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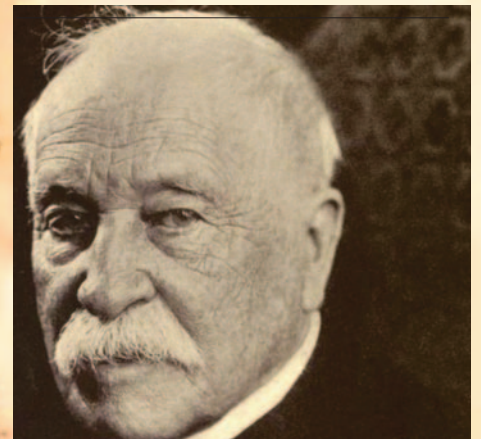
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Capitalism's climate crisis

As world leaders meet to tackle the climate crisis Ireland and the European Union are in the grip of an energy crisis.

Oil prices have risen by 60 per cent this year, while natural gas has risen by 500 per cent.

Clover Carroll analyses p16



"Not the most gifted man that ever lived, in the practice of any art or science, and paid at the highest rate that exceptional genius could justly demand from those who have worked for their money, could ever earn a million dollars. It is the landlords and the merchant princes, the railroad kings and the coal barons . . . It is these that *make* the millions, but no man *earns* them."—**William Dean Howells**, *A Hazard of New Fortunes* (1889).

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Workers demand their rights



SCARE THE BOSS
JOIN A UNION!

JIMMY DORAN

THE TRADE UNION Left Forum has been campaigning for the last four years to have the restrictions on workers' rights contained in the Industrial Relations Act (1990) abolished. At the biennial delegate conference of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions in October this campaign took a step closer to achieving its aim with the adoption of a motion from Dublin Council of Trade Unions, as follows:

"Conference recognises that the restrictions on trade union action in the

1990 Industrial Relations Act need to be opposed, and that the Act should be reformed to restore rights which trade unions had before 1990. Conference mandates the executive to seek an alternative legislative regime which would allow trade union and industrial action for individual workers, for issues that concern workers across society and across employers, and for effective solidarity to workers in dispute."

This is now the policy of the ICTU and all its affiliated trade unions. Under the 1990 act, individual workers' disputes had to exhaust all the mechanisms of

industrial relations before any industrial action could be taken on behalf of the individual worker. This in reality meant that industrial action could be delayed for many months, if not years, by which time the case would have run out of steam.

This was also used as a bullying mechanism, whereby shop stewards have been victimised by employers, and even sacked, as a warning to other workers. Employers were happy to pay a few thousand euros' compensation in an unfair dismissal case to get rid of militant shop stewards. This intimidated

A tale of two economies

ALAN FARRELL

IF YOU WERE to do an on-line search for "richest countries" you would quickly find lists where Ireland features prominently, by some estimates sometimes as high as the third-richest in the entire world. At the same time you would understand anecdotally, or perhaps personally, the difficulty with which people manage their finances, sometimes living from month to month, week to week, or even day to day.

How can this be? How can so many international metrics rank Ireland so highly in terms of wealth when so many struggle? The answer is that a two-tier economy has been created in this country.

Ireland's two-tier economy is well

documented and has been the subject of international criticism and even ridicule; the term "leprechaun economics" was coined to describe our improbable gross domestic product (GDP), heavily influenced and distorted by transnational tax-avoidance strategies. GDP, as a result, was abandoned as a metric and replaced with modified gross national income (GNI*) for better measuring the reality most people live under.¹

The clearest example of this divide is in Dublin. In a lot of other cities with a similarly high cost of living this cost is balanced or mitigated by similarly high local purchasing power (wages). However, in Dublin the bottom 70 per cent find themselves living in a city with a high cost of living and low purchasing power. Cities with a high cost of living

balanced with high purchasing power include Zürich, Geneva, Oslo, and most German cities. By average local purchasing power, Dublin is ranked 102nd out of 240 European cities.²

To return to GDP, Ireland is at the top in the EU (after Luxembourg) in this measure. However, average actual individual consumption (AIC) in Ireland is below the EU average.³ Some households are very well off, but most Irish households are not, and consumption rates reflect this.

There is also usually a very strong correlation between cities that have a high cost of living, high local purchasing power, and high quality of life. German, Dutch, Danish and Swiss cities usually rank at the top of lists for quality of life. Dublin ranks 50th out of 88 cities for which there is data.⁴

The trade union movement is at a significant crossroads, where we can choose to struggle, fight, grow and raise the expectations and class-consciousness of workers

other workers by getting rid of their leader.

Issues of concern throughout society referred to in the motion include removing the ban on political strikes, which will be necessary in coming years as the neoliberal government seeks to privatise all remaining state assets, businesses, and companies.

Strikes against privatisation were deemed political and so banned under the 1990 act. This motion opens up the possibility of industrial action over everything, from housing to boycotting Israeli goods.

Effective solidarity for workers in dispute will allow for secondary picketing and support strikes, which were also made illegal under the 1990 act. In fact the motion calls for all rights lost under the 1990 act to be restored under new legislation, which the ICTU and its affiliates are now compelled to fight for.

This is a major step on the journey to restoring workers' rights lost under the 1990 act and to tip the balance of power pack towards workers and away from capital. Pressure must be mounted on the political class to force them to act to restore these rights as soon as possible. It is up to workers to raise it at the branch level in their own unions and to have a campaign of relentless pressure from within the trade union

Anyone who lives in Dublin could probably give you a long list of reasons, but some of the more obvious are poor public transport, an overcrowded health system, and long traffic commutes. On the latter two metrics Dublin ranks 78th and 79th, respectively, out of 88.

In October the budget for 2022 announced that it would help families meet the "rising cost of living." In real terms, this meant a cancelling out of predicted rises in the consumer price index (CPI). The CPI increases roughly at 1½ per cent annually. It does not, however, take into consideration health, rents, and child care. The latter two can rise by up to 10 per cent annually. Therefore, increased welfare payments and adjustments in income tax bands will ultimately make very little difference to the cost of living.

The only things that would bring down the actual cost of living for households would be for private household rents and the costs of child

movement to get this workers' rights act into legislation and not allow this to be just another motion passed at Congress to be left to gather dust on a shelf in ICTU head office.

On 8 April 1916, two weeks before James Connolly led the Irish Citizen Army down to the GPO, he wrote in the *Workers' Republic*: "Legislation does not control the Lords of Industry; it is the Lords of Industry who control legislation. As we have often put it: The Class which rules industrially will rule politically."

This statement captures the essence and the reason behind the Industrial Relations Act. It was introduced as the legislative controlling mechanism on workers, unions, and actions taken in pursuit of workers' demands against the lords of industry.

The trade union movement is at a significant crossroads, where we can choose to struggle, fight, grow and raise the expectations and class-consciousness of workers or to be further incorporated in the structures of the state, representing only an elite of public and private-sector workers, increasingly distanced from working people and increasingly irrelevant to the struggle for equality and a better Ireland.

The covid pandemic has laid bare the reality of life for many workers in Ireland today: a housing crisis, the second-

care to be radically reduced and the wages of the bottom 70 per cent of workers radically increased.

The Communist Party of Ireland and like-minded organisations have long identified housing, health and workers' ability to bargain for better pay and conditions as the most important sites of resistance and struggle. To this end it has been involved in spearheading a Campaign for Public Housing⁵ (as well as many members taking an active part in CATU, the tenants' union), the campaign for an All-Ireland National Health Service,⁶ and the campaign to abolish the 1990 Industrial Relations Act.⁷

We may live on an island with an abundance of wealth, but for most of us residing here we have no access to it. Workers must unite in struggle if any progress is to be achieved.

*Our demands most moderate are:
we only want the earth!*

highest level of low pay in the OECD, precarious work, and a lack of workers' rights.

It is our duty as trade unionists to stand by our fellow-workers and fight to improve pay and conditions and to bring an end to precarious work, short-term and minimum-hour contracts, the gig economy, and bogus self-employment, which have all flourished since 1990. This will be possible when not restricted by the Industrial Relations Act.

Today, three out of every four workers are not in a union. We must ask ourselves why this is so. Workers no longer see unions as having their back, as they did in the past before the 1990 act, when they had power over their own destiny and they decided when and where they went on strike or the type of action they initiated.

The new legislation required as a result of this motion will arm workers to fight for change by regaining the rights lost as a result of the 1990 act and finally tip the balance of power back to workers. This is confined to the South of Ireland. Thatcherite anti-union legislation in the North has to be tackled also with legislative change.

This development must mark the return of the radical trade union movement and reawaken the sleeping giant of organised labour.

