all progressive forces to oppose these attempts to sow further division, which will only lead to an escalation from which there will be no victors, only victims. In all matters we need to ask who benefits from this violence, and who loses in this situation. Certainly unionism as a political ideology is attempting to use the false flag of "identity" as a threat to cover its own policies, wedded to the economic and political status quo, a system built on

poverty, discrimination, poor housing and growing homelessness, increasing social inequality, collapsing public services such as health, and brutal exploitation as the rich get richer.

Considering the ubiquitous presence of British military intelligence agents, it is hardly surprising that the riots in some unionist areas should be mirrored on the other side of the "peace line." Violence in nationalist areas has been minimal, despite the intimidation and goading of these communities by the police, including the use of dogs and water cannon.

No doubt the British state forces will use this violence and the threat of violence to ensure that its strategic interests are secured and guaranteed. In the hundred years since the establishment of the gerrymandered northern statelet, partition has failed working people. It was built upon a gerrymander and sectarianism and can only be sustained and maintained by the constant sowing of division.

In relation to Brexit and its possible

implications for a move towards some form of national unitary state, the CPI once again reaffirms its long-standing policy of struggling for a united, sovereign and independent Ireland. Whether Brexit aids or impedes that process will depend on the extent to which democratic and anti-imperialist forces can be mobilised.

It is within the terrain created by the internal tension between two imperialist blocs, the EU and the British state, that we have to build and mobilise the politics and national struggles of resistance, to challenge imperial power: institutional, economic, political, and cultural.

What we are sure of is that it will be the actions of the mass of the people that will bring a united all-Ireland democracy; it is most certainly not predicated on whether or not the British state grants a border poll. Neither the British nor any imperial power have the right to set fetters on the boundaries and aspirations of the people of Ireland. ★

A hundred years of division

PARTITION

JIMMY DORAN

IN THIS, the decade of anniversaries, we reached the hundredth anniversary of the partition of Ireland. Britain partitioned the country to protect its interests—not to protect us from each other but to keep us apart. Divide and conquer, imperialism’s favourite control mechanism, is a device they used everywhere they invade, occupy, and plunder. This article looks at how partition has worked in relation to the health service on both sides of the border.

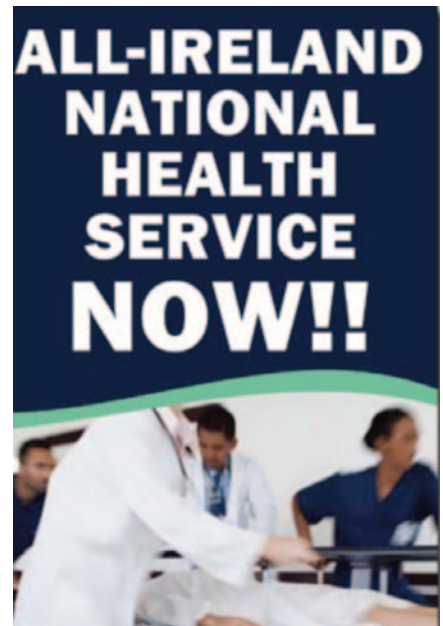
The National Health Service was introduced in the North—despite opposition from Unionist politicians—by the British Labour government in 1945. It was a great victory for the British working class, a compromise forced on the state to stop the rise of socialism after the Soviet Union had defeated fascist Germany in the Second World War.

It wasn’t long before the NHS came under attack as the state tried to claw

back some of the workers’ gains through charges for services. These efforts were defeated, but the attacks continued. When the government failed in attempts to impose charges for health services it changed tactics by privatising large areas of its services, creating massive income and profits for business interests. In recent times £1.6 billion in contracts for personal protective equipment has been given out to companies with links to the Conservative Party.

Despite all this, the National Health Service continues to provide an excellent service to the people in Britain. However, the service provided to the citizens in the North of Ireland is abysmal in comparison. In the five years before the arrival of covid, 22,000 people died while on a hospital waiting-list, with the average waiting period a hundred times longer than in England. One in eight medical positions are unfilled; and, according to the Royal College of Surgeons, the NHS in the North is at the point of collapse. And this is before covid. There are now 327,000 people on-waiting lists; that works out at roughly one in every six people.

In the South there are 830,000



people on waiting-lists, which works out at slightly less than the North. In general, the history of the health service in the South is much worse. With the defeat of Noel Browne’s Mother and Child Service seventy years ago—which would have provided a service similar to the NHS for women and for children up to the age of sixteen—this was the end of all attempts to have a free universal health service for

Lá Idirnáisiúnta an Lucht Oibre



DÓNALL Ó BRIAIN

Sean-fhéile thraidisiúnta ar feadh na gcianta ba ea Lá Bealtaine, an chéad lá den samhradh. D’eagraítí deasghnátha éagsúla ar fud thuaisceart na hEorpa le fáilte a chur roimh an ngrian agus roimh theacht na soininne. In Éirinn, lastaí tinte cnámh, mar aithris ar an ngrian (“tine gheal” ba bhrí le “Bealtaine”) agus le beannacht a chur ar na beithígh agus iad á dtiomáint chun a bhféarach samhraidh.

Sa naoú haois déag cuireadh tús le Lá nua Bealtaine, lá ar a ndéanfaí cumhacht an lucht oibre a cheiliúradh agus a gcearta a éileamh ar fud an domhain. Sna Stáit Aontaithe, i Chicago—cathair mhór ghluaiseacht an lucht oibre—a ragadh an lá nua seo.

“The old world is dying, and the new world struggles to be born: now is the time of monsters.” Antonio Gramsci

the citizens in the South of Ireland.

This led directly to the two-tier health service that we now have in the South. Qualification for free health services is means-tested, so that only the poorest of citizens qualify, amounting to about one in every three people in the South. This demonstrates the number of poor people in Ireland today. The South of Ireland is the only western European state that does not offer universal primary health care. As a result, 45 per cent of citizens have private health insurance. This leaves about one in four people with neither—the so-called working poor.

During the pandemic both health systems came close to being overwhelmed. Large numbers of hospital procedures were suspended to cope with the pandemic. This has led to a huge increase in the numbers of late-stage cancers now being diagnosed in accident and emergency departments in the North and the South.

Ironically, it was ambulances from the South’s National Ambulance Service that went to the assistance of the NHS in the North in the first wave of the pandemic and again in December 2020, as the NHS was being overwhelmed. Years of underfunding and privatisation have brought the once-magnificent NHS in the

North to its knees.

During the pandemic there were two conflicting health strategies in Ireland. This led directly to the death rate from covid-19 in the North being twice that in the South. The rate of vaccination in the North has been much superior to the haphazard efforts in the South; but all the hard work in the North may come to nothing because of the extremely low level and slow pace of vaccination in the South.

Instead of two health services and two health strategies in Ireland, if we had one all-Ireland public health service, with one health strategy, we could have achieved what New Zealand achieved, a country of similar population. In New Zealand there have been 2,600 cases of covid-19, and 26 people have died; in Ireland more than 365,000 people have been infected, and more than 7,000 have died.

These damning figures demonstrate the lunacy of having two health strategies in a country the size of Ireland. It also shows what can be achieved if we have services on an all-Ireland basis.

How much longer do the hospital waiting-lists have to get in the North before citizens realise that Belfast is not as British as Finchley—or that there are no waiting-lists in Finchley.

The British strategy of divide and conquer has lasted, and worked, for a hundred years. The NHS was a great achievement in Britain back in 1945 for the British working class. We have in it a template for building a much better world-class all-Ireland fully funded public health service, free at the point of entry, from the cradle to the grave and everything in between.

The responsibility for child care and care of the elderly falls disproportionately on women. The inclusion of these two services in a new, all-Ireland health service would be a huge improvement and also a significant move towards equality for women. We can improve immensely on the British Labour Party’s framework from 1945; after all, the NHS was designed and set up by a man in a patriarchal society.

Partition and division have hindered, restricted and blocked the unity and the advance of our class for one hundred years. The old, failed allegiances must be left to history. We must form a new allegiance, an allegiance with each other, a unity of our class, coming together to build a much better Ireland, better than London or Dublin would ever allow us to have. ★

Sa bhliain 1884 mhol an Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions go gcuirfí tús le feachtas náisiúnta ar son lá oibre ocht n-uaire (deich n-uaire sa lá, nó níos mó, a bhí coitianta ag an am), le tosú ar 1 Bealtaine 1886. Dé Luain 3 Bealtaine an bhliain sin chuaigh oibríthe i monarcha innill talmhaíochta McCormick ar stailc. Cuireadh glas amuigh orthu; d’ionsaigh na póilíní iad, agus maraíodh duine acu.

Glaodh cruinniú agóide i Haymarket Square don lá dar gcionn, cé nár fhreastail air ach 2,500 duine. Bhí an cruinniú beagnach thart agus na daoine ag scaipeadh nuair a d’ionsaigh na póilíní iad. Ansin chaith duine éiginn buama in aghaidh na bpóilíní. Maraíodh duine acu ar an toirt. Tháinig líonrith ar na póilíní; sa dorchacht scaoil siad a gcuid gunnaí i ngach treo, gan smacht gan treo, ar a chéile chomh maith. Faoi dheireadh an áir bhí ceathrar neamhchiontach marbh,

chomh maith le seachtar póilíní.

Fógraíodh dlí míleata ar fud na tíre, agus cuireadh i bhfeidhm é dá mba chogadh in aghaidh an lucht oibre é. Roghnaíodh ochtar eagraithe lucht oibre—go randamach, de réir cosúlachta—agus cúisíodh iad i ndúnmharú na bpóilíní i Chicago.

Gan mhoill thosaigh na nuachtáin—cairde lucht an rachmais i gcónaí—agus na polaiteoirí ar fheachtas i gcoinne ghluaiseacht na n-oibríthe i gcoitinne agus i gcoinne lucht eagraithe an léirsithe go háirithe, ag éileamh pionós an bháis. Thairg príomh-nuachtán na cathrach, an Chicago Tribune, duais airgid don ghiúiré dá bhfaighidís ciontach iad.

Tar éis triail arbh iomrall ceartais amach is amach í, scaoileadh saor duine amháin de na príosúnaigh agus gearradh pionós an bháis ar an seachtar eile—ina measc daoine nach raibh i láthair fiú nuair a tharla an pléascadh. Faoi dheireadh gearradh

cúig bliana déag príosúnachta ar bheirt, agus gearradh pionós an bháis ar na fir eile. Chuir duine de na príosúnaigh lámh ina bhás féin roimh lá na cinniúna; ach ar an lá sin, 11 Deireadh Fómhair 1887, crochadh ceathrar.

I mí an Mheithimh 1893 cháin gobharnóir nua Illinois go géar iompar na bpóilíní, na gcúirteanna agus na nuachtán agus thug pardún do na fir a bhí fós i bpríosún.

