

Socialist Voice

Communist Party of Ireland
Páirtí Cumannach na hÉireann
Partisan Patriotic Internationalist
www.commmunistparty.ie
Number 210 August 2022 €1.50

2	Energy
2	'Defence'
4	Public transport
4	Ckass consciousness
6	Anticommunism
6	Literacy
8	Pay and profits
9	Capitalist contradiction
10	Cuba family code
12	Poetry

IRISH WORKERS NEED A PAY RISE



"We need to return to a place where no-one ever dares to defy democracy again. We need to send fascism back to the sewer of history, which it should never have come out of."—Luiz Inácio (Lula) da Silva (candidate for president of Brazil), 7 May 2022.

SV

Socialist Voice

43 East Essex Street

Dublin D02 XH96

(01)708707

<https://socialistvoice.ie>



**Workers in Ireland need a big pay rise
to match CEOs' pay rises and profits**
EugenMcCartan pages 8 and 9



DESTROYING THE WORLD

JIMMY CORCORAN
ENERGY

IN THE OFFICIAL ideology of the Irish state, the Industrial Development Authority comes in for special praise as one of the main agencies that helped “modernise” the Irish economy—i.e. opened it up to penetration by foreign, mostly American, capital. It has been lauded as a latter-day David that outfought Goliath (other European states) to bag an impressive haul of American transnational companies, which transformed the Irish economy and Irish society.

The reality, of course, is different.

The IDA acts as an advocate for the interests of American monopoly capitalism in Ireland, and it was in this role that its CEO, Martin Shanahan, gave an interview to the *Business Post* last month.

In his interview Shanahan condemned the decision to put a moratorium on new data centres in the greater Dublin area. He argued that siting more data centres there is vital to the needs of the Irish economy.¹

In the same issue an article by Killian Woods pointed out that in 2021 Meta’s data centre in Co. Meath used as much electricity as 151,190 Irish homes, and also used the same amount

of water as a 20,000-person Irish town.² (Is it any wonder that Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and the Labour Party want to privatise water? Imagine the profits they could present to their capitalist controllers!)

There are at present approximately seventy data centres in the 26 counties, which between them account for 14 per cent of the state’s electricity usage. Government spokespersons are busy lecturing us on the need to cut back on our consumption of electricity and water in order to preserve such vital resources and to slow down the rate at which the Earth is heating. Yet at the same time, with parts of Europe, North Africa and North America burning as a result of climate change because of capitalism’s fetish for increased growth and profits, the IDA calls for an expansion of the number of data centres.

WHAT ARE ENHANCED DEFENCE FORCES FOR?



TOMMY MCKEARNY
ARMS SPENDING

IN THE 26 COUNTIES there is a housing crisis, a shamefully inadequate two-tier health service, a decrepit public transport system, and a grave shortage of affordable accommodation for third-level students. As always, the impact of this failure by the state is felt most acutely by working people.

It raises the question, therefore, of why, with so much of the Republic’s social infrastructure in dire need of financial support, the Dublin government has decided to devote an extra €400 million annually towards military expenditure. What madness has caused the coalition to embark on a spending spree described by the

Department of the Taoiseach as “the largest increase in the defence budget in the history of the state.”¹

Of course there is a reference in the same press statement to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, claiming that it has fundamentally changed the defence landscape in Europe. How exactly war in eastern Europe will affect Ireland militarily is not made clear. Nevertheless the statement continues with an assertion that the 26 Counties is ill prepared to defend itself. The fact that the Republic spends a smaller percentage of annual GDP on its armed forces than several other European countries is seemingly to be used as evidence of the state’s vulnerability.

Meanwhile Micheál Martin is touring abroad making speeches designed evidently to lend weight to his

government’s stance. In one instance, laced with unintended irony, he promised to help Volodymyr Zelenskyy rebuild Ukraine. Presumably that unfortunate country will not require public housing or a national children’s hospital. On other occasions the Fianna Fáil leader is found proclaiming his eagerness to help maintain what he likes to call the rules-based international order.

For dangerously tendentious nonsense, this new-found enthusiasm for armaments and foreign alliances takes some beating. Just how disingenuous the strategy is can be seen by the Government’s frequent use of that term “rules-based international order,” which in practice means upholding a system ordained by Washington and London—in other words, the type of so-called rules adhered to by John Bolton’s United States when organising CIA-directed coups in South America or by the British SAS when executing orders in Afghanistan.

Notwithstanding the unethical political rationale being advanced for this extravagant expenditure, there are very hard-headed practical questions to be asked about how realistic any of this is.

For a start, from where is any likely invasion to come? And who is the potential enemy? Undoubtedly this has to have been a crucial part of any assessment conducted by the Irish military’s advisers. Surely we should be informed, because if any superpower, such as Russia or China, is deemed a real threat, then an extra €400 million will make no difference whatsoever. Moreover, “tooling up” to participate in

Imagine the outcry if they had called for coal-fired steel plants!

Data centres are portrayed by the IDA as clean, ultra-modern, and progressive. When one considers their environmental impact, the data-centre industry should be seen as a dirty industry.