Notes

- 1 Brad Setser, "Ireland exports its leprechaun," Council on Foreign Relations, 11 May 2018 ([tinyurl.com/5bhxrurk](https://www.cfr.org/analysis/ireland-exports-its-leprechaun/p21877)).
- 2 Numbeo, "Cost of living" ([tinyurl.com/2cnydftf](https://www.numbeo.com/cost-of-living/)).
- 3 Central Statistics Office, Actual individual consumption: An international comparison, 20 July 2021 ([tinyurl.com/2edk4hpj](https://www.cso.ie/en/media/cso/images/publications/actual-individual-consumption-an-international-comparison-2021.pdf)).
- 4 Numbeo, "Quality of life" ([tinyurl.com/3najt8uk](https://www.numbeo.com/quality-of-life/)).
- 5 Communist Party of Ireland, "Campaign for Public Housing" ([tinyurl.com/88ztkn4e](https://www.cpi.ie/campaign-for-public-housing/)).
- 6 Facebook, Campaign for an All-Ireland National Health Service ([tinyurl.com/x2zmmmhv](https://www.facebook.com/campaignforanallirelandnationalhealthservice/)).
- 7 Trade Union Left Forum ([tinyurl.com/9rk9bc38](https://www.tuleftforum.com/)).

A spectre is haunting Ireland

The spectre of a democratic and progressive country

TOMMY MCKEARNEY

WHAT ON earth was that event last month in St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh, all about? We were told that it wasn't a celebration of partition, nor a commemoration of the hundredth anniversary of the foundation of the Six-County political entity. Rather, it was—the organisers informed us—an occasion to reflect on and mark the formation of Northern Ireland and, thereafter, offer hope for the future.

Yet in spite of the highfalutin talk that preceded the service, little or nothing of substance was said during the event: no serious or incisive reflection on the nature of the brutal and sectarian Northern state; no concrete proposals

on which to base hope for the time to come; no good reason offered for why the North's non-unionist population would care to mark their abandonment by Dublin and decades of subjection in an Orange state.

Nevertheless, and notwithstanding the notable absence of Michael D. Higgins, Queen Elizabeth II of England, and Sinn Féin, the ecumenical church service for partition was attended by a number of senior political figures. The British prime minister, Boris de Pfeffel Johnson, the leader of the SDLP, Colum Eastwood, the first minister, Paul Givan (DUP), and Simon Coveney and Jack Chambers of the Dublin government were among the elected representatives who joined the congregation.

All very anodyne and harmless, one might say. And one would be wrong; because the Armagh event was not only a power play by the establishment, North and South, but also revealed a deep-seated insecurity that affects the ruling class in both jurisdictions.

Displaying their ability to mobilise the secular authorities and oversee the entire event were the five main Christian churches in Ireland, fronted at times by the unctuous Eamon Martin, Catholic Archbishop of Armagh. Having taken a well-deserved trashing over recent decades, the Catholic Church was anxious to flex its muscles. It could take some satisfaction not only from the fact that it had been party to convening a powerful gathering in Armagh but that very day had also influenced Sinn Féin and the SDLP to abstain on a DUP motion delaying the introduction of abortion legislation in the Six Counties.

Simultaneously we were treated to the spectacle of the Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael coalition demonstrating its authority by rejecting the lead set by President Higgins when he refused to attend. They were joined in the cathedral by the SDLP, trying to appear indifferent to censure by their critics in Sinn Féin; and then there was the Tory prime minister, Johnson, flaunting his unionism while emphasising his mandate to govern Britain's Irish colony.

So, steady as she goes, there. The ruling class throughout the country can breathe a sigh of relief; and with church and state in such close embrace the status quo is surely set in concrete.

Partition and the DUP

PAUL DORAN

IN A PERSONAL interview printed in the *Irish Times* on 25 September the present leader of the DUP proclaimed that he was a "Mourne man" and went on to say that he has neighbours who carry an Irish passport while he carries a British passport, that they live on the same road and share the same townland. He talked about how he was a former UDR (Ulster Defence Regiment) soldier.

I too am a Mourne man. I was born in what was then a hospital in Kilkeel, the DUP leader's home turf, which then became an RUC station during the long war in the Six Counties.

Unfortunately the regiment the DUP leader was in would lead the readers of the *Irish Times* to think that they were a nice little regiment, and yet they were, in this writer's opinion, a bunch of thugs intent on giving anyone with a hint of republican politics a hard time.

We went to work with these thugs, and come any night when one was out socialising there they were, with their rifles and their sectarian abuse, hassling us each weekend night, or whatever mood they were in on a particular day, and at the same time creaming it in with all their part-time work and extra money; how they would chase you home at night threatening you and, on at least one occasion,

Unionism is fractured, demographic changes are threatening the Union; and, in spite of Johnson's jingoistic posturing, the British establishment cares little for the North, as evidenced by its willingness to sacrifice it in order to "get Brexit done."

But is it? Was this pantomime the display of a confident and secure established order? or was it another desperate gambit to prop up and maintain, for as long as possible, partition—an institution that remains essential for the sustainability of two failed states and the privileges reaped by beneficiaries of this debased system.

The 26 Counties is far from the confident political entity that its governing bodies like to portray. The neoliberal free-market economic model to which the Southern state slavishly adheres has created a housing crisis, a costly two-tier health service, and repressive industrial relations legislation, along with gross and growing inequality among the citizenry.

Consequently, Sinn Féin is leading in the opinion polls, because so many want to change this broken model. Whether Sinn Féin is capable of answering the need for fundamental change remains in doubt. The party's support for the EU, coupled with its economic spokesperson assuring big business of a safe future, raises the question of what exactly they might change.

Meanwhile, north of the border, the very political institutions are in constant jeopardy, and the constitutional position of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom has never been less secure. Unionism is fractured, demographic changes are threatening the Union; and, in spite of Johnson's jingoistic posturing, the British establishment cares little for the North, as evidenced

by its willingness to sacrifice it in order to "get Brexit done."

Attempts are being made in both jurisdictions to contain discontent, or neutralise demands for a better alternative. Their efforts are nevertheless failing to definitively address the issues, because of the impossibility of squaring so many circles.

An adequate supply of housing, a national health service or progressive legislation guaranteeing workers' rights would go some way towards restoring the fortunes of the Republic's coalition government. Yet none of these remedies is compatible with strict adherence to free-market dictates, nor would they be in accord with EU regulations regarding state aid, a dilemma epitomised in the person of that master of inertia and indecisiveness Micheál Martin.

Further north we have the hand-wringing of the SDLP in one corner and the UUP, their unionist counterparts, agonising in the other nook. Both recognise that the world has changed from the days of Basil Brooke and Bill Craig, yet both are incapable of acting decisively in the light of the new dispensation lest they unsettle their middle-class electorate. The DUP, naturally, is not afflicted with any such ambivalence, but seemingly Oliver Cromwell is refusing to return their calls.

In essence, the situation on both sides of the border is unsettled. Nothing near breakdown or anything close to an existential crisis, yet the establishment has cause for concern. Political equilibrium is finely balanced at the

moment and is unlikely to withstand something as transformational as the ending of partition, accompanied inevitably by a plethora of measures necessary to accommodate the change.

A national health service free at the point of entry would undoubtedly be an unavoidable demand, as would public housing; and, in order to address years of sectarian segregation in the field of education, it would be imperative to remove church influence from the classroom.

Such a scenario would clearly alarm the ruling class, its supporters and its ideologues, both secular and religious, on each side of the border. It would also disturb the hedge funds, vulture funds and transnational corporations operating here, which, incidentally, are a crucial source of income for many in the most privileged strata of society.

Little wonder, therefore, that conservatives of every hue and persuasion from around the country would congregate in St Patrick's Cathedral in Armagh to pray that partition might endure and that they be delivered from a spectre haunting them: the spectre of a democratic and progressive Ireland.

Now all the powers of Old Ireland have entered into a holy alliance to exorcise this spectre: archbishop and prime minister, Frost and Coveney, British Labour Party and the Special Branch.

That, in reality, was what the Armagh prayer service was all about. What can one say but—well, Amen.

sticking a gun into this writer's mouth.

I knew this so-called *solider* well. I recall vividly the Down team being stoned by loyalist thugs in Kilkeel as they brought home the Sam Maguire Cup in September 1991.

Aye, good neighbours, and yet underneath all the spin the deep-seated sectarianism is alive and well, and still is today.

The threat in another article in which he was quoted as saying, "It is little wonder there has been civic unrest in Northern Ireland as unionists fearful about the future seek ways to register their frustration," is typical of what we have heard over many decades.

Recently the DUP leader tried to

push the Irish state into going along to a church ceremony celebrating the creation of a partitionist state based on religious and racial grounds, as its founders proudly proclaimed, which led up to the events of 1921, along with church leaders. The church leaders, as much as the politicians, sat quietly for many decades, playing along with this rotten debacle (bar a few notable exceptions).