Chuir sléacht Chicago agus an triail fearg ar an lucht oibre ar fud an domhain. I mí Iúil 1889 mhol Cumann Idirnáisiúnta na bhFear Oibre (an Dara Idirnáisiúntas) go n-eagrófaí léirsithe ar an aonú lá de Bhealtaine gach bliain ina dhiaidh sin in ómós mhairtírigh Haymarket Square agus ar son aitheantas dleathach do lá oibre ocht n-uaire, éilimh eile an lucht oibre, agus síocháin uilechoiteann. Agus is chuige sin a cheiliúrtar é ó shin i leith ar fud an domhain. ★

Is constitutional change on the way?



IRISH UNITY

TOMMY MCKEARNEY

IT'S BECOMING increasingly difficult to assess the behaviour of the Dublin government. Is it slavishly following a free-market agenda, indifferent to workers? Is it responding to pressure from abroad? Is it simply incompetent? Or is it the fact that there are elements of all three causes in the wretched performance that the unfortunate citizens of the 26 Counties are subjected to by this coalition government?

Inadequate regulation of meat factories and building sites for transnational corporations, the transit of US troops through Shannon Airport

and the mismanagement of a pandemic are just a few examples of this sorry state of affairs. Above all, though, there is the unavoidable conclusion that, faced with fundamental change, the Republic's ruling order simply doesn't know what to do, apart from holding on to office at all costs.

The coalition's handling of the covid pandemic exemplifies a government in disarray. This, remember, is the government in which the Department of Health assigned civil servants to check whether the minister's Twitter account was up to date. Incredibly, while searching for Stephen Donnelly's Twitter handle, the provision of mandatory hotel quarantine places had reached capacity. This is a government that claims it has worked to balance the

needs of health and safety with the wellbeing of the economy but has mismanaged the former and allowed the middle classes to benefit disproportionately.

Several issues or events have emerged over the recent past to unsettle and disorient the old order. There is the covid pandemic, with all its ramifications for the economy and society; there is the impact of Brexit on the cosy relationship with London; add to that the North and the difficult matter of partition stubbornly refusing to go away. Overhanging all this, though, is the consternation caused by the rise of Sinn Féin.

It is this latter point that goes right to the bottom of ruling-class unease. It is not so much the party itself as what its re-emergence on the political scene indicates. After decades of stagnation north and south of the border there is now a sense that not only are the fundamentals changing but that a significant number of people are looking for something different and better.

Over recent decades there has been a welcome liberalisation throughout society. While of itself this does not necessarily challenge the ruling class, it is indicative of a weakening of once-powerful conformist influences. Mechanisms for governance have not changed as visibly or as quickly, yet there is real movement away from the past.

Nothing illustrates this better in the 26 Counties than the very obvious decline of the once all-powerful Fianna Fáil. With opinion polls consistently showing Fianna Fáil scoring approximately half the Sinn Féin return, the writing is surely on the wall for Micheál Martin and his colleagues.

Eircode scandal

DÓNALL Ó BRIAIN

IN JULY 2015, after many years of deliberation and (we now know) internal wrangling, the Government finally announced the introduction of a national system of postal codes. Under the brand name Eircode (everything nowadays has to have a brand name, even public services), it gives a unique code to every postal address within the

26 Counties.

The project caused a controversy when it was discovered that it is poorly designed and in fact is not fit for purpose. There are many other technical problems; but the real scandal is the ownership, and the way this ownership was allocated, and is exercised.

The database, which needs constant updating, is privately owned and copyright. As with the mobile phone

scandal, the licence was granted in a manner contrary to the norms for public tendering. In this case it was awarded to a subsidiary of the British financial services and "outsourcing" company Capita PLC.

This is a corporation whose activities in England include the ownership of several public utilities, the administration of medical records for the National Health Service (in 2016 a survey of GPs found that 85 per cent were missing patients' records in what the *Guardian* described as "another botched

This is a government that claims it has worked to balance the needs of health and safety with the wellbeing of the economy but has mismanaged the former and allowed the middle classes to benefit disproportionately.

Moreover, the de facto merger between the two conservative parties has shifted the axis away from the old non-choice between two right-wing entities.

This is not to say that Sinn Féin is offering a radical socialist alternative, rather that its electoral progress is indicative of possibilities for a new beginning.

It is north of the border, however, that we are witnessing unavoidable evidence of profound change that will undoubtedly have an impact throughout the entire country. Just as with Fianna Fáil in the Republic, the DUP has lost its touch and is desperately trying to retain a purchase on its core support.

Contrary to some opinion, Arlene Foster and her colleagues are not just politically inept on the wider UK stage: they are also struggling with a losing hand. Just consider the cause of their anxiety. Several of the most influential publications in Britain are now talking about the potential breakup of the United Kingdom.¹ Some of this may be idle speculation, but it is certainly disturbing for Northern unionists, especially when considered in tandem with Boris Johnson's volte-face on the Northern Ireland protocol.

Still more ominous were the results of an opinion poll by Lucid Talk for the BBC NI's programme "Spotlight,"² which recorded, albeit not necessarily emphasising, two pertinent facts.³ A majority of those in the age group 18–44 would vote to end partition immediately, while a majority of all respondents said they believed that twenty-five years from now the Six Counties would no longer be in the United Kingdom.

privatisation"), contracts for the assessment of fitness to work, electronic tagging of prisoners, a recruiting contract for the British army, and operating the Fire Service College. In Germany it operates a call centre business and in Ireland the billing system for Irish Water.

It has since been revealed that a perfectly functional system had already been devised within the Department of Communication itself. This could be implemented virtually overnight, and would have cost the state precisely nothing. (The introduction of Eircode was

Clearly, opinion polls are subject to margins of error and may be inaccurate. Nevertheless, these findings are in keeping with such widely verifiable facts as changing demographics and recent electoral results.

While it is not incontestable that the six-county political entity is entering its final phase, no-one could reasonably dispute that fundamental constitutional change is now more likely than not over the coming two or three decades. The DUP, being the party that it is, responds not with constructive proposals or a statesmanlike approach but instead provokes unrest in deprived unionist working-class communities. This time-honoured practice of playing the Orange card may temporarily extend the party's electoral life, but only at the cost of the overall well-being of the citizenry.

All of which raises the question, What is the Dublin government doing to address such an urgent issue? Not surprisingly in the light of what we mentioned above, the ruling coalition is not only refusing to do anything constructive but is actively promoting a tendentious narrative in order to stifle consideration. The leader of Fianna Fáil, Micheál Martin, is attempting to avoid dealing with the situation by talking up the risk of instability and violence if an end to partition is discussed or planned for in any meaningful way. Rather than acknowledge changing realities in the North and launch a programme to address this fact, he is adopting a policy of "pro-actively standing idly by," a strategy that failed woefully to prevent bloodshed in the North when adopted fifty years ago by his mentor, Jack Lynch.

estimated to cost €20 million; in the event it cost €38 million, to which must be added the annual maintenance cost of several millions in perpetuity.) But this would have clashed with the Government's subservience to the European Union and its dogmatic policy of privatising everything in sight and, most particularly, not allowing any new public enterprise, no matter how economical it might be.

Most of the other tenders were quickly rejected also after a cursory and highly dubious assessment.

Without state power there is only so much those on the ground can do to circumvent this state of stasis. Rather than surrender to inertia, though, we can constantly emphasise the reality of the situation when and where we can. There is, moreover, the positive option of campaigning for the building of important all-Ireland institutions of vital necessity to the working class, north and south. There is already a nascent campaign for an all-Ireland national health service. That initiative deserves all our support and energy. What about also launching a drive to address the housing crisis by creating an all-Ireland Housing Executive, modelled on the best days of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive?

The advantage of such a campaign must be obvious to all who care to see. If successful it would address two major issues identified by Northern critics of reunification. It would also allow for a meaningful Northern input into the new republic. Moreover, it would make the ending of partition more attractive to the South's working people. Finally, doing so would be a significant step towards undermining two major areas of privatisation led by vulture funds in the Republic.

If we could achieve that much I'd almost be tempted to support a campaign for Irish reunification myself! ★

Notes

- 1 Economist Films, *Could Britain Break Up?* (<https://econ.st/3njb7EB>).
- 2 George Parker, "Johnson struggles to find a way to keep the UK together," *Financial Times*, 4 April 2021.
- 3 Lucid Talk, "LT BBC NI Spotlight poll-project" (<https://bit.ly/3tOnR8J>).

Delivery companies and emergency services must now *purchase* access to the database. There is a limited one-at-a-time search facility, operated in conjunction with Google Maps, so requiring an application owned and operated by the notorious sucker-up of personal data.

Where is the dividing line now between public services, privatised public services, and transnational corporations?

Alas, there isn't one. ★

What separates the CPI from the rest?



IDEOLOGY

EOGHAN O'NEILL

IN THE NOVEMBER 2020 issue the article headed “From A to B, and everything in between” outlined the CPI’s transformative strategy. The present article is a short follow-up based on discussions that have come up since the article was published, which I hope will further illuminate the thinking and ideas within the CPI.

What separates the CPI from every other political party or movement? Quite simply, the central role of political class-consciousness in our analysis and understanding of our material world. It is an awareness of your place in this world, of your social position; an awareness of the historical construction of class societies, of how and why classes are formed—an awareness of class struggle.

Class-consciousness is one of our

strongest weapons against the class enemy, because once you develop it you no longer remain hostage to ignorance and to spontaneity, the antithesis of political class-consciousness.

Ignorance and spontaneity mean knowing that there is so much injustice, inequality, imbalance in the world but, by either not knowing or not wanting to know, or not being clear in what to do about it, bar the protection of the self and resorting to charity in acts of solidarity, the working class is kept captive within the capitalist mode of production, which guarantees the continued exploitation and destruction of the planet and all living and working beings. It is shrouded in subjectivity and lacks a clear and objective class analysis of the prevailing and coming crises. As Lenin stated:

*“The spontaneous development of the working-class movement leads to its subordination to bourgeois ideology; for the spontaneous working-class movement is trade-unionism, and trade unionism means the ideological enslavement of the workers by the bourgeoisie. Hence, our task, the task of Social-Democracy [i.e. communists], is to combat spontaneity, to divert the working-class movement from this spontaneous, trade-unionist striving to come under the wing of the bourgeoisie, and to bring it under the wing of revolutionary Social Democracy.”**

As social beings, having a collective understanding of class society helps develop the bonds of class solidarity and unity. There is no other method of

defeating the class enemy. It must be forged by the conscious efforts of communists and the most advanced sections of the working class, injecting the theory of Marxism-Leninism into the wider workers’ movement and working-class forces, to develop class-consciousness, struggle, and solidarity, with a concrete analysis of capitalism and imperialism, a vision and framework for a different mode of production—of socialism.