The president of Ireland saw through this "church event" and stood against this push; but we have Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil going along with this "two-nation theory," as exposed in an article in *Socialist Voice* last year (tinyurl.com/3w5xbh3r), which said that

"the 'two-nations theory is the official policy of the ruling class in the 26 Counties. This is not a recent development, but it is worth noting that during the hunger strikes, despite the Irish government disowning the republicans' demands, it would have been heresy to suggest that the ending of partition was not a worthy goal."

A united Ireland is a worthy goal, one in which the CPI seeks to play a major part, by appealing to the working class not to fall for the clatter of noise coming from those who seek to represent you but instead to unite the working class, and we shall overcome and create a 32-county Ireland based on the needs of the many.



The CPI as a product of Irish conditions

“The Communist Party must be the party of national independence . . . This national issue is not something in the road of the CP keeping back the struggle, but is the most powerful weapon in the hands of the working class in Ireland.”

Seán Murray
pictured above

GRAHAM HARRINGTON

ONE OF THE most common attacks against us by anti-communists, in Ireland and elsewhere, is that communist parties were little more than “pawns of Moscow.” This line of attack was used against the CPI, both by the right and by some on the so-called left, in an effort to use establishment anti-

Sovietism as well as to paint the party as a foreign import, pushing an ideology alien to Irish workers. It must be difficult for them to see the CPI still alive thirty years later.

In reality, no communist party can survive without being a product of the unique conditions in its country of origin. While the Bolshevik Party gives us a template to follow in regard to organisation, principles, strategy, and ideology, the success of Marxism-Leninism lies in the ability to apply it to Irish conditions.

The Society of United Irishmen, headed by Wolfe Tone and others, sought to take the principles of the French Revolution—liberty, equality, and fraternity—and apply them to Irish conditions. Given the impossibility of achieving any sort of basic democracy in Ireland without struggling to remove British rule, this was the priority of the mass movement that arose in 1798.

What’s important to remember is that the United Irishmen were following the most radical politics of the time, according to the unique features of Ireland.

Sovereignty and independence

**Rally for Irish Unity,
Newtown Butler, Co. Fermanagh,
24 October 2021
Speech by Colm Laigneach,
Communist Party of Ireland**

A chairde Gael,
Bailíonn muid anseo ar bhruach na hainnise a dtugtar an teorainn air. An chríochdheighilt sheicteach ghránna is cúis le hár is uafás in Éirinn le céad bliain anuas. Tá muid bailithe anseo in Achadh na Gé inniu ní hamháin ar mhaithe le heirí amach in éadan na héagóra ach ar son athbhunú na Poblachta a bunaíodh i 1916.

Comrades, in a week when British imperialism sees fit to celebrate a hundred years of unabashed sectarianism, torture, murder and oppression and the creation of a hate state that is so-called Northern Ireland through the denial of democracy by military might, we stand here today to reassert our right, the right of the sovereign people of Ireland to

independence and the freedom to determine and shape our own future free of threat or intimidation.

We know that the hideous distortion of human progress that is the Six Counties is just one in a litany of tactical manoeuvres by the British ruling class in the history of the conquest of Ireland, the ultimate goal of which is, of course, the extraction of the wealth and resources of Ireland through the enslavement of the Irish working class.

In 1921 British imperialism, in the face of republican resistance and no longer able to hold Ireland, created the reactionary alliance that has left Ireland with a sectarian state in the north and an equally right-wing state in the south, both dominated by the middle class and amenable to British interests.

They did this, of course, in order to thwart the Republican promise of a republic where the resources of Ireland would be controlled by and would belong to all the people of Ireland. They did this in order to thwart the establishment of a republic where all the citizens of that

republic would be cherished equally and where the working class would be delivered from the subjugation of capitalism.

Today, comrades, a hundred years on, British imperialism is joined by the European Union in thwarting the hopes and dreams of Irish workers. European imperialism is no less unequal or oppressive than that of Britain in determining the limits to human progress and freedom. The European Union dictates that the interests of big money and corporations outweigh and trump those of workers, to the point where public investment in even the basic needs of housing and health are subordinate to those of profit and big business.

Furthermore, I need not remind you that until recently Europe was a key guarantor in supporting Britain’s right to remain in Ireland.

Recently the competing and selfish interests of Europe and Britain have led to Brexit, with both sides using Ireland as a pawn in rehearsing their competing

When the Communist Party of Ireland was first formed in 1921 it was a product as much of the radical republican struggle as of the October Revolution in Russia.

Radical republicanism underwent ebbs and flows, until James Connolly developed a Marxist view of Irish history, with a political clarity on the link between national liberation and working-class liberation that was unmatched before. There is nothing more foreign or alien to Ireland than capitalism, a system forcibly implemented by an English bayonet. Yet much of the national independence movement believed the class struggle and national struggle to be separate; and today many on the left believe the national struggle to be a secondary concern.

When the CPI was first formed in 1921 it was a product as much of the radical republican struggle as of the October Revolution in Russia. This is not to play down the influence of the Russian Revolution but instead to make the point that the universal principles of October had to be applied to Ireland, rather than merely imitated or copied mechanically.

Just as Tone followed the radical politics of his time, by 1917 republicanism wasn't enough in the changing world environment. The

interests. Today the European Union is vying with British imperialism for dominance in Ireland, not in the hope of delivering a republic of equals but of maintaining the abysmal status quo, where a working family cannot afford a home.

Yet Brexit has created an unprecedented time of flux and opened up many contradictions, leaving British imperialism in crisis yet again.

In this crisis, many myths are being rehearsed. There are those who will tell you that a united Ireland is inevitable, and that this will be delivered through a border poll and demographic change. Comrades, it is not clear that this is the case. Any decision on holding a border poll remains absolutely with the British secretary of state, and any decision to act on the outcome of any such internal poll again remains the sole power of Britain.

As history tells us, when British imperialism faces crisis it reaches for further distortions of democracy; and it is therefore as likely that Britain will continue to deny any plebiscite that might reduce its control of Ireland. Similarly, the gombeen politicians of the

occupation of work places, called "soviets," the general strikes, land seizures, growth of women's and youth movements, the military struggle—all created the context that the CPI came out of.

What was the opening point in the Irish Revolution? The economic left would argue that it was the 1913 Dublin Lockout. The republican who is not a socialist would argue that it was the Rising. Both of these were important, but in fact it goes back to the cultural revival, the founding of the GAA, Conradh na Gaeilge, and so on, that put forward the idea of Ireland as a distinct cultural, economic unit—in other words, a nation.

The opening of the Irish Revolution was the movement towards national consciousness, with later moves towards class-consciousness, with the ITGWU itself being formed as an Irish trade union, as distinct from the British unions. Perhaps this is why the labour movement failed to take the lead in the national struggle: it became involved too late.

Class struggle is the substance and national struggle the form. Without

Free State, and those who have lately joined their ranks in the North, will tell you that the European Union's ambition of economic control of Ireland is tantamount to support for independence. Of course this is not true.

It is as likely that when Europe decides to settle with Britain and sees no further use for Ireland as a bargaining-chip in its battle for economic dominance it will support Britain in the creation of a new distortion as readily as it has previously supported the acceptance of the failed northern state. The prospect of sectarian federalism or unity within the Commonwealth looms on the Irish political horizon.

Comrades, we as republicans and socialists must be clear, at this time, in being determined and expressing our ambitions and demands and in defining the debate around the future of Ireland. A mere union of two failed states, or any new form of home rule under the control of an imperial power, as hoped for by the gombeen-nationalist, will not achieve the Republic. As Connolly so accurately predicted over a hundred years ago, "if you remove the English army to-morrow and hoist the green flag over Dublin

national liberation, socialism would have been unthinkable in Vietnam, Cuba, Angola, China, and elsewhere. We are in a unique position in Ireland now in that we can see major constitutional change on the horizon. Can we say we are the weak link in the chain of imperialism as it is expressed in Europe?

While previously the left in Ireland imitated the left in Britain, nowadays the Irish left follows the latest trends in American and European left-wing spaces, without any real consideration of the actual relevance to Ireland. We face a ruling class that is a junior partner of British imperialism historically and more and more closely resembles its European and American betters.

If we actually respect our movement seriously, and wish to follow in the best traditions of the communist movement, we need to recognise the actualities of Ireland, how capitalism expresses itself uniquely here, learning from Connolly as we struggle. Not only did we survive the counter-revolutions of 1989–1991 but we have managed to grow and thrive years later and have dealt a blow to reformist influences.

Castle, unless you set about the organisation of the Socialist Republic your efforts would be in vain. England would still rule you. She would rule you through her capitalists, through her landlords, through her financiers, through the whole array of commercial and individualist institutions she has planted in this country and watered with the tears of our mothers and the blood of our martyrs."

The hoisting of the European flag over Stormont will be no more successful.

As republicans and socialists, let us be clear here today: our aim and demand is for national liberation. Our determined aim is the establishment of a workers' republic, and nothing less. Let us reject the notion that the enslavement of the working class for the benefit of the rich and powerful is inevitable and reassert our demand for an Ireland free of oppression—civil, economic, or political.

Comrades, let us redouble our efforts to set out a vision for Ireland in the twenty-first century, a vision for a new Democratic Programme, for a socialist republic.

Political exploitation of Indigenous communities

As Nicaragua votes to choose their president and national assembly the Sandinista Front (FSLN) currently in government is expected to win the presidency and a majority of seats in the assembly. A key element in the strategy to defeat the Sandinistas is the mobilisation of liberal sentiment to present indigenous people as under threat claiming that the US is importing “conflict beef” from the indigenous regions of Nicaragua and falsely alleging that the government is complicit in violence against indigenous communities.

NICARAGUA IS A country with some 40,000 Indigenous families, who benefit from the region’s most ambitious system of decentralised Indigenous government. Three hundred Indigenous communities legally own approximately a third of Nicaragua’s national territory.

Within four years of returning to power in January 2007, President Daniel Ortega’s Sandinista government had granted Nicaragua’s Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples a title to fifteen territories, covering more than 2 million hectares.

The largest tropical rainforest reserve in Central America, Bosawás, includes

seven territories belonging to Mayangna and Miskitu Indigenous groups. Under autonomous government, Indigenous peoples participate actively in decisions relating to the protection of this environment. Land in these territories is held communally and cannot be sold, only leased.

However, there is a long history of mestizo settlers (called colonos) moving into the territories, a process that accelerated under neoliberal governments in power from 1990 until 2007. From January 2007 the new government worked to mitigate the continuing adverse effects while also consolidating the region’s autonomous administration. In fact most mestizo settlers are accepted by the Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities and live alongside them.

Despite that generally stable context, some mestizo settlers occupy land illegally. Most disputes over land are resolved peacefully, but there is a history of occasionally violent conflict, with some thirty-seven Indigenous deaths in the six years to 2020 reported by international organisations, which invariably omit other deaths of mestizo people resulting from attacks by Indigenous groups. Guillermo Rodriguez of the Center for Justice and International Law has admitted that “it’s a really complex situation. In some places, 90 per cent of the current inhabitants are colonos.”

Regrettably, local and international NGOs ignore such complexities. They also fail to abide by basic reporting norms, making little effort to corroborate information they receive from local

sources, seldom comparing reported incidents with other versions of events, and rarely seeking genuinely independent verification. While other countries have bona fide representative organisations (e.g. in Honduras, COPINH’s defence of Lenca communities and OFRANEH’s reporting on attacks against Garifuna people), in Nicaragua elected Indigenous leaders reject the incompetence and biased reporting by local foreign-financed NGOs, finding them to be neither representative nor impartial.

The UN system and other international institutions seem almost invariably to accept the reports of international NGOs as if they were presented by impartial interlocutors, which, in the case of Nicaragua, categorically they are not. In doing so, such organisations fail the majority of Indigenous and Afro-descendant people in Nicaragua by misrepresenting the problems they face and by propagating falsehoods about the causes of any violence. They disregard the views and experience of Indigenous community leaders themselves, who are given no voice in these debates (as, for example, when the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights holds hearings without inviting local elected Indigenous leaders, such as the one on 18 March 2021).

At both the local and the international level, NGOs exploit the occasional violent incidents in Nicaragua’s autonomous Caribbean Coast regions, using them in effect as ideological propaganda against Nicaragua’s socialist government. Here are four recent examples:

In 1987, the Sandinista government passed Law 28 which gave legal support to indigenous land claims. After the Sandinistas lost a hotly contested election in 1990, neoliberal policies took over and progress on indigenous claims was stopped and reversed.

An incident in Kiwakumbai on 23 August of this year led to nine deaths and two women being raped. The Oakland Institute, together with the Nicaraguan NGOs CALPI, CEJUDHCAN, and Fundación del Río, claimed that “settlers massacred at least eleven members of the Indigenous Miskitu and Mayangna peoples living in the Bosawás Biosphere Reserve.” In fact there were no settlers involved: the victims, who were Mayangna, Miskitu and other people operating an artisanal goldmine, were attacked by a group composed mainly of other Indigenous people in a dispute over profits from the mine. This was an intracommunal conflict.

On 16 February 2020, according to CEJUDHCAN, a young girl in the Miskitu community of Santa Clara was shot in the face in a settler attack, an allegation repeated by the Oakland Institute. The girl’s injury was actually due to a domestic firearm accident, as community leaders later confirmed. Settler attacks giving cause for concern have indeed occurred in Santa Clara and nearby Wisconsin, but as a result of illicit land sales by other local Miskitu community leaders to mestizo families.

On 29 January 2020 twelve houses in the Mayangna community of Alal were burnt down by colonos and two people injured. The Oakland Institute’s report “Nicaragua’s Failed Revolution” wrongly claimed that there were four deaths. This was repeated in a statement by the UN Human Rights Commissioner on 7 February. In fact the violence was a revenge attack by “colonos” to whom some Mayangna people from Alal had illegally sold land. The attack targeted

the houses only of those people involved in the sale, apparently because they wanted to illicitly resell the same land to other buyers.

More widely, in 2020 the Oakland Institute and CEJUDHCAN launched a completely spurious and baseless campaign to portray Nicaraguan beef exports as “conflict beef” coming from disputed Indigenous territories, ignoring the protective mechanisms which the government has put in place and which meet stringent international norms.

Recently, the United Nations Human Rights Council received a letter signed by many of the organisations listed above, falsely accusing the Nicaraguan government of “negligence . . . and impunity in the face of the recurrent attacks against Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples in the North Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region with the aim of widespread land-grab.”

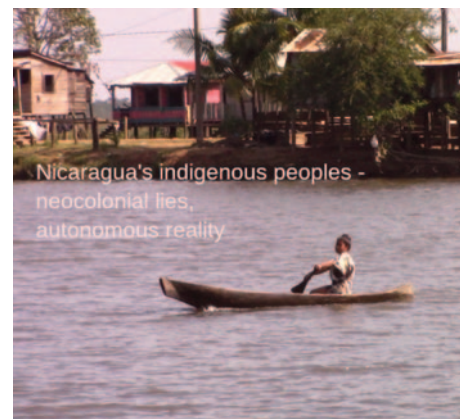
The letter repeats the incorrect version of the incident in Kiwakumbai on 23 August and is based on a statement by Amaru Ruiz of the NGO Fundación del Río, who has himself now been charged by Nicaragua’s authorities with deliberately publishing false information and provoking communal hatred.

Several of the organisations have condemned the Nicaraguan government in the most extreme terms, accusing it of “ethnocide” and labelling Nicaragua “the most dangerous country for environmental defenders.” One body warns sensationally of the “complete disappearance” of Indigenous peoples, when the overall population of the Miskitu and Mayangna peoples alone number some 180,000 and 30,000, respectively.

The letter’s completely distorted picture ignores the interlinked problems of the remoteness of the areas, the extreme difficulty in policing them, and the culpability of some members of Indigenous communities involved in illicit land sales. In the worst neocolonial style, these NGOs idealise all Indigenous people as environmental and human rights defenders when, naturally, this is not always the case. They dismiss the Nicaraguan government’s continuing efforts to resolve land disputes, omit the role of autonomous regional, territorial and communal governments, and ignore far-reaching improvements brought by the government to the social and economic wellbeing of Indigenous peoples.

We therefore call on the United Nations Human Rights Council to reject the accusations in the letter from the sixteen organisations. We also call on the international NGOs concerned to act in good faith when reporting on Nicaragua in the future. At the very least, we urge them to abide by basic reporting norms so as to investigate and corroborate far more thoroughly claims about the situation of Indigenous peoples of the kind made by the Oakland Institute and by the Nicaraguan NGOs CALPI, CEJUDHCAN, and Fundación del Río. We demand that all these organisations desist from making exaggerated, misinformed and categorically false criticisms of Nicaragua’s treatment of its Indigenous peoples.