The nature, role and development of the communist party must therefore be front and centre in developing and building that movement.

Reformism and reformist demands, as a tendency within the workers’ movement, lack clarity at best and at worst are ignorant of political class-consciousness. The demands may be the popular demands of the people who are defending their interests, of the workers who are pitted in a class war they are often oblivious of; but these demands are the protection and defence of the self, whether as an individual, a company, an industry, or a nation, and have their merit within the realm of self-preservation.

But for a communist party, or a party or movement that represents the working class, to concentrate their work, their resources, their time on reforms of the system without going beyond the reforms is to avoid the class struggle and to engage only in bourgeois politics. What distinctive role do we as communists and as a communist party have if we fail to advance the position of the working class? The house is already full of political opportunism and reformism.

The resignation of Arlene Foster Statement by Betty Sinclair Branch, Communist Party of Ireland

THE RESIGNATION of Arlene Foster should come as little surprise. The difficulties for political unionism, and particularly for the DUP, have been mounting for some considerable time.

After one hundred years of partition, unionism has finally run out of options, and unionists’ relationship with the British state has been downgraded, while the British have simultaneously courted and secured

new forces to advance their imperial interests in Ireland, north and south.

It’s not just Brexit that has accentuated the ongoing and deepening crisis within unionism. Political unionism has little, if anything, to offer its working-class base, other than the relentless dog-whistle of sectarianism.

The DUP, like the other parties that make up the Northern Executive, has



The role of a communist party is different from that of trade unions and trade union work, and this should be recognised by members of both.

If we are aware of our theory and our place within our class we have to make decisions to intervene in the class struggle where strategically this strengthens the hand of labour and the people over capital and its benefactors, where there is popular support for change, by shifting the emphasis of demands from reforms to transformations.

It's not a subjective factor—whether we think that demands, campaigns or policies are good or bad—that would merit the time and resources, as struggles and demands are in constant flux and on ever-changing battlegrounds: it is whether we can objectively transform any particular demands, campaigns or policies that develop class-consciousness, in other words that expose the class nature of the struggle within the capitalist mode of production, bringing the conflict between capital and labour to the fore, that weaken the grip of imperialism on our country and people but also offers an opportunity for developing and deepening class solidarity.

That should be our strategic objective, and that is what is intended when we adopt a transformative strategy.

There are many detractors of this type of strategy, labelling it either “revisionist” or “ultra-leftist,” yet there has been little if any actual critique of a serious nature of the transformative strategy backed up by an alternative formulation that would imbue the working class and trade union movement with a political class-consciousness in a planned, directed and organised way. Until such a critique or encompassing counter-strategy is presented and logically explained and analysed, the detractors, especially those on the left, can sling all the fallacious arguments they want, but it will not

develop and deepen political class-consciousness among those who they insist they represent but will serve only to enslave workers to the pervasive capitalist ideology.

An important point to note is that a transformative line does not mean ignoring or stifling the reformist demands of the people, or indeed those of trade unions: it is for attempting to shift the focus and line of attack of reforms, from protecting particular interests or insular reforms within the system to protecting the particular interest while also challenging the validity and legitimacy of the capitalist system itself as a mode of production and challenging the ruling class, by bringing forward an alternative to the insular demand, i.e. a transformative demand.

Trade unions by their nature are there to protect their own members' interests and, by and large, reflect the collective political class-consciousness of those they represent. They have a distinct function in the class struggle, being in the front line of the industrial battlefield, engaging in struggle against capitalist employers and the bourgeois state and our gombeen political class but are limited by the restraints of bourgeois ideology, laws and practices that are pervasive within society.

The role of a communist party is different from that of trade unions and trade union work, and this should be recognised by members of both. However, it is not an “either-or” scenario. The interjection of political class-consciousness into the trade union movement can be symbiotic for active members in both, and so the campaigns and demands of trade unions will reflect the developments in political class-consciousness.

Importantly, the objectivity of a

transformative strategy can only be infused by the conscious work of comrades active and engaged within the trade union movement as well as the myriad campaigns, activities and forums that the party is mobilised on; otherwise we are back to the scenario of relying on the “spontaneous development of the working-class movement.”

Seeking the transformative demand is not a dogmatic formulation of listing “good” and “bad” (subjective) reforms that at any particular time are randomly picked out but is for initiating a flexible method of work, to act as a guide in ensuring that whatever the particular struggle, demand, or reform—working from home, the environmental crisis, privatisation of water, the housing crisis, health crisis, partition, etc.—it is actively and consciously developed and linked to the general intensification of class struggle. This can only be achieved by the targeted and planned direct action of a party being conscious of the means of actively developing, implementing and assessing a transformative strategy.

It is this that sets the CPI apart from trade unions, and from any other party for that matter, and why it is vital that the party remains steadfast in the midst of attacks against the organisation. The role of the party is not only to stretch the horizon of our class by advancing transformative and revolutionary demands, building a movement for socialism, but it must train and develop all members joining our ranks into a well-disciplined but vibrant party, collectively willing and able to represent and advance the position of our class in any and every facet of the class struggle. ★

* V. I. Lenin, *What Is to Be Done?* Burning Questions of Our Movement (1902) (tinyurl.com/kkzm6bxs).

overseen more than two decades of austerity and attacks on the living standards of working people.

The NHS is on the verge of collapse. Poverty has grown, as has the number of homeless and those on housing waiting-lists.

All the Stormont parties have failed to challenge the current economic orthodoxy or meaningfully challenge the British-imposed budget restraints and fiscal priorities. They are all

compliant to the greater needs of the British state.

No matter who will take over after Arlene Foster, the challenges facing both urban and rural working families as well as farming communities will not be met nor satisfied by any of the leading candidates vying to replace her.

A century on, what has become clearer with each and every crisis within unionism and within the Northern Executive is that partition has

failed; it has run its course. It's time for a new way forward for working people, from Derry to Kerry.

We need a new economic and social order with the needs of working people centre stage, a new all-Ireland democracy where working people no longer wait in line to see a doctor or secure a home, an all-Ireland democracy where our youth are guaranteed a future here at home. A better future is possible. ★



A euphemism for class war

AUSTERITY

SAJEEV KUMAR

THERE IS A saying, “Life is an education of a different kind, where exams come before the lessons.”

The nineteenth-century cholera outbreak taught England the importance of underground drainage systems. Covid-19 has taught us many lessons; one among them is that there are some sectors that have to be the responsibility of the state, such as health services, which should not be privatised. The other lesson is that the virus can affect anyone, without class bias; but the effect is not the same on all classes: as usual in any crisis, the working class is the worst affected

India is the latest epicentre of covid-19 and is drowning under the second wave of the pandemic. While the prime minister is busy with campaign speeches, the people of India are running from pillar to post for oxygen. Mass cremations are conducted because of the piling up of dead bodies. Every day more than 200,000 people become infected.

The lockdown during the first wave was a disaster. People were informed a mere four hours beforehand. Immigrants in their thousands who depend on day-to-day wages walked hundreds of miles to go back home; many did not complete the journey but died at the roadside.

All this happened in the largest democracy, where the government is supposed to be accountable.

Why is an elected government so

callous? Is it a phenomenon seen only in India? Earlier, during the welfare-state period, the political sphere controlled the economic sphere; but in the neoliberal era capital accumulation in the hands of monopolies became so huge that it led to the accumulation of political power, with the policies of governments dictated by the monopolies.

This transfer of political power forced governments to draft laws that further exacerbate the accumulation of wealth in the hands of the few. During covid-19, when India’s GDP shrank by 7 per cent, the number of dollar billionaires increased from 102 to 140.

At a time when the vaccinations were to be given free by stepping up production, using public-sector institutions, the vaccines were priced at different rates for central and state governments, to facilitate the maximising of profit by private companies. The day when the government announced its vaccine policy, in favour of monopolies, the shares of four pharma companies went up by 30 per cent.

Until the middle of April only 8 per cent of the population had been given a single dose of vaccination and only 1 per cent given both doses. In a country of 1.4 billion people there is a large market that can be exploited for profit.

The World Trade Organization’s intellectual property rights agreement in the field of life-saving medicines is another war waged against people, especially during critical times such as the present one.

At the end of chapter 31 of *Capital*,

Marx quotes the English trade unionist and Chartist T. J. Dunning, who wrote:

“With adequate profit, capital is very bold. A certain 10 per cent. will ensure its employment anywhere; 20 per cent. certain will produce eagerness; 50 per cent., positive audacity; 100 per cent. will make it ready to trample on all human laws; 300 per cent., and there is not a crime at which it will scruple, nor a risk it will not run, even to the chance of its owner being hanged.”

When people are dying in the streets, the corporates are fighting for profits on the corpses of the deceased.

The situation may be better in Ireland when compared with India, but the neoliberal policies that bind the governments are the same in the two countries. These policies reduce elected governments to agents of finance capital. The austerity measures are implemented without concern for people, according to the directions given by the EU (in the case of Ireland).

Austerity measures reduce government expenditure for people’s welfare, such as health and education.

Austerity is a euphemism for class war, declared by the ruling classes on the working class.

It is false to say that the pandemic is the cause of all the damage: in fact the pandemic exposed the flaw that exists in the capitalist system, which is based on profits.

Noam Chomsky explains how the public accepts privatisation. “The standard technique of privatization: defund, make sure things don’t work, people get angry, you hand it over to private capital.” The privatisation of health services to facilitate the maximising of profit, thereby relieving governments of the responsibility, led to the catastrophe that humanity faces today.

There are two ways ahead for us: we can sweep everything under the carpet and go on doing our business as usual, or we can question the logic of privatising essential needs, such as health, education, and housing, and oppose the austerity measures and the burden of debt on the Irish people. But the wounds caused by the pandemic are so deep that the former is no option. ★

Image: Communist-run Kerala has used effective anti-Covid measures.

The greater part of community work is ultimately financed by capitalism, and they will always try to co-opt you.

Activists must be embedded in their communities

POLITICS

BARRY MURRAY

SO IT'S AN Irish Socialist Republic or nothing?—where the people of Ireland will eventually own the means of production and distribution of the wealth, an independent, sovereign and socialist Ireland, free from the grip of imperialism.

Where are we now with that project and how long will it take to first slow, then stall the “express train of imperialism” and finally derail it?

Relatively speaking, we are a small force, even in Ireland. Centuries of conditioning by church, state, media and education, and hard experience, have left the class-consciousness of a very large proportion of people in—well, poor condition, to put it mildly. There are several mountains to climb—big ones.