PICTURE: Police inspect the site of a violent incident in an artisanal goldmine run by Indigenous people in Bosawás, Nicaragua
Source: Alliance for Global Justice



<https://afgj.org/download/nicaraguas-indigenous-peoples-neocolonial-lies-autonomous-reality>

Signed by the following organisations:

ÁBACOnRed
Alliance for Global Justice
Anti-imperialist Working Class Platform (PCOA), Ireland
Australia Solidarity with Latin America
Black Alliance for Peace
Casa Baltimore Limay
Casa del Agua
Chicago ALBA Solidarity
Cindy Sheehan’s Soapbox
Communist Party of Ireland
Community Organizing Center
Friends of the Congo
Friends of Latin America
Friendship Office of the Americas
Genesee Valley Citizens for Peace
Give Ye Them to Eat

Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space
International Action Center
Marxist Think Tank
Network in Defence of Humanity (REDH), Irish Chapter
Nicaragua Solidarity, Ireland
Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign
Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign Action Group
Ode to Earth / Echoes of Silence
Orinoco Tribune
Pan-African Roots
Popular Resistance
Rights Action
Sustainable Orphanages for Haitian Youth
Task Force on the Americas
Venezuela-Ireland Network
Veterans for Peace, Linus Pauling Chapter 132
Victor Jara Siempre Canta
Women Against Military Madness

**HOUSING
IS A HUMAN
RIGHT
CONTROL
TO END**

LANDLORD POWER

IRISH COMMUNISTS SERIOUS ABOUT SOCIALISM



Communist Party of Ireland
Páirtí Cumannach na hÉireann
<https://communistparty.ie>



Journalism in a new era

SAJEEV KUMAR

THE CASE Of Julian Assange is important for press freedom. Apart from fighting for the economic demands of workers, the Trade Union Left Forum and various trade unions engaged in a political struggle in organising a day of action in support of Assange on 23 October in Ireland.

Marx wrote that “the ideas of the ruling class in every epoch are the ruling ideas.” But how are these ideas ingrained? There are four main agents that make people succumb to power and prevent questioning it: religion, family, educational institutions and the media.

Especially in this period, when information is power, those who want to retain power want to control information. This is done by the media. The corporatisation of the mass media has turned journalism from being a watchdog of democracy into a lapdog of power. People’s opinions are fabricated in accordance with the information they are

subjected to, and so it is the same people who control the media who control the minds.

Edward Snowden has shown how the privacy of US citizens is compromised when the state uses surveillance methods to snoop on its own people, in the name of national security. When capitalism uses new methods of surveillance to control dissent it needs journalism of a new kind to expose the oppressor. The likes of Assange use those new methods of exposing the lies the US government employed to justify the bombing on innocent people in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Chelsea Manning was an intelligence analyst who had access to classified information, which she leaked to Wikileaks. She disclosed materials about the bombing of Baghdad in 2007 and Afghanistan in 2009, and famously the videos of US soldiers shooting innocent civilians and celebrating the murder. She was sentenced to thirty-five years’ imprisonment, which was later

Marxists, campaign groups and capitalism’s destruction

BARRY MURRAY

THE LIST OF groups in Ireland, even today, that campaign, pressure, expose, support or oppose an endless list of issues is mind-boggling. In a lot of cases it is an industry grant-aided by the state—the so-called “third sector” of society.

Community groups, social groups, pressure groups, protest movements, unions etc. are all part of human history and, in large part, the making of history.

They come in many forms and continually evolve, either to the left of the political spectrum or to the right, or somewhere in between. Some are clearly in favour of the status quo and are considered to have originated from the system or the state, largely support it, and are considered part of the dominant power groups, while many other groups are ostensibly against the system of government and view themselves as discriminated against or exploited, though the actual lines between “for” and “against” the status quo are very fluid.

The nominally anti-system groups are those fighting from the bottom up and that mostly want better conditions: changes in the law, an end to inequality

and exploitation, issues that are mostly based on social justice. They are generally reformist, whether they realise it or not. This is often fuelled by the emphasis on single-issue campaigns. They will say, “We need this sorted, and that’s it,” and they are not really bothered about the bigger, deeper picture. But during the course of struggle this too can change and the “dots” are sometimes joined up, in whole or in part.

A large proportion of the groups arise from class conflicts and the human need for a better life; others arise to maintain their existing class status of living, domination, and cultural ideas. But oppression, misrule, inequality and exploitation are the major drivers of the need to resist or fight for change through organised groups.

Most groups operate within the general orbit of the status quo. Many do not understand either the direct or the indirect links with power and capitalism; others choose not to.

On the other hand, most Marxists view the struggles of social, campaigning and pressure movements as one of the main ways in which we agitate for change, preferably transformative. It is a central part of the “organise, educate

The question is, can Marxists work with the reality or even the need for expanding the reach and abilities of anti-capitalist, social-justice and campaigning groups, in whatever guise, to achieve a people-based parliamentary democracy in a socialist Ireland?

commuted to seven years. She was later jailed again for contempt, and fined for refusing to testify against Julian Assange.

What did the mainstream media do in Julian Assange's case? They were pitiful in their response. They were not willing to include Assange as a journalist, or accept his methods as journalism. Assange in fact brought out more truth than any journalist has ever done in the history of journalism.

The mainstream media did not publish Chelsea Manning's videos of the US army celebrating the mass murder of innocent people in Iraq; it was Wikileaks that published it. If journalism is telling the truth, exposing lies, and questioning power, then what Assange did was journalism of the highest quality. If the mainstream media had done what Julian Assange did, many wars would have been avoided.

The mainstream media, which investigated Russia's influencing of US elections, never investigated how many elections the United States influences

abroad when there is scope for an anti-imperial party to win an election. "True" journalism never reports weapons of mass destruction that US hegemony uses, and never questioned imperialism when it failed to discover the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq for which it created the war.

What threat the United States faces so as to have eight hundred bases around the world, or why the war budget of the United States exceeds the military budget of the next ten countries put together, is never questioned by "true" journalists. In fact they justify it at a time when millions died because of lack of medical facilities as a result of covid-19 in the United States. We can be 100 per cent sure that the new cold war against China won't be questioned either.

In a society that is divided into classes, the media are also class-oriented and serve the class they represent. With the accumulation of wealth at one pole through monopoly, economic power translates into political

power; and to justify the political decisions, media propaganda becomes inevitable for manufacturing consent.

During the Cold War period trade union leaders, socialists, communists and anarchists were all branded by McCarthyism as terrorists and spies for the Soviet Union. The media were at the centre of the propaganda to create a fear psychosis among people to prevent discussion about communism and alternative forms of organising society.

We live in a post-truth era, which means that objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief. In this era, revealing the facts in itself is a revolutionary act. Julian Assange is a person who spoke the truth, and that too against power, and that too against the most powerful state.

What Julian Assange did was to question the lies the establishment propagated to convince people to accept their wrong political decisions. If that isn't journalism, then what is?

and agitate" methodology of the left. Involvement in such groups can, and often does, build the power and knowledge of the activists. This results in the "narrative of power" being interrogated, exposed, and quite often changed, though certainly not always.

Power will use its own campaign groups, or so-called monitoring groups, that support power or are certainly controlled by it, to promote and maintain the agenda of power. These groups act as a "weathervane" for governments and deflect the contradictions that exist in capitalism. They peddle and promote what is seen as "common sense," as opposed to what Gramsci called "good sense."

State-inspired "common sense" is intended to promote consent for state power within populations; and if the state fails to achieve consent it will resort to the use of coercion. Gramsci referred to this as the "compromise equilibrium": either consent or coercion, coupled with the divide-and-conquer strategies.

There has always been conflict between pro-system and anti-system groups; but even that is not clear-cut, as the direction or make-up of either pro or anti groups can change, depending on

circumstances at any given time. No human groups, on either side, are ever completely homogeneous. Differences always occur in the tactics of pro and opposition groups; but they evolve as well.

From a transformative viewpoint the tactics of the groups emanating from the bottom up have to be for an end to neoliberal capitalism. So the exposure, undermining and replacement of capitalism with socialism, then communism, must be the end goal—that is, the strategy.

While anti-system or anti-state groups learn and are motivated by their own lived and class experiences, they are also influenced by the very same state power they oppose, if only through state-influenced education curricula and media. However, anti-system or anti-state groups have to take cognisance of the reality of state power in the development of their campaigning tactics.

Various crises in capitalism, throughout history, combined with the push and pull from or between pro and anti groups, have forced capitalism to change. However, states and capitalism will always attempt to manage this change or even reverse it at opportune

times.

The predicted reality is that neoliberal capitalism is going to continue to "present targets" by means of its attempts to extract wealth from the lower classes. This will be enhanced by the actions of imperialism. In the case of Ireland, the triple lock of British, EU and American imperialism is a dynamic factor. Coupled with colonialism, campaigning, pressure and political groups that oppose state power will have plenty to do.

The question is, Can Marxists work with the reality or even the need for expanding the reach and abilities of anti-capitalist, social-justice and campaigning groups, in whatever guise, to achieve a people-based parliamentary democracy in a socialist Ireland? Or can it only be the "one vanguard party" Marxist idea that can bring down and replace capitalism? Do we accept that the campaigns that come from below might inevitably be the genesis and dynamic of this type of Marxist vanguard party?

As E. P. Thompson once wrote, maybe it is not "whether we are on Marx's side, but whether Marx is on our side."

EXPLOITATION



‘On time, on budget, and in scope’

Nicola Lawlor reveals how the production process of computer games hides the built-in exploitation of both workers and customers

GAMES WORKERS In Ireland and all over the world have begun unionising. First of all they established their own Game Workers Unite, a loose movement of workers internationally; this has since developed in a number of countries into specific, focused union organising campaigns, with such unions as the FSU in Ireland, IWGB and Prospect in Britain, Unionen in Sweden, and the CWA in North America.

Working in games is not always as much fun as it sounds. There have been a number of exposés of the games industry that identify unpaid overtime, long working hours, “crunch hours” at the end of a project, work-related stress, muscular disorders, lack of pay transparency, lack of paid sickness leave, lack of recognition in credits, non-disclosure agreements, non-compete clauses and job insecurity as prevalent and common for workers who operate in

a largely non-union international production chain.

Individual workers often “resist” or react to these conditions by leaving their job, through leaking information to the media, or through “Easter eggs” (inserting a unique piece of code to stamp a game).

There were a number of prominent legal actions throughout the 1990s (for example the EA Spouse Affair, Wives of Rockstar, and Gamewatch), and these culminated in the creation of the International Game Developers’ Association. While not a union, and with employers involved, it did provide something of a collective voice on some matters and at one point did suggest that a third of all game workers wanted to unionise.

This demand has grown among game workers, and here in Ireland these workers are now organising and unionising, with the support of the

Financial Services Union. This campaign has produced two important reports on working in games that have revealed poor working conditions in Ireland similar to those as reported elsewhere.

The first report, “What’s the Score?”¹ emphasised the following:

- 64 per cent of respondents have experienced low pay, while 17 per cent experienced missed payments,
- 45 per cent report working unpaid overtime,
- 56 per cent have been required to work “crunch time” (overtime, often unpaid, towards the end of a project or deadline),
- 62 per cent do not have secure employment contracts, and
- 12 per cent have experienced harassment or intimidation based on their gender, ethnicity, age, or sexuality.

In reaction to these bad working conditions, the report found that

Publishers are top of the hierarchy of production. They finance and control the publication of games. No surprise to readers of *Socialist Voice* that there are not many controlling publishers!

- 65 per cent of respondents want the support of an organised community of workers, and
- 64 per cent are interested in collective bargaining to improve wage standards.

These results in favour of unionisation and collective bargaining compare favourably with the international research of the IGDA from some years ago, which suggests that the movement to unionise is growing and strengthening. And in August the workers issued a second report,² looking more specifically at pay in the sector, which found that

- 90 per cent of pay increases are not published or disclosed by employers,
- 73 per cent of pay ranges are not published or disclosed by employers,
- 42 per cent do not receive an annual pay increase,
- only 15 per cent are paid for overtime,
- 78 per cent do not receive employers' contributions to a pension scheme, and
- 15 per cent are earning less than the living wage (€12.30 per hour at the time, since increased to €12.90).

These pay conditions are frightening for any workers used to a unionised environment; but unfortunately, for non-unionised private-sector workers, pay secrecy, low pay and unpaid overtime are all too common an experience.

Yet game companies, not satisfied with only exploiting the labour of workers, also exploit the labour of gamers themselves. Gamers are often encouraged, sometimes even provided with tools or competitions, to modify and enhance games deliberately after they are launched to improve and prolong the life of the product. This "plabour," as it has been called, is in effect the commodification of gamers' leisure time, with the value extracted and absorbed by the owners of the game.

The production of a game can take between six months and two years and involve up to a hundred workers, organised in teams, sometimes in a variety of companies or self-employed. Designers create the vision, artists create the artwork, programmers produce the code, and producers oversee production. There are also

testers and quality-assurance workers.

Publishers are top of the hierarchy of production. They finance and control the publication of games. No surprise to readers of *Socialist Voice* that there are not many controlling publishers! It's suggested that there are ten firms that largely control production, and these include such names as Sony, Microsoft, EA, and Nintendo, with a regional split among the top ten of four in Japan, four in the United States, and two in China. Of the middle-sized firms there are a further six American companies, five Japanese, and a number spread throughout Europe.

To those who have read Samir Amin this triad will be familiar. The games sector globally is now the biggest, in global market worth, in the entertainment industry, with ten times the income of films and three times that of music. Within games, mobile have now passed out console or PC-based games.

It is these dominant publishers who often set what is described as the iron triangle of on budget, on time, and in scope. These are the strict boundaries of production of games. Costs and risks are often passed down the line, with the greatest profit margins taken by the top companies, and this has a massive deteriorating effect on working conditions and on workers' health.

It is also clear that "crunch time" at the end of a project is in fact a significant and deliberate part of the production process, designed to use more free labour in addition to that already extracted through the wage-labour process.

This is the global production process of computer games, and it is a very welcome development that the workers are beginning to unionise to rebalance power in the production process.

Solidarity and support for game workers!

If you're working in games, or for more information, see the GWU site at <https://gwuireland.org/>.

- 1 Joshua Moody and Aphra Kerr, "What's the Score? Surveying Game Workers in Ireland, 2020" (tinyurl.com/ytt7adf8).
- 2 Game Workers Unite, Ireland, "Pay Transparency Report," 2021 (tinyurl.com/b47bhdyd).

The Trade Union Left Forum was formed in 2012 on an all Ireland basis, by union activists from both public-sector and private-sector unions who believe that trade unionists needed a space, both physical and on line, in which to debate the burning issues of the day.

The Trade Union Left Forum aims to stimulate class-based critical debate and to foster trade union and community organising for a transformation of Ireland towards socialism.

The TULF uses its web site and social media to encourage critical thinking on trade union, community and workers' issues as well as hosting meetings where activists can come together for honest and comradely discussion.

Successful forums and events have been held, and discussion documents have also been produced and distributed.

We oppose anti-union legislation, social partnership and EU membership. Our demands

- ★ Universal Public Housing
- ★ All Ireland universal public health
- ★ End Precarious work
- ★ Abolish 1990 Industrial Relations Act
- ★ Right to Union recognition
- ★ Right to Union Access
- ★ Full Collective Bargaining Rights.
- ★ Immunity from prosecution during a dispute so long as the action is not in itself illegal.

We encourage all workers to join a trade union and to campaign to have the 1990 Industrial Relations Act abolished and the equivalent anti worker legislation in the North. Abolishing anti-union legislation will tip the balance of power away from employers in favour of workers. It will empower workers and give them the ability to fight for much more than a pay rise.

We call on people to vote for left wing candidates in elections North & south. We are separate to political groupings, our role is to simulate the trade union movement and build it back into the force that it once was. Trade unions must become radical or they will become redundant

To get involved, email tuleft@gmail.com and you will then receive e-mail notifications of events. We also encourage activists from the community and trade union movements to submit articles to us for publication on our web site: <http://www.tuleftforum.com/>

Profits put before action



Moneypoint Power Station, Wikimedia Commons

CLOVER CARROLL

THE CONSTANT growth of capitalism, fuelled by exploitation, has resulted in an energy crisis in the European Union. Oil prices have risen by 60 per cent this year, while natural gas has risen by 500 per cent, and coal prices in China are at a record.

The increase in gas prices has in turn caused a switch from natural gas to coal in the EU, which will cause more pollution. The EU closing coal mines in member-states, offering no job security,

shows a complete lack of planning, both environmentally and economically.

With the crisis, Eirgrid has warned that consumers will have to brace themselves for five years of high prices. With already high costs of living and a housing crisis, the Government will have to act.

Ireland's lack of investment in renewable energy has also been a factor in the crisis, as the country relies on natural gas, oil and coal for heating and electricity. The current coalition, one third of which is the Green Party, will

have the attention of the people as we head into winter.

As the present Government has shown that they are more focused on the profit they can make with the housing crisis, they will ignore those most affected by the energy crisis: the working class, those on the minimum wage, students lacking accommodation, and the homeless. As the recent protests against gold mining in the Sperrin region in Co. Tyrone show, profit will come before green energy or any environmental policies.

Brexit and the EU

JIMMY CORCORAN

IN HER COLUMN in the *Business Post* on 3 October the former Blueshirt minister Lucinda Creighton argued in favour of further EU expansion into the Balkans. She did so in terms that would have been familiar to those drafting English or British policy on Ireland any time in the past five hundred years.