The soccer “Super League,” sport in general, shopping therapy, fashion, now social media—all make for major distractions that defuse any notions of thinking about the state we are in. In reality, people have to live: pay bills, work, pay a mortgage, and more. People’s minds are, understandably, fixed elsewhere.

The pressure on the poor and the working poor is enormous and likely to grow. After covid comes austerity; at least that’s what power has planned for us. The question for activists, socialists and communists is, How exactly do we intervene in people’s lives (a) to get them to think differently and hopefully (b) to get them to actually participate in confronting their oppressor. That’s a major issue.

In struggle it is never possible to get 100 per cent participation in the “front line.” There are always several “lines.” There will be a percentage (the smallest) who will be the “cutting edge,” the vanguard, another percentage who assist and are in and out of different

phases of struggle. Then there’s a larger percentage of the population who, no matter what, will be lukewarm—neither cold nor hot, not actively with you but not diametrically opposed to you either. They will also ebb and flow according to the progress, or not, at any stage of the struggle. That’s a critical section of the population.

There is always going to be a tiny number of people who, even in the “Irish Socialist Republic,” will never be for you, and may well work against you.

Now, none of the above is scientific, but it comes from long years of experience and observation of the reality on the ground, during struggle.

At what point are the actions of activists who are at present working in communities all over Ireland progressive, transformative, or reformist? Day to day or at the end of the year, how do we measure that? Or do we just plod on, year in, year out? Can we say with any confidence that the social enterprise or co-op that has been established in Co. Tyrone or Fermanagh has even the potential to be transformative, a transformative reform, or just a waste of time and energy?

The greater part of community work is ultimately financed by capitalism, and they will always try to co-opt you. If you start to look like a communist and begin to really threaten the status quo, they will turn off the tap. And then what?

Even if you pre-empt their moves and build a successful source of income through social enterprises or co-ops, will you survive the onslaught of capitalism and the market? Do we abandon all this work and concentrate on exposing the crimes of neoliberalism and capitalism? Will direct action and electoralism form part of a potential other strategy?

On the one hand, activists need to become embedded in their communities. On the other hand, they need to avoid being “lost in the swamp.” Can Karl or Vladimir help us, please? ★

Who said that?

DECLAN MCKENNA

“The lawlessness and cruelty of death-dealing sanctions must be recognized as genocide and a crime against humanity and must be prohibited.”

Ramsey Clark, former US attorney-general who dedicated his life to opposing economic wars.

“That’s not the case. Most of the apples are fully rotten. And so is the mainstream reporting.”

Eva Bartlett, Canadian journalist and activist commenting on the description of terrorists in the “White Helmets” in Syria as “a few bad apples.”

“The real underlying currency of our world is not gold, nor bureaucratic fiat, nor even military might. The real underlying currency of our world is narrative, and the ability to control it. Everything always comes down to this one real currency . . . It ultimately boils down to controlling the dominant stories that people tell about what’s going on in their world.”

Caitlin Johnstone, Australian journalist

“Cuban workers and peasants decided more than 60 years ago they would no longer be servants for US imperialism or capitalism. They have been collectively punished for it ever since.”

Zach Farber, *Liberation News*

“No.”

Bill Gates on Sky News, responding to a question whether stripping intellectual property protection from vaccine recipes would be helpful in providing poorer countries with supplies

“My hope for a post-pandemic world is that the old excuses for doing nothing about climate—that it is impossible to change the status quo and too expensive to do so—have been stripped away. In response to the pandemic, we in the US have spent trillions of dollars and changed how we live and work. We need the will to do the same for the climate crisis.”

Rebecca Solnit, *Guardian* columnist



The Great Housing Robbery

BARRY MURRAY

THE MANTRA “You need to own your own house” or to “get on the property ladder” has great appeal in the Irish psyche. Young couples will queue outside building sites for days to get their “dream home.” While they wait, and it makes the evening news, the original price of the house creeps up in increments of ten or twenty thousand.

And nobody bats an eyelid. It’s taken as normal practice—a part of life.

Often the houses are not even built yet, and all they see is the well-manicured mocked-up “lived-in” show house. They are keen, and content to buy off the plan. The young couple (and it mostly is young couples) have worked long hours, saved, curtailed their lives, and stayed with parents or in substandard accommodation, just to scrape together the minimum deposit. Parents and even grandparents might chip in too.

All this is viewed as the road to the prize of “owning” your own home. And they don’t even have a home yet. A long list of vultures have to get a slice of the action: the advertisers, the solicitors, the auctioneers, the insurance company, and of course the mortgage company or bank. The government has taxes to get. So have local councils.

The original seller has received an exorbitant price for the land the houses will be built on. They may well have bought the land at a knock-down price, got planning permission, then raised the price ten, fifteen or twentyfold, knowing well that people will even camp outside the building site to buy the eventual houses at inflated and ever-increasing prices.

Then there’s the property mogul or builder. They certainly have a large slice to get, and to get that slice up to the maximum they will do anything it takes. All corners that can be cut will be cut.

This is a well-practised art form.

At the outset they will maximise the number of houses or apartments they can possibly squeeze in to the area they have. Green areas, recreational areas or community spaces are not profit-making, so they don’t count too highly in the moneymaking plan. Subcontractors and workers will have their wages cut to the bone. They will be subject to strict time schedules, with penalties. Materials used will be the cheapest that can be got to fit.

Building regulations will be adeptly complied with, where possible. And there are many examples in the recent past of this. The result is a poor-quality house, entirely the result of the race to make a profit at any cost. Your three-bedroom semi-detached house, which you queued for, which you skimped, saved and borrowed for, cost in the region of €300,000 to build, and you will pay perhaps €400,500 to €500,500 for it. It will imprison you for

Evictions: The brutal reality of government captured by landlords

EOIN MACDERMOTT

THE MORATORIUM on evictions was lifted on 23 April, placing the fate of thousands of renters affected by this pandemic firmly back into the hands of landlords.

The government has clearly shown that it cares more for the rights of the propertied classes during an economic and public health crisis than for the basic right of the people to shelter and dignity. In a country that has the means to prevent homelessness and poverty, this is a level of callousness that offends even the most jaded observer.

The effects of this are already unfolding in Dún Laoghaire, where eight tenants face immediate eviction. The profits of Mill Street Projects Ltd are more important to Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and the Green Party than protecting the people; but why would this be a surprise? In 2019 a quarter of all TDs were landlords, despite the fact that landlords make up only 4 per cent of the population. When the representatives of the people more closely resemble a gathering of the Irish Property Owners’ Association than a random sample of citizens, is it any surprise that this is the outcome?

Yet the problem isn’t simply the need for a more accurate socio-economic representation of the populace in the Dáil: the problem is an economic system that treats one of the most basic human needs, shelter, as something to be bought and sold. The right of the landlord is sacrosanct in the Free State, and the exercise of this right leads to an appalling situation, where many dogs around the country are treated better than children, students, and the most vulnerable members of our society. The rights of young and old to shelter and basic dignity are treated with disdain by men in suits whose main

The rental market, as at present constituted, is yet another crucifixion of those wishing to set up home. Private landlords and transnational vulture landlords all strive to screw as much as possible out of the poor and the working poor.

the rest of your life; and you will be unlikely, in the main, to ever own it.

All being well, you might pay off your original mortgage of €400,000 or €500,000 in mid to late life. Of course the original mortgage, plus interest, insurance, and the upkeep of your home, will now have cost you many times the figure of your original mortgage. In the meantime your house may now be only worth half, or less, of your lifetime expenditure. And all the time someone is profiting from your home, which you might not even own yet.

The rental market, as at present constituted, is yet another crucifixion of those wishing to set up home. Private landlords and transnational vulture landlords all strive to screw as much as possible out of the poor and the working poor. Housing and apartment rental in Ireland is, quite simply, extortionate. Government assistance for both buyers and renters only pushes up prices, and results in the money from the government, by way of taxpayers, being transferred to the already rich.

And yet there is another, much simpler way to have a home; but the media, and those with an interest in profit only, will never mention it. Dozens of television programmes promote the notion and the “dream” of buying your own home, in Ireland or abroad. However, in Europe owning your own home is not a big thing. There, public housing, in one form or another, is seen as normal; but here, to be a renter instead of being an owner has a low

status attached to it.

People convince themselves that they are “middle-class” when they have a large house, in an affluent area, complete with an equally crippling mortgage; and those who are renting, whether from councils, housing executives or would-be landlords, are somehow lower-class or merely working-class.

This “othering” is very useful to those who wish to cash in on the mistaken notion that an Irishman’s (or woman’s) home is their castle. They rub their hands with glee when they hear this repeated ad nauseam.

Imagine a different approach: that a home is a human right, and treated like food or water—essential to human existence; that the profit motive is removed completely, and that the government built our homes, according to the needs of the population; that the constitution would say you have a home for life, unless you want to change, upgrade, “downsize,” or emigrate.

All these options would be paid for by a rent measured according to your ability to pay. It could even be linked to whether you are working or not.

The very first and obvious question would be, How will all this be paid for? The writer is not an expert on these matters; but I would hazard a guess that a raising of the tax rate on the transnational vultures that have caused the price of housing in Ireland to skyrocket would be a start, followed by all the other transnationals that avoid

paying tax in Ireland, not to mention our own home-grown vultures. I have no doubt at all that, if the political and ideological will was there, it would be doable.

Just consider how society would change if everyone had a home, at a nominal rent, for life, as a right; further, that those who worked reaped the proper rewards of their labour, a full share in the profits, as of right, coupled with a free health service, free education, and even proper food—not the poor-quality, chemicalised and factory-farmed stuff that is peddled as food to the people. Less illness, less stress, and a more fulfilling life.

At present two parents have to work to pay for their over-priced house or to rent. The majority cannot digress from making ends meet. They are constantly on the edge. It affects how they participate in society (or don’t). It means they cannot afford not to have a job. Unable to pay or fall behind on a mortgage or rent and they are homeless. The landlord or the mortgage company care little about that situation. They have a profit to make, no matter what.

So not alone has the whole system to change but our attitude to what a home is must change too. As part of the development of a New Ireland, public housing by government must become the norm. A home must be deemed a human right; a home must not be for profit.

Ireland could lead the way with progressive action on this. ★

concern is the proper functioning of the property market.

We have to ask ourselves, Are we helped by framing this as an issue of rights, or would it be better to talk plainly about power? Landlords have power, while the individual renter is at their mercy. They exercise that power through the courts, the Gardaí, and their political connections—leaving thousands in damp, crowded and dingy apartments that must be paid for each month, even during a global pandemic.

On experiencing the misery that springs from this power imbalance it would be rational to think that the economic and political systems operating in this country are corrupted by greed. Unfortunately they work properly and

efficiently according to the blueprints they were built from. If we want to change the outcome we need to change the whole political and economic machinery; it is not enough to appeal to the kindness of the landlords’ hearts. To do that we require a new blueprint.