She argued that unless the EU incorporates the region, Russia and China will intervene. This, she claims,

will lead to instability on the borders of the EU, which could cause trouble within the EU itself.

This is an old argument used by colonial powers to “justify” colonialism, i.e. the natives occupy a strategic position vis-à-vis the coloniser and are too weak to defend it against the coloniser's rivals. It was used by the English and then British state in relation to Ireland, which was seen as a weak link, through which Spain or France could launch an invasion of Britain.

Following the Anglo-Irish Treaty and the creation of the Irish Free State, British policy remained the same. During the Second World War the British seriously considered invading the neutral

Free State, lest it fall to Germany.

Creighton seems to believe in the “right” of the EU to incorporate all of Europe and is loud in proclaiming the benefits that EU membership and “European values” would bring to non-EU European countries. She would have us believe that the EU is on a “civilising” mission to less-developed countries. No mention of the EU supporting neo-Nazis in order to foist a pro-EU government on Ukraine, or the role it played in destabilising Yugoslavia. She is very much in the tradition of the Redmondite wing of Fine Gael, which always supported imperialism, only wanting a bigger cut for the Irish capitalist class.

One could argue that the ideology of



To prevent Ireland's working class enduring still further disadvantage and pain it will be necessary to end the privileges accruing to one section of society under capitalism, to end the inequalities arising from their sense of entitlement.

Russia has faced a greater demand for natural gas as it goes into a colder winter, and exports to the EU have dropped; however, they have said they may increase exports to the EU. China also had an increase in demand for coal, causing shortages and increased prices. However, the government moved quickly to increase supplies, causing coal production by mines to rise by 4½ per cent.

Meanwhile the energy crisis in the EU continues. China's quick response shows how a planned economy can react; however, even with this increase its reliance on fossil fuels has caused an increase in demand, with winter coming to put more pressure on the government to increase the power supply for heating in homes.

With an unofficial ban on coal imports from Australia, they have now switched to Mongolia. However, Australian coal was cheaper to import, causing less coal to be imported.

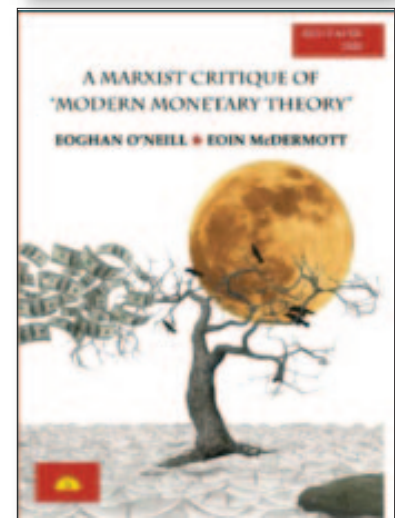
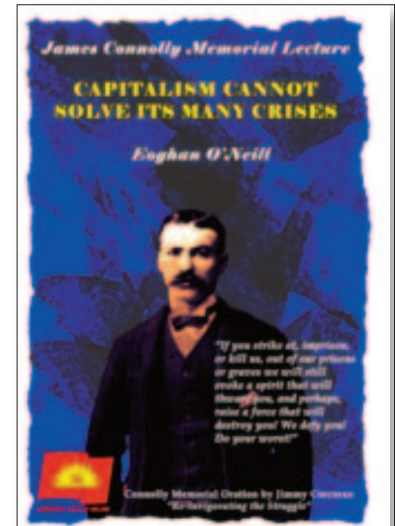
The EU's lack of transition to green energy, which can be seen especially during an energy crisis, has shown that profits are being put before any action to reduce climate change. The EU's "green deal" has been halted as the EU confirmed its commitment to natural gas, oil, and now, with the current crisis, coal. With 1,103 companies that work with oil and gas for profit within the EU, with no incentive for countries and companies to move to less profitable renewable energy sources, it shows that capitalism's ever-expanding consumption has led to the dialectical

result of running out of resources.

The Netherlands, Europe's leading producer of natural gas, began phasing out its largest gas field in 2018. In 1990 the EU produced 277 million tonnes of coal, in 2020 only 56 million tonnes. The switch from gas to coal that the EU is planning will not fix the crisis. France, which exports 10 gigawatts to other EU countries, is also facing high energy prices, despite using nuclear power. They could decide to limit exports or even cut off the EU completely to conserve energy and cut costs; this in turn would increase energy costs throughout the EU. France has warned Britain that it may cut it off if it continues to violate the Brexit agreement.

But while the ever-expanding, ever-consuming system of capitalism has led to a world energy crisis, economists are worried about switching to renewable energy, stating that solar energy could create so much energy that the supply could go so high above demand that the cost could go into the negative. The huge increase in prices and the lack of resources shows the people of the world clearly that we must switch our tactics on how we create energy. We can no longer rely on fossil fuels, as this will lead to crisis after crisis. We must invest in green energy.

A nationalised energy industry that provides electricity and heat for the people rather than for profit is what is needed throughout Europe to combat the crisis and prevent another one in the future.



Two books on political economy from the Communist Party of Ireland available at www.connollybooks.org

the Irish state is in fact Redmondite, as even Fianna Fáil has shed any pretence of being anti-colonial or anti-imperialist. The vehemence with which RTE and the print media condemned Michael D. Higgins's decision not to celebrate the partition of Ireland, and their uncritical support for the EU, show the level of pro-imperialist ideology that dominates establishment thought in Ireland. This reflects the subordinate relationship that the Irish ruling class maintains with both British and EU imperialism.

Brexit has weakened both Britain and the EU. To what extent is not clear, as the capitalist class in both centres seeks to form a new relationship. The Irish ruling class is also trying to deal with the fall-out from Brexit. How they will favour

their relationship with one over the other will become evident over time.

Last month Simon Coveney leapt at the chance to attend the church ceremony in Armagh celebrating partition, like a vassal paying fealty to his feudal lord, in this case British imperialism. At the same time he was engaged in a Twitter spat with the British Brexit negotiator, David Frost, in which Coveney upheld the primacy of the EU Court of Justice in overseeing the "NI Protocol."

Despite the media spin, the protocol dispute has little to do with Ireland: it is a conflict between EU imperialism and a section of the British ruling class. Ireland merely provides the battlefield. Neither the Dáil nor the Six-County Assembly will

have a say in the outcome.

The last time Ireland was the battlefield for a conflict between European powers was during the Williamite wars, and that didn't end too well for us. Whether it is Ireland or the Balkans, the right of small European nations to chart an independent path is not accepted by the EU or the British.

However, we must take advantage of the rift between the EU and Britain to push the cause of national independence and socialism. We must challenge unblinkered media support for EU policies. We must also highlight the undemocratic situation whereby the EU and Britain will make decisions about Ireland over the heads of the Irish people.

Respect yourself

MICHAEL HEALY

Respect (2021) is a biographical musical drama about the life of the African-American singer and civil rights campaigner Aretha Franklin, which features Jennifer Hudson.

“Respect,” Aretha’s signature song, was released in April 1967 and reached number 1 in the music charts and was later hailed as a civil rights and feminist anthem.

This film reminded me of the African-American soul music tour of Britain in 1967 with Otis Redding, Eddie Floyd, and Booker T. Jones, which played to both white and black teenage audiences. This must have been a culture shock for the black entertainers arriving from 1960s America, with its segregated clubs and dance halls.

In 1968 I went to see Eddie Floyd (Knock on Wood) at the Mecca Ballroom, Southampton. Other concerts followed, including Stevie Wonder, Sly and the Family Stone, and Sam and Dave, renowned as one of the best live acts ever. Many of these

artists were politically active in the struggle for black pride, which was obvious from the lyrics of their songs.

Soul music was adopted by working-class teenagers known as Modes, who frequented the soul clubs—a melting-pot in cities and towns. Unfortunately the ugly face of racism wasn’t too far away, which would mutate into the right-wing National Front. It was obvious to me, therefore, that only through political and socialist activity could a multicultural society ever be achieved.

With the arrival of migrants in Ireland too in recent years, many of them are making their presence felt in sport, the professions and music while adding a new dimension to Irish culture. They include Denise Chaila, the Irish-Zambian winner of the RTE Choice Music Award, 2020, for the album *Go Bravely*, which covers everything from feminism to racial identity. Denise declares that “to reject Irishness is to reject myself, because if I’m not going to say that this country had a hand in making me, what am I going to say?”

Working-class voices

JENNY FARRELL

The 32: An Anthology of Irish Working-Class Voices, edited by Paul McVeigh, 2021 (€12.50 / £8.75)

WORKING-CLASS WRITING is coming to the fore in Ireland. *The 32* follows the publication of two anthologies of working people’s writing, *The Children of the Nation* (Culture Matters, 2019) and *From the Plough to the Stars* (Culture Matters, 2020).