We require an alternative economic system that produces humane outcomes, an economic system that builds and distributes warm, safe, dry and environmentally efficient public housing on the basis of the needs of our society. This will not be achieved by appealing to the interests of a Dáil captured by the propertied classes.

While the existing inhuman machinery is not in a position to be dismantled, because of our present lack of power, it

can and must be disrupted as a first step towards a future without mould, cold, or the threat of homelessness.

The coming months and years will present even more challenges on top of the already difficult situation that we all find ourselves in. The state and the landlords are organising for mass evictions by legislating to allow thugs from private security companies to carry out evictions. Organisation at the community and the national level is our only weapon to counter this assault. If not members already, readers should consider joining a tenants’ union, such as CATU, as well as the Communist Party. As individuals we can hope to achieve little, but collectively we have great power. ★

The Climate Bill and the end of agriculture



ENVIRONMENT

JOE HURLEY

THE CLIMATE ACTION and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Bill (2021) is of major concern to all farmers and rural workers. If it is allowed to be implemented in full it would be the death knell of rural industry.

The bill entails a massive cut in the national herd, setting legally binding targets to make sure Ireland reaches net zero emission of greenhouse gases by 2050. That means of 51 per cent reduction in emissions by 2030. The plan is to reduce by seventy-five emissions a year.

The national herd is being reduced because of methane emissions by the cattle, technically known as biogenic methane belching, which, according to knowledgeable environmentalists, is destroying the environment and is a major factor in climate change.

I think the amount of wind the Greens and Co. spout is a bigger danger to everyone than flatulent cattle. What this means is that farms will have to reduce their herd over the next ten years. That means 1 million tonnes of emissions cut every year.

Methane from livestock amounts to 60 per cent of agricultural emissions.

Capitalism and the future of human-animal relations

NATURE

RUAIRÍ Ó HÚLLACHAIN

THE WORLD HEALTH Organization has confirmed that the most likely source of covid-19 was transmission from bats to humans through another animal. This is just the latest in a long list of viruses that have been passed from other animals to humans.

As the relentless destruction of our natural world for the profit of a tiny minority continues, these viruses are only increasing in frequency and severity. This

is no mere coincidence. If we are to prevent further pandemics, as well as to tackle the substantial role animal agriculture plays in global warming and climate change, then we need to reshape our relationship with other animals.

After all, animals are trapped within the capitalist system like the rest of us and are similarly seen by capitalists as nothing more than expendable commodities. Animals are exploited, oppressed, and brutalised, forcibly impregnated and selectively bred to maximise profits, thereby perpetuating

the endless cycle of violence.

Many breeds of domesticated animals have inherited serious health issues from human interference. For example, farmed hens have been bred to produce up to three hundred eggs annually, rather than the one or two clutches they would produce in the wild. This constant strain of egg-laying causes enormous internal damage and results in painful and disabling conditions.

When we talk about animals we lump together a vast number of incredibly diverse species into one large homogeneous group, and separate our species from this group. However, humans are also animals; and if we regard ourselves as distinct and superior to all other species this asserts that humans exist outside the natural world, and that we are entitled to complete dominion of the land and all other living beings.

The rise of veganism has raised valid moral questions about animal rights and human-animal relations in general; but the philosophy of veganism will always fall short under capitalism, because capitalism is fuelled by the exploitation of humans and animals alike.

The targeting of this area and the forced reductions will destroy the agricultural industry by 2050. The reduction in methane will ensure the reduction of the Irish herd by 3½ million, which is about 70,000 per year.

Two five-year plans will be implemented: 2021–25 and 2025–30. If the targets are not met there will be legal challenges from the powers that be.

So how can we in this situation produce enough to compete with Mercosur and CPTTP (the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership)? We can't. We are to become an importer of agricultural products, not a producer or exporter. Most rural areas will be afforested. That's the future that the windbags in the Green Party and their environmental friends have for us all. And it won't be only rural areas that will be affected: every sector of the economy will be legally required to halve carbon emissions by 2030.

So, no coal, gas, or turf, only more expensive wind farms that don't actually work but suck in subsidies paid by the public, and electric cars etc. The future does not look good all round, except for the super-rich. Climate change or global warming is

an elitist capitalist dream. It is a great financial opportunity for the elite and big corporations. We will save the planet but we will destroy ourselves, at the expense of all workers. Whether destroying rainforests or taking away bogs, coal and gas production and slowly driving rural workers into extinction, it is all for the same purpose: fattening the profits of the 1 per cent. If you are one of them, climate change is a God-sent opportunity; however, the future for everyone else is not good.

What is the solution? Well, we must get our sovereignty back. That means we may have to leave the EU to survive, get back to producing all we can produce, and find new markets. If not we can join the dodo in the museum. That's how serious this Climate Bill is.

There is another round of submissions against yet another attempt at getting planning permission for Coole Windfarm. The No group hope to strike a blow for the people and stop it again. A couple of years ago a nature company called Promontoria Cerberus tried to take over the local clinic (Coole Clinic). A campaign of letter-writing to TDs stopped this takeover, when the clinic was bought and then leased to the GPs working there.

The clinic is still there and operating successfully. The man in charge of Cerberus Promontoria was none other than the former US vice-president Dan Quayle. This was another fine success for the people. It shows that when people make the effort they can beat exploitative vultures and companies.

Next month I will write about armchair farmers, collective farmers, and show farmers. ★

Editor's note: While we understand the real anger and deep frustration that exist in rural communities about what is happening, and the danger posed to their livelihood, climate change is real, and is threatening the very existence of hundreds of millions of people. It has had and will continue to have a massive impact on the bio-diversity of animal and plant life, threatening the very existence of life on our planet.

Like all things under capitalism, the natural world and natural resources are being plundered to enrich a tiny minority and global corporations. Within capitalism there are contending interests at play, sometimes antagonistic to each other, vying to win out over each other. Climate change is not a conspiracy by an elite or by environmentalists, it is real and is a product of the system of capitalism, of the capitalist mode of production.

Such chauvinistic reasoning is rooted in religious dogma and has been similarly used to justify countless atrocities inflicted on other humans throughout history.

Animal agriculture was born out of necessity by our ancestors thousands of years ago to supplement diets during times of scarcity. Nowadays many farms have been turned into intensive factories, and animals have been transformed into machines, so much so that we now have an overabundance of what we need. A third of the food we produce goes to waste; yet millions of people die from hunger every year.

A third of the crops we grow are used to feed the animals we eat. These animals produce only a small fraction of food, compared with the amount it takes to feed them. This is more than inefficient. We have progressed beyond

the need for animal agriculture, but because the capitalist system is incapable of equitable distribution it is also incapable of the radical change that is needed. Any change that risks a loss in profits for the ruling class will be actively opposed.

Despite the scientifically proven damage caused by animal agriculture, most of the income for farmers in the sector is heavily subsidised. Yet even with these subsidies many farmers are struggling to make ends meet. At the same time these farmers have conveniently become the scapegoats for the climate change issue, though there remains no incentive for them to divest from animal agriculture. These farmers need support to transition away from animal agriculture.

The magnitude of this task cannot be overstated. Many farms have been handed down from generation to

generation; but for the sake of future generations we need a shift towards a sustainable model, and this cannot be achieved under the capitalist system.

The rise of veganism has raised valid moral questions about animal rights and human-animal relations in general; but the philosophy of veganism will always fall short under capitalism, because capitalism is fuelled by the exploitation of humans and animals alike. And so what could have been a radical social movement has been predicatively consolidated by the capitalist system and has been reduced to an individualised consumer activity.

If we are to build a better future not just for our own species but for all who live on this planet then capitalism must be our primary target. If we fail to destroy capitalism then we will fail to save the planet and all who live on it. ★

Irish communists and industrial schools

LAURA DUGGAN

IN MAY 1935, the horrific treatment and the murder of a young boy in the care of the Christian Brothers at Artane Industrial School was exposed in the *Workers' Voice*. During the school's existence, from 1868 to 1969, approximately 15,500 boys passed through its doors.

For over a hundred years the state worked hand in hand with the church to knowingly feed working-class youth into the industrial schools and laundries and the abuse they faced there.

Only a year after the printing of this article the report of the Cussen Commission was published. Strikingly, while the commission does seem to have taken some information verbatim from the orders running these institutions, and is concerned with ensuring that the religious orders are compensated, it also noted that the education and housing supplied were substandard, as well as the reliance on handshake agreements between religious orders and local authorities being open to abuse.

It recommends the formalising of the process of sending girls to laundries, recommending that they be held for a maximum of three years and that they be remunerated on their leaving for the work they had done during that time.

It also called for boys to have access to further training up to the age of seventeen, and argued for the establishment of a children's court, with a more informal mode of dress etc., in order to be less intimidating for children.

Micheál Martin's statement in 1999 that "the concept of the child as a separate individual with rights came late to this country" rings a little hollow in the

The League, which brought together Irish and British left-wing campaigners, had two core demands: the immediate release of all internees, and the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Ireland.

On 9 August 1971 "Operation Demetrius"—internment without charge or trial—began, and it would continue until 5 December 1975, during which time 1,981 people were interned. Many of those interned were members of the Official and Provisional republican movements; the rest of the internees were political opponents of the



Mass solidarity

INTERNMENT

MICK HEALY

THIS YEAR is the 50th anniversary of the Anti-Internment League, founded in London after the introduction of internment in the North of Ireland in 1971.

For over a hundred years the state worked hand in hand with the church to knowingly feed working-class youth into the industrial schools and laundries and the abuse they faced there.

face of this. He, like many polished career politicians, defended their dynastic legacies and their political parties up to the 2000s with the tired line that “nobody knew”: nobody in the government, the church or the civil service really knew what was taking place in those institutions behind closed doors.

Only when the sea of evidence to the contrary became public, through the Ryan Report in 2009, did the narrative change to that of Ireland being collectively responsible, that something in our culture had allowed this to happen, and that we were all guilty, diluting the blame so far that it became meaningless. This article from 1935 shows otherwise.

The people locked up and hidden away had tried to make their voices heard. Their families had tried to draw attention to their plight; the Cussen Inquiry had shown that the institutions and handshake agreements were not good enough; the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children had pinpointed the need for social protection, such as welfare and child benefit, in the 1940s to prevent poor children being incarcerated.

The Father Flanagan report in 1946–48 and Father Moore’s report in 1962 were both buried for detailing the crimes perpetrated within these institutions and the cruelty of the reform system.

Constantly since the formation of the Free State these schools and laundries were shown to be flawed; and time and time again those in power closed their eyes and ears to the cries for help. It is our collective sorrow, but it is not our blame to carry: that rests squarely with those who colluded within the church and government to silence the working-class survivors and to profit from their misery

Unionists, such as People’s Democracy, the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association, and, in some cases, militant trade unionists.

During this period I attended an anti-internment march from Speakers’ Corner in Hyde Park to Trafalgar Square in central London, organised by the Connolly Association. I became involved with the Anti-Internment League in Southampton, which, along with the Young Communists, organised the picketing of British army recruitment centres.

On 18 February 1972 more than

and pain. We can only be proud that our party, and many other individuals, did not keep this deplorable vow of silence.

It is time for the blame and shame to be apportioned correctly. Solidarity with the survivors!

We Demand Open Enquiry into Scandal of Artane Tragedy “My Boy’s Body Was Black and Blue” Says Sorrowing Father to “Voice”

“I saw my boy on Holy Thursday when he was lying dead at the Mater hospital. I lifted the shroud. His ribs and whole side were black and blue, and his jaw was discoloured.”

So said Mr. Patrick Byrne, 55 York st, Dublin, to the WORKERS VOICE, in an interview on a tragedy that has shocked the working class and parents of all parts of Ireland—the death of his son, John Byrne, a 15-year-old boy, as a result of injuries received at Artane Industrial School. Here are the amazing facts revealed at the inquest on Friday:

Dr. Murphy, Medical Officer to Artane, was unable to diagnose the cause of the boy’s illness.

Mr. Patrick Byrne, the father—“The boy told me that while he was playing ball, the ball happened to strike the master, Cornelius Lynch, who then kicked him.”

James Doran, a pupil at Artane,—“Mr. Lynch punched Byrne in a joke. Byrne fell to the ground and Mr. Lynch kicked him for a couple of minutes on the soles. Byrne kept wriggling and received a kick in the thigh.”

Cornelius Lynch, the master,—“I admit I was flurried when I made the previous statement which was not right, that I ran at Byrne as he was about to

four hundred people attended an anti-internment meeting at Southampton town hall, addressed by James Wray, whose son Jim was killed on Bloody Sunday, and Kate Hoey. The secretary of the Anti-Internment League, John Grey, was presented with a cheque for £100 from Southampton Students’ Union.

The League became a mass movement, with trade unions and trades councils passing resolutions of support for the internees. Thousands demonstrated on the streets of Britain, demanding an end to internment and

throw himself on the ground.” Mr. L. T. McCarthy (for next of kin)—“So the first thing you did when asked for an explanation by your superior was to tell a lie?”—“Yes”, Lynch responded.

Yet, with all of this evidence, the doctor stated that the boy died from abscesses in the lungs, heart and hip, and the jury found in accordance with the medical evidence.

“When I saw my boy, before he died,” Mr. Byrne stated, “he said to me: ‘the master kicked me but don’t say anything Daddy or he will kill me when I go back.’ After his death, the coroner said “you can see him again, but he must be boxed up tonight.” But when he was being coffined, neither his mother nor I saw him. Now I am told that the undertaker was not allowed to coffin my boy, but that the hospital authorities took the coffin from him and did it themselves. There is something terrible and strange about it all, I am not even sure I buried my own son.”

Every worker will agree with the sorrow-stricken parent. Unless this tragedy is properly investigated, workers will have no other option but to believe that conditions in Artane are being deliberately covered up by the responsible people. This is not the first death there in suspicious circumstances: there have been others in recent years. In the name of the whole working class, we demand:

Put Lynch into the dock and hold a public inquiry into the conduct of Artane!

Proper working-class representation on the inquiry! No whitewashing, but a free and full inquiry to reveal all the facts! ★

the withdrawal of troops from Ireland. With the start of the IRA bombing campaign in England the mass support slowly ebbed away; the British establishment must have heaved a sigh of relief.

There still remained a solidarity campaign of the far left, but the days of 20,000 in protest against British misrule were gone. Arguably it might have been better to concentrate on building broad political support among the British working class and to make Ireland an integral part of the left agenda in Britain. ★

Repression in the Philippines



Wikimedia Commons

MICHALA LAFFERTY

MOTHER, SON, friend, wife, father, husband, daughter—all tags that we wear quite easily, tags that show we mean something to someone else. However, in the Philippines you can have another tag, a sinister tag that you don't wear so easily: you can be “red-tagged.”

This is a tag that you do not choose. It means you are a threat to others; it is given to you by a faceless malevolent murderous state, and it marks you for execution.

“Red-tagging” is a despicable process whereby individuals or organisations are blacklisted if they are considered to be critical, or not fully supportive, of the Duterte government. They are tagged as communists or terrorists, or both, regardless of their actual beliefs, or evidence. The Catholic Church, human-rights advocates and organisations, academics, law-makers, charities, feminist groups, ethnic rights groups and our partners and comrades in the BPO [business process outsourcing] Industry Employees' Network, or BIEN, have all been red-tagged.

Some 328 people who have been red-tagged have been murdered, including Jora Porquia, the president of BIEN, and more than 2,600 have been

illegally arrested, and almost a thousand citizens have been illegally arrested and detained.

After the most recent massacre, on 7 March, when nine activists were murdered, BIEN held a conference on safety and discussed different steps that their organisers and volunteers needed to follow to keep themselves safe from execution. When our lives are threatened or our property invaded and destroyed, we call the police; but what do you do when the police are the perpetrators? What do you do when neighbours and friends could be the eyes and ears of the state? Where do you go when you have nowhere to turn?

Here are some of the stories of our organisers. I have changed their names to try to give them some protection.

Jasmine is thirty-eight, a mother of six children, a mass communications graduate, and a qualified high-school teacher. Jasmine became involved in the movement many years ago, and it is how she met her partner. She is a member of the Executive Council of BIEN and works tirelessly on behalf of call-centre workers in the BPO Industry in her country.

In October 2019 Jasmine was working in the office of the women's organisation office. She had just finished folding laundry into neat piles when they

burst in, terrifying her young family. There was little she could do but watch and try to comfort her children. They marched everyone outside and held them at gunpoint while they read them the search warrant.

Jasmine was frightened but needed to be calm for her children and not risk antagonising those who were destroying her place of work. She could not give them any excuse to react against her. She had heard the stories; she had already lost friends and colleagues to state murder; she knew what could happen if she resisted in any way.

The army left, leaving a trail of destruction in their wake. The noise of screaming children was soon silenced, however, when ten minutes later the police arrived to search the office. The office and her children were to be upset again. Jasmine defiantly quipped to one of the police that they had better not destroy the clean clothes she had painstakingly washed, dried, and folded—a typical response that would resonate with mothers and home-makers everywhere.

During this illegal search the police found two weapons—clearly planted by the recent military raid—and this time Jasmine was arrested and detained, and ripped away from her children while they watched helplessly as she was taken away. She was detained for twelve days and is still facing trumped-up charges of the illegal possession of firearms.

Jasmine has been red-tagged twice already this year. Her faceless accuser names her as a high-ranking official with the armed communist militia.

Jasmine periodically has had to separate herself from her family, to move and stay with her elderly father, move again to stay with her husband's family, never really settling. Those close to her know that she was arrested in 2019, but they have no idea that she is now-red tagged. Her face is on social media, accusing her of being an enemy of the state and a member of the New People's Army.

There is no place of safety for Jasmine. She is constantly treading water, constantly having to be vigilant, constantly hiding the worst from her friends and family, who have begged her

“Red-tagging” is a despicable process whereby individuals or organisations are blacklisted if they are considered to be critical, or not fully supportive, of the Duterte government.

to give this work up. The threat against Jasmine is now even more real, because the anti-terror law has come into effect, and this has struck fear into the hearts of everyone who loves her but especially her two older children. Jasmine says:

“I always remind them that in a fight for our rights and freedom, we do this, even giving our own lives to win. They have been prepared to expect things like this, that this is not an easy job.

Organising my own children will help them survive in this kind of system and to be strong in the face of repression.”

Jacob is thirty-two. He would have been a happy-go-lucky character, but living under the shadow of being red-tagged and being under surveillance has had a detrimental effect on his mental health. Jacob lives with his sister and his elderly mother in a compound but is almost always under surveillance. He has been involved with BIEN since 2011 and became involved in activism and leadership when he was a student.

He was under surveillance even then and knows the signs, the seemingly innocuous situations that stands out to him that others would readily dismiss. The police car, doing a second or third lap of his block; the delivery driver who calls asking to deliver a parcel but using Jacob’s real name, a name he now never goes by; or the vendor going round the district in the evening despite the curfew, in full view of the curfew marshals, selling fresh taho, a breakfast product that is usually sold in the mornings.

Jacob now suffers from severe bouts of anxiety and panic. He is unsafe in the place he called home, a place that he grew up in, where he is surrounded by his entire family. He feels homeless, and to a great extent he is; he is unsafe, on his own, and he is exposed and vulnerable, but he puts his family at risk if he goes back and lives among them.

Jacob knows some of the people, his friends and comrades who have been arrested and killed after being red-tagged. He lives in fear for his life, and this fear has damaged his mental health. He recently attended his doctor’s office to obtain counselling and much-needed therapy, but a few days later he was contacted by the office saying that he had been in close contact there with

someone who tested positive for covid.

Jacob has now tested positive for covid. His choices in reality are no choices at all: he can go home, where he exposes his family to covid and red-tagging, or he checks in to a special government isolation facility, where he identifies himself to the very government that has red-tagged him. Clearly Jacob can do neither, so he has had to scrape together some money for a hotel room, where his friends bring him medication and food every day.

Reggie is one of our organisers, a natural leader. He became involved in politics and activism while he was a student. He left university and went to work in the call centre to support his parents. His father is a chronic asthmatic, and his mother has suffered from a stroke that has paralysed one side of her body. He is their main carer.

Reggie went to a rally a few years ago, where he met an old university friend. He was asked to help out in the campaign for call-centre workers and began to do so part-time before deciding to work. He witnessed so much exploitation of call-centre workers that he decided to take on a full-time role supporting BIEN.

Last year BIEN carried out a protest action to demand the full thirteenth month pay for BPO employees. It wasn’t long after that that the entire executive of BIEN were red-tagged on social media. A few weeks ago BIEN issued a statement criticising Duterte’s inadequate response to the covid pandemic. Since then they have all been red-tagged again on various social media.

Reggie is frightened now, because he knows he is under surveillance. He is almost thankful for the lockdown and the curfew, as it reduces the chances of any incidents against him. However, it is difficult if not impossible for him to see his frail parents. He is concerned for his safety, because, although he lives in a quiet residential estate, the police frequently set up a checkpoint in front of his apartment in the middle of the night, even when there is little or no traffic. Reggie has told me:

We fear every day for our safety. People or organisations who get red-tagged usually end up dead or in jail . . .

We hope this would stop. But whatever happens, our organisation will not stop defending the rights and welfare of BPO workers.”