All three anthologies stand out in the literary landscape for being just that: anthologies. Much as the publications of individual working-class writers must be admired for breaking through the class barriers in the publishing industry, these anthologies together give a strong sense of the voice of a class speaking—the strength that arises from standing together.

One of the questions raised is how to define the working class. It means to be poor, and scorned by the establishment, those who dominate education, culture, politics, the media. They reinforce their preconceived, ill-informed notions of the working class by all means at their disposal.

This motivates taking charge of one’s own narrative, a theme that recurs

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And so, the importance of speech, dress, address and school appear time and again in these texts. The greatest part of these are memoir, or “faction.” Class barriers are seen and cited all the way.



throughout the collection. However, unless cultural workers, trade unions and universities acknowledge this and redress it, these anthologies will achieve little.

Kevin Barry, writing in “The Gaatch,” points to where establishment prejudice invariably leads: “On Thursday mornings I attended the sittings of Limerick District Court. I did the courts for a couple of years, and I can’t remember ever hearing a working-class defendant’s word taken over the word of a guard. You could predict with high accuracy the forthcoming judgements from the look of the defendant taking to the witness stand. If he or she had a working-class kind of gaatch to them—as we’d say in Limerick, meaning that they carried themselves in a certain way, dressed in a certain way, spoke in

a certain way—they would very likely be found guilty.”

Being presumed guilty because of belonging to the dispossessed is reiterated in Rosaleen McDonagh’s experience as one of the Travelling community.

And so, the importance of speech, dress, address and school appear time and again in these texts. The greatest part of these are memoir, or “faction.” Class barriers are seen and cited all the way. Education is viewed as a way out. Many of the writers describe the difficulty of pursuing a writing career.

In the introduction to *From the Plough to the Stars* we define: “Our understanding of ‘working class’ are those people who sell their labour power and share only marginally in the fruits of their labour. They create the basis of national wealth, yet their living conditions are frequently precarious. This includes the urban and rural proletariat, small farmers as a peripheral group, as well as the rising number of people in precarious employment, the homeless and the unemployed.”

In some of the texts you find a sense of solidarity and pride in class, the sense that surely poverty and lack of education are not the ultimate and eternal definition of working class, that this class has the potential to challenge the society that keeps it on the poverty line.

This strength, this process of liberation, is a hallmark of Maxim Gorky’s working-class writing. It envisages a society where there is little difference in income and living standard between the skilled industrial workers, farmers, and professionals. In this (socialist) society, being working class

does not spell poverty, poor education, and neglect by society: it is entirely possible to be a working-class intellectual.

And it is important to know that it was in the USSR, later the other socialist countries, that working-class history and working-class art first became the subject of academic research. It is ignorant and damaging to be told that having achieved a university education, or working in the arts, means that one is no longer working class. It is important to bear this in mind when discussing “working class.”

The texts in *The 32* deal with contemporary Ireland, the lived experience of the writers, ranging from the 1950s to 2020. Paul McVeigh has achieved a good balance of contributions from the Republic as well as the North. Here the sectarian prejudice against the Catholic population adds significantly to social inequality, as several contributors attest.

Regrettably, no texts in Irish are included. This would have paid necessary tribute to the long tradition of working-class writing in Irish. The exclusion of this tradition by the literary industry is shameful and needs to be challenged by those who have taken up the pen to put an end to social injustice.

Along with *The Children of the Nation* and *From the Plough to the Stars*, *The 32* presents a differentiated image of what it means to be working-class in Ireland today. These three anthologies will be followed by a fourth publication by Culture Matters in November this year, *Land of the Ever Young*, a beautifully illustrated book of working people’s writing for children.

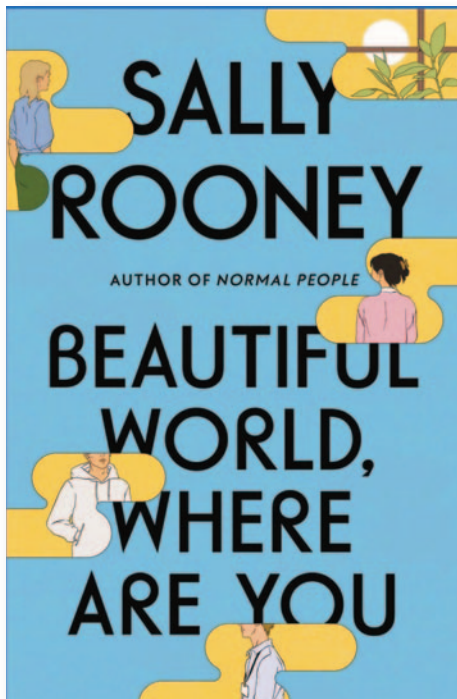
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How should we read Sally Rooney?



EMILIA ARMAND

SALLY ROONEY'S hotly anticipated latest novel, *Beautiful World, Where Are You*, frames a taut interpersonal drama of interlinked friendships and romance against the wider context of history, class, and labour, exploring the inherent ridiculousness of millennial existence in an increasingly fraught, complicated world.

Rooney's self-avowed Marxist credentials are apparent in this most recent offering. Her main characters—who at times can be read as either extensions of or foils for the author herself—are class-conscious, smart, and often sad. They discuss life, love, religion, and the contradictions of everyday life under capitalism, through a series of email exchanges—an artful update of the epistolary novel format.

Alice, a famous young writer—by her own admission nearly a millionaire, her money acquired “just from

books”—writes to Eileen, her best friend from university, equally brilliant although working for a pittance at a literary magazine. Eileen pines after Simon, a childhood friend working for the government, while Alice falls for Felix, a factory worker she meets on a dating app after moving to the country to take space from her uneasy relationship with her own celebrity status.

Rooney's novel invites—but does not overtly prompt—a Marxist reading in its weaving together of certain elements throughout. These include the contested relationship between the individual and their labour—“that's the thing about work, if you liked it you'd do it for free,” Felix wryly notes, his labourer status at odds with Alice's accrued wealth. Also present are concerns about the acquisition of property, the universal search for meaning, and considerations about whether beauty is possible in a world that is falling apart at the seams.

Her characters even debate the appeal of contemporary communism: “and to all these new people trying to make communism cool, I would just like to say, welcome aboard, comrades.” Arch comments on the rampant inequalities evident in the world sit snugly with millennial quips in the same breath: “It seems that there exists a curiously unexplained belief that the conditions of exploitation will by themselves generate a solution to exploitation—and that to suggest otherwise is condescending and superior, like mansplaining.”

Underneath the novel's surface is an invitation to read her characters not just as mouthpieces of millennial malcontent but as reminders of the necessity of a historical and political awareness—an understanding of the systems structuring our present reality that have led to our present moment. Anxieties about the role of culture, specifically literary culture, in misdirecting the historical narratives available to humanity are keenly felt throughout. At one point Alice observes: “The problem with the Euro-American novel is that it relied for its structural integrity on suppressing the lived realities of most human beings on earth.”

Angst also stems from the idea that

the circumstances of our arrival at this present moment in history have left the future of the twenty-first century unstructured and unmapped. Alice writes to Eileen: “I'm not going to get into another argument with you about the Soviet Union, but when it died so did history. I think of the twentieth century as one long question, and in the end we got the answer wrong.”

Rooney's self-awareness about the concept of the celebrity author is negotiated here, both on and off the page. The furore surrounding her book's publication reflects the contradictory nature of such a “marketable” author. The commercialisation of her brand reached fever pitch with this novel: before reaching the literary sphere a host of much-coveted merchandise was distributed by her publisher, including tote bags, a branded truck in New York serving coffee outside independent bookshops, and—perhaps most bizarrely—a mustard-yellow bucket hat emblazoned with the novel's title.

It is hard not to read these branded items as slightly tongue-in-cheek, contradictory expressions of Rooney's celebrity status and political affiliations. This is especially pertinent in the light of her recent refusal to sell the novel's translation rights to an Israeli publishing house, stating her support for the BDS movement. But then again the inherent contradictions of a class-conscious author making money through her intensely popular books only reinforce the paradoxical nature of marketable celebrity status under capitalism.

At its heart, however, the novel is concerned with the idea of “loving and worrying” about the people we know on a local level, almost in defiance of the global crises resulting from the exploitative chokehold of capitalism. In this reaffirmation of humanity the relationships between and among people take central importance; their problems are enduringly, and often endearingly, human.

Rooney's novels, therefore, do not directly instruct—didactics have never been her *modus operandi*—rather, she extends an invitation to consider the complexities of millennial existence through a Marxist lens, among others, however imperfectly. It is up to her audience—fans and detractors alike—whether to accept this invitation or not.