Safra has worked for a call centre as an agent since 2006. Tired of seeing how companies walked around the perimeter of the law, she became involved in the BIEN network and became president of their only union in 2015. Safra has three daughters and one son, and is a widow. Her mother lives with her, as does one of her younger brothers.

Because of her involvement with the union and being a leader she has been red-tagged. This has caused great hardship and heartache within her family. One of the groups that has red-tagged Safra is an NGO called Call Centre Agents for Democracy (CCAD), as well as some other pro-Duterte groups.

Safra’s children and her mother now live in fear and are being harassed by the government; they believe Safra has become involved in “bad work.” Her friends are aware that she has been red-tagged and have shunned her offers to meet for lunch or go for coffee; they do not even want to talk to her any more. Safra feels totally isolated and vulnerable, even within her own home. It is sometimes difficult for family members to understand the passion that drives organisers to continue to fight for the rights of workers, especially in the most dangerous of circumstances.

UNI Global Union represents more than 20 million workers in more than 150 countries in the fastest-growing sectors in the world: skills and services. The general secretary of UNI, Christy Hoffman, extends continued solidarity to officials of BIEN in the Philippines, who are living and working under the threat of execution as a result of being red-tagged, the abhorrent practice that mislabels activists publicly as communist enemies of the state. ★

■ Michala Lafferty works for UNI Global Union and is based in Nyon in Switzerland. She heads a team fighting for the unionising of the contact-centre sector in the Philippines, which employs more than a million people. Here she recounts some of her team’s experiences over the past year.

Champion of the peasants



Jenny Farrell on the life and work of Albrecht Dürer

ALBRECHT DÜRER (depicted left aged 28 in a self portrait painted in 1500) was born 550 years ago, on 21 May 1471, during the Renaissance, a time of upheaval that rang in the early modern age.

With improved production methods, industry and trade grew rapidly, bringing with them more money and the strengthening of a new middle class. Modern science developed, inherited truths were called into question, and the working people began to challenge their appointed places in the social, political and religious hierarchies. It was a time, among other things, when the peasants arose and demanded to be treated as equals.

The Reformation movement began with John Wyclif in England, continued with Jan Hus in Bohemia, and culminated in Germany. Popular social opposition became part of it. Social forces in religious guise fought the Hussite wars in Bohemia.

As Engels describes it in *The Peasant War in Germany*, Luther became afraid when he realised the socially explosive effect his challenge to Rome's hierarchy had on the peasants, who understood this to legitimise aspirations to change their own lot. Luther's theological reform did not question class antagonisms.

Dürer was the first German artist to capture the peasants' self-confidence that had been stirring since the late fifteenth century and the first to portray peasants as aesthetic subjects.

Thomas Müntzer became the leader of the popular opposition. He led the Peasant War, which challenged the old social order. Luther, along with the bourgeoisie, turned against the revolutionary peasants, preventing the unification of all opposition forces and setting back major social change by centuries. The peasants and their urban plebeian allies were defeated; Müntzer was imprisoned and beheaded.

The impact of the working classes on German art of the Reformation period survives in numerous pamphlet woodcuts from the early sixteenth century but above all in the many prints by Dürer and his circle. Dürer's influence can be seen in the work of Grünewald, Riemenschneider, Jörg Ratgeb and many other artists and infuses German art of the Reformation period with a haunting popular appeal.

Dürer's genius so dominated the art of the early bourgeois revolution in Germany that this is known as the Dürer epoch. He was born in Nürnberg, the son of a goldsmith, studied for three years in the workshop of Michael Wolgemut, spent four journeyman years in Basel and Strasbourg, among other places, and finally settled in Nürnberg. Twice he crossed the Alps to Italy, first in 1495, the second time in 1505/06, each time spending an extended period in Venice. A third journey took him to see the Netherlands in 1520/21.

The remarkable portrait of Catherine (page 20, top right) was drawn from life during the journey to the Netherlands. It shows the artist's great interest in people who came to Europe because of growing international trade, including the slave trade. Catherine was a twenty-year-old servant of the Portuguese commercial agent João Brandão, who administered the Portuguese spice monopoly in Antwerp. Dürer was his guest when he travelled to Antwerp in 1521.

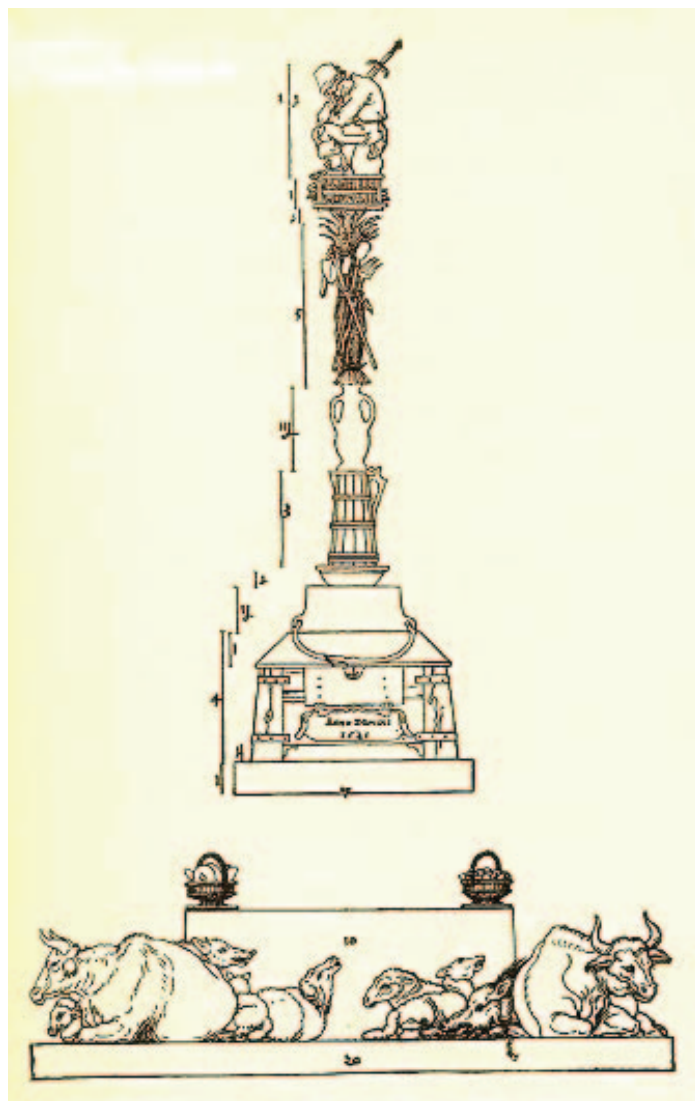
It is likely that Brandão acquired this African woman through his trade connections. Her name suggests that she had converted to Christianity. Dürer's obvious interest here is in the individual person. His deep humanism infuses her portrait with the same dignity he affords the peasants he depicts.

Dürer was the first German artist to capture the peasants' self-confidence that had been stirring since the late fifteenth century and the first to portray peasants as aesthetic subjects. Through Dürer, depictions of peasants appear in the revolutionary pamphlets of the time.

The wonderful copper engraving of three armed peasants (page 20, top left) shows them in serious conversation. They are clearly intelligent and dignified people. One of them carries a rapier, another has a knife in his pocket and spurs on his shoes, all suggesting that they are rebellious peasants; the third figure reaches into his waistcoat, from which he might produce a leaflet.

Dürer also set an example during the Peasant War. When Luther turned against the peasants and became the prince's vassal, Dürer took a stand against him. Luther advised that the princes slaughter the rebellious peasants; Dürer, on the other hand, professed his support for the peasant army with his *Peasants' Monument*. In 1525, in the third book of his *Unterweisung der Messung* (Instruction in Measurement), as a model for the proportioning of a monument he included a woodcut that commemorates the defeated peasants.

The column (Above right) shows livestock and household



and agricultural equipment from a peasant holding, now the ownerless booty of the conquerors. Instead of the victorious conqueror crowning the pillar there is a peasant, pierced by a sword. We see him in the posture of Christ at rest, the slain peasant as the true follower of Christ.

The Peasant War just over, siding with the revolutionary peasants was far from safe. Many artists suffered persecution. Matthias Grünewald took part in seditious acts, had to go on the run, and died a hunted person. A passionate and rebellious spirit, portraying the representatives of the church as fat, arrogant executioners, inspires Jörg Ratgeb's main work, the Herrenberg Altar. Ratgeb joined the peasants and became a military adviser. Following the defeat of the peasant army, he was publicly quartered in the marketplace of Pforzheim in 1526. Tilman Riemenschneider, a foremost sculptor of the late Gothic period, a respected citizen of Würzburg and member of the council, was arrested and tortured. He ceased all artistic activity after this.

In the last years of his life Dürer turned away from art to more scientific pursuits, and he died on 6 April 1528 at the age of fifty-seven. He remained close to the common people, sided with the democratic movement, and fought for it with the weapons of his art. The greatest artists of that time in Germany stood with the revolutionary people. ★

Sucking the life out of sport



CAPITALISM

RAYMOND Ó DUBHGHAILL

THE ANNOUNCEMENT on Sunday 18 April 2021 by a group of twelve “elite” football clubs in England, Spain and Italy that they intended to set up a European Super League brought widespread condemnation from soccer fans.

This new competition was intended to supersede the existing UEFA Champions League, for which the best-performing domestic league sides now qualify each year, and potentially to pave the way for an outright exit by these clubs from their domestic league competitions in future.

Most controversially, the Super League was announced as a “closed shop,” in which the founder-clubs were guaranteed to keep their place every season, thus removing the possibility of, for example, the likes of Leicester City or West Ham United (both performing well above expectations thus far this season) of qualifying on competitive merit.

The stated intention of the club owners was to secure “a more sustainable future” for European football—in other words, to secure more

profits for themselves, with minimal risk. The widespread fury of fans at the move appeared to cause club owners to pull out of the project in just a matter of days; however, it would be naïve to think that we have seen the last of the idea. Indeed further “reforms” that benefit club owners, television companies and advertisers, such as the new “Swiss model” Champions League,¹ are inevitable without drastic structural change occurring in the sport as well as in wider society.

As Marx and Engels wrote of the developmental tendency of the capitalist mode of production in the *Communist Manifesto*, “All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind.” In football terms, sporting competition, which most fans would hold as sacred to football as an organised sport, is to the owners of these “big clubs” merely an obstacle or impediment to the profitability of their assets, something to be done away with in the name of “progress” and the lie of “sustainability.”

The risk that poor performance on the pitch might result in decreased income from it is anathema to the

James Connolly Festival returns



and historical topics and themes.

The line-up for 2021 features Lethal Dialect, Donal Fallon (Three Castles Burning), Senator Eileen Flynn, Emmet Kirwan, the COO of Bohemian FC, Dan Lambert, and more.

No question is more topical than privatisation within football. The festival is launched with a discussion hosted by the Bang Bang Café, Phibsborough, chaired by Daniel Lambert of Bohemian FC, on football’s further commercialisation into the hands of corporate ownership, seen most recently with the proposal of a new European “Super League.” We examine the current state of play domestically and pose the question, Can member-owned clubs prosper?

THE ANNUAL James Connolly Festival returns for its seventh year on 3–9 May, bringing together working-class arts, culture, and politics.

This year’s week-long virtual events, recorded at the New Theatre, will include lectures, panel discussions, round-table talks, debate, and performance, covering a wide variety of contemporary

The past number of years have seen a surge in far-right politics and racism in Ireland. Most recently these groups have seized upon the disastrous handling of covid-19 by the Government, as well as a number of racist attacks by Gardaí and members of the public. We welcome speakers including Senator Eileen Flynn and Gloria Nkencho to discuss what shape these reactionary forces have taken and how we can combat them.

Similarly, the lockdown has given weight to the long-established link made between economic crises and gender-based violence. Day 3 will have a round-table discussion between activists and trade unionists, bringing a socialist-feminist analysis to the question of gender violence.

The 'failed' European Super League: Manchester United, Manchester City, Chelsea, Liverpool, Arsenal, Tottenham Hotspur, Real Madrid, Barcelona, Atlético Madrid, Juventus, Inter Milan and AC Milan

capitalist. The ESL project provided a perfect work-around for this problem. However, it also exposed in naked terms the contradiction between the interests of capitalist club owners and those of football supporters.

Controversy surrounding the project was notable in that it had even high-profile commenters on the sport, such as Gary Neville and Jamie Carragher on Sky Sports (itself no small irony), lambasting the greed of club owners and decrying the "hyper-capitalism" that resulted in the Super League idea.² Welcome though this anger might be, implicit in such critiques is the notion that capitalism itself can be redeemed, if it were only to be freed from the greed of a few and therefore not allowed to ascend into some accelerated or exaggerated state beyond familiar, acceptable capitalism proper.

This silliness only serves to obfuscate the matter. Capitalism operates according to an internal logic that means that it must continually increase its exploitation in pursuit of profit and move ever closer towards monopoly.³ "Greed" is merely the moral appearance of the inherent, rational quality of the economic system.

The truth is that top-level football was stolen from the working class a long time ago. Football matches on Sky and BT Sports are prime advertising real estate, along with stadiums named after

airline companies, jerseys smothered in brand logos, cynical corporate tie-ins, and the ubiquitous, all-pervasive imagery of betting firms. Salaries for players and CEOs alike increase while ticket prices become unaffordable to all but the most well-off of supporters, not to mention extortionate television subscription fees.

The concentration of wealth and power with an elite few means that competition is skewed, resulting in farcical domination by a single club or a small group of competing sides in all the top European leagues. At the same time, smaller clubs are in danger of collapse or going into administration: teams that began as community assets become rootless businesses that can move, merge or disappear according to the whims of the market or their unscrupulous owners.

If this all seems very distant from what sport is meant to represent it is simply the inevitable result of the capitalist system sucking the vitality out of our communities for centuries.

It is clear that, at the very least, we should uphold a system whereby community assets such as football clubs remain owned and operated by the fans and within the community. Bohemian FC and Cork City FC are examples of member-owned clubs that have seen their ups and downs over the past couple of decades in Irish football, with Bohs recently achieving their second

season in a row in Europe despite their comparatively meagre resources. English football boasts a long list, including the likes of the great West Didsbury and Chorlton FC in Manchester and Dulwich Hamlets FC in London, to name but two. Such teams put football back in the community, with affordable ticket prices, an inclusive atmosphere, left-wing politics, and members making decisions over the future of their club.

These are positive working-class values that should be upheld as we work to strengthen the ties between workers, empower communities, and build the material conditions for socialism. ★

Notes

- 1 "The Champions League's 'Swiss model': Why European leagues have strong concerns over reforms," Goal.com, 9 March 2021 (<https://www.goal.com/en-ie/news/the-champions-leagues-swiss-model-why-european-clubs-have-strong-1xc669zqgg8gm1gf4uj93mpy5q>).
- 2 "Pure greed": Gary Neville takes aim at clubs in European Super League," *Guardian* (London), 18 April 2021 (<https://www.theguardian.com/football/2021/apr/18/gary-neville-premier-league-clubs-super-league-european-liverpool-manchester-united>).
- 3 V.I. Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1917), chapter 1: Concentration of Production and Monopolies (<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/imp-hsc/ch01.htm>).

Two panel discussions will take place on the national question. In its centenary year, the historians Fearghal Mac Bhloscaidh and Liz Gillis will delve into the history of the Northern state, recounting this seminal moment in Irish history.

This will be followed by an event titled "Carson's Crumbling Creation." Looking at the future of the Six-County entity, Paul Stewart (political scientist) and Eugene McCartan (general secretary, Communist Party of Ireland) will discuss partition, border polls, and what shape a united Ireland could take.

Friday night will present a discussion on "Working in the Arts Post-Covid," hosted by the Trade Union Left Forum. They will look at an arts industry on its knees, fraught with precarious work and uncertainty. This is immediately followed by a celebration of these artists with a music, spoken-word and poetry session

curated by the panellist and artist Emmet Kirwan. The inimitable Dublin rapper Lethal Dialect will also take to the stage, followed by the 2FM DJ Handsome Paddy, who promises a unique set of "local artists' music only, taking in soul, hip hop and electronic music, tipping the hat to the rich diversity present in the contemporary musical landscape of Ireland."

Saturday has the prolific podcaster and historian Donal Fallon join the cast. The host of one of Ireland's foremost podcasts, Three Castles Burning, Donal sits down with the general secretary of the Communist Party of Ireland, Eugene McCartan. They will look at the history of communism in Ireland through the prism of its oldest radical bookseller, Connolly Books.

The annual James Connolly Memorial Lecture will be given by the world-renowned Indian historian, lecturer and

Marxist scholar Vijay Prashad. Vijay will discuss the global crisis facing us in relation to the environment and inequality, looking at the relevance of national struggles in the fight against capitalism and imperialism today.

The festival organiser, Aaron Nolan, said: "We're delighted that the festival is back, even under different circumstances. We continue to provide a space for healthy debate, discussion, and expression. Through words, music and performance we look at where our society lies and where we want it to go."

All events will be recorded at the New Theatre in East Essex Street (Temple Bar), Dublin, ensuring the strictest of covid-19 regulations and guidelines, and then streamed on line via the James Connolly Festival's and Socialist Voice's digital platforms. ★
facebook.com/ConnollyFestival
youtube.com/SocialistVoice



We express our solidarity with the Cuban people, and we salute the heroic Henry Reeve International Contingent of Doctors (Cuban Medical Brigade). They have shown what socialism has achieved, and shows that a different path of economic and social development is possible and necessary. Real solidarity is a hallmark of socialism, while “thoughts and prayers” is the best that capitalism has to offer.

Capitalism is a deeply flawed exploitative system that has nothing to offer but growing misery. The capitalist mode of production serves the interests of the ruling class while offering the working class nothing but misery. It promotes sexism and racism. War and violence are inherent features of the system, a system that is destroying our planet in its constant pursuit of ever-increasing corporate profits. It is also increasingly destroying people’s minds and spreading alienation throughout the world.

We express our solidarity with all those around the world struggling against imperialism, to the hundreds of millions of workers suffering savage exploitation by both the local capitalist class and transnational corporations. We offer solidarity to all those nations and peoples struggling to build a new society, to build socialism.

Globally, we face a growing environmental catastrophe created and driven by the capitalist system. We face a constant and growing threat by imperialism to world peace, posed by those trying to launch a new Cold War: the imperialist powers, such as the United States and the European Union.

Irish neutrality is needed more than ever, and working people need to oppose those who seek to undermine it. We need to end the Government’s spending commitments to the European Union’s PESCO military budgetary targets and divert that spending to social and economic development at home. We call for a progressive neutrality based on international solidarity and support for people.

For the working class of Ireland there is a clear need to build resistance and to struggle to secure decent public housing, and to establish an all-Ireland free public health system for all. The pandemic has exposed the gross inequality within society. It has exposed the extent of low pay and precarious

employment, which have had the hardest impact on women and young people. It has exposed the massive exploitation by parasitic landlords and the global speculative investment funds, the new absentee landlords, that increasingly control and determine housing policy, making vast profits from people’s need for shelter.

Workers need to build more militant trade union and community organisations to defend and advance their interests, to protect their living standards and their rights. Workers need the right to join and be represented by a trade union, with the right to unrestricted access to represent workers and the right to organise. We support workers seeking to rebalance power in their work-place through unionisation.

The Irish capitalist class, allied with transnational corporations, have used the pandemic and the restrictions imposed on workers to restructure their businesses, to lay off thousands of workers, or to close down completely, including finance, banking, and global retailers. Remote working, unrestricted, offers capital a truly global market in which to exploit workers.

Working people need to challenge the anti-worker laws, north and south, including the Industrial Relations Act (1990) and the anti-union laws in the Six Counties. We need a Bill of Rights for all workers, for the whole of Ireland.

The Communist Party of Ireland remains resolute in its conviction that real qualitative changes to the lives of our people, north and south, will only be met by the building and expanding of public services, industries, assets, and institutions, decoupled from capitalist profiteering and private ownership.

Expanding public ownership, active participation in our institutions and industries and socialist transformation is the only solution to the capitalist crisis engulfing not only the Irish working class but the global working class. We need

- an all-Ireland national industrial strategy
- an all-Ireland national bank and insurance agency
- an all-Ireland national building company for urban and rural planning and development.

The future belongs to those who struggle.

A better future is won through struggle. ★

THE COMMUNIST PARTY of Ireland sends warmest May Day greetings of solidarity to the working people of Ireland. For the Irish working class there is a clear crisis in housing and health. We emphasise the need to build resistance and struggle to demand and secure decent public housing and to establish an all-Ireland free public health system and for an to end private health services as a priority.

The building of all-Ireland people-centred and controlled universal public services, free to all, is a priority in the struggle to end the partition of our country and eliminate the scourge of division.

This May Day we are mindful of all throughout the world who have suffered so terribly in the covid-19 pandemic. On all continents, including Europe, it is has been working people, the poorest and the powerless who have suffered most.

Health care is a basic human right. The distribution of vaccines and essential medicines should not be impeded by considerations of patent rights, corporate profits, or chauvinistic control. The actions of the EU, United States and Britain in blocking access to and the production of vaccines for people all over the world is shameful and demonstrative of their clear class priorities.