However, they are not alone. A report in the *Guardian* last month showed that 25 per cent of the total land area of the Six Counties and 27 per cent in the 26 Counties is covered by mining concessions.³ Mining is a particularly dirty industry, which has a record of leaving environmental devastation in its wake as well as damaging the living communities whose way of life is utterly changed by the mining process.

Local communities have organised to resist the siting of environmentally destructive industries in their communities, such as Raybestos-Manhattan in Co. Cork in the 1970s,

Shell to Sea, and the cross-border campaign against Dalriadan Gold in the Sperrins.

These struggles show the reality of where power lies in Ireland, north and south. Official ideology would have us believe it lies with the people; the reality is very different. The Six Counties is a British colony, and the ultimate source of power is the British capitalist class. In the South the Irish capitalist class is the ruling class: it is they who execute state power, but they do so within the constraints of the triple lock of American, British and EU imperialism.

The interests of capitalism carry far more sway than those of working people. The coercive force of the state and the “soft power” of the media is used against those who dare stand up for their communities. They are accused of being backward-looking, selfish “NIMBYs” or Luddites who are holding up progress and who fail to see

Data centres are portrayed by the IDA as clean, ultra-modern, and progressive. When one considers their environmental impact, the data-centre industry should be seen as a dirty industry

the “bigger picture.”

Being opposed to environmentally destructive industry does not mean opposing sustainable industrial development, but to be effective it must mean opposing capitalism. “Green,” sustainable capitalism is an oxymoron. Capitalism is built on ever-increasing growth, the destruction of more and more natural resources, and built-in obsolescence—all driven by the need to increase profits at the cost of everything else, even life on the planet.

Such a system cannot be reformed, modified, or regulated: it has to be overthrown and replaced by socialism. Only socialism will give us a sustainable economy and sustainable communities.

- 1 *Business Post*, 10 July 2022, p. 1.
- 2 *Business Post*, 10 July 2022, p. 6.
- 3 Tommy Greene, “Fears island of Ireland faces ‘a new carve-up’ by mining companies,” *Guardian* (London), 25 July 2022.

some EU-led force will not offer protection but would instead make this country a target for attack.

Bear in mind also that in this technological age any such strike would probably mean a catastrophic pre-emptive missile blitz with unstoppable ultrasonic warheads.

In reality, the most pragmatic, indeed only sane course of action is to maintain a position of strict neutrality in the event of a global conflict. Not only would this greatly reduce the risk of Ireland being targeted but it would afford this country the opportunity to use its moral authority to act as a peace-broker. Interestingly too, a neutral Republic might well provide a measure of protection for the North as well.²

In this light, it hardly needs stating that €400 million spent annually on any of the infrastructural sectors referred to above would help alleviate existing difficulties. Not only would the impact be immediate but it would also demonstrate the value of direct state aid. And this last observation about state investment may point towards a more credible, albeit no less disturbing explanation than Martin and Coveney preparing to resist an invasion.

There is at present a state of global economic turbulence, illustrated by high and rising inflation. The effect of this is visible everywhere, inflicting a painful cost-of-living crisis that is borne principally by the working class. Not surprisingly, workers and their unions are demanding wage increases to make good the shortfall. In turn, business and the state are resisting and thus raising the possibility of what is politely described as industrial unrest.

Under any circumstances, such a scenario would cause concern within the Irish establishment. Even if, as free-market economists assure us, inflationary pressures are temporary, contingency plans would be in place.

There is, however, a different narrative, suggesting that, because of its inherent instability, capitalism is experiencing a systemic challenge.

In a recent edition of *Marxism-Leninism Today*, Greg Godels explores an interesting theory elaborated in a book *The Rise and Fall of the Neoliberal Order* (2022) by Prof. Gary Gerstle.³ At the end of his lengthy and cogent article, “Towards a New Political Order,” Godels agrees with the author’s hypothesis that, thanks to neoliberalism’s failings, global capitalism is entering a new phase of instability.

Should this be the case—and the argument is convincing—the real rationale for enhancing the Irish military may well be domestic containment rather than international adventurism.

Let’s be clear: this is not pointing towards a Pinochet-style apocalypse. Think instead of an expanded role for the military, such as that recently proposed for it at Dublin Airport. Think too about an extra 2,000 personnel, including civilian HR experts and a digital transformation officer who will lead a digital transformation programme. Reflect also on the proposal accepted by Coveney’s department that the Defence Forces’ representative body will be permitted to apply for associate membership of the ICTU.

It is easy to see how convenient it would be to deploy this up-skilled,

In reality, the most pragmatic, indeed only sane course of action is to maintain a position of strict neutrality in the event of a global conflict.

upgraded military if discontent over housing, health services or other inadequate provisions, exacerbated by a precarious economic climate, were to cause widespread industrial action.

Indeed within the very recent past RTE has reported trade unions saying they would step up preparations for industrial action in an attempt to secure an improved public-sector pay offer.

Under such conditions a conservative state and its establishment would seek to maintain crucial sectors of the economy in order to frustrate and counteract any protest movement.

It is, of course, possible that no such thoughts of privilege-preservation entered the heads of our ruling class. Perhaps they are really just keeping a watchful eye, Skibbereen Eagle-like, on the man in Moscow.

On the other hand, it is still worth keeping in mind a phrase my grandfather often used when he would say that there may well be a method underpinning their madness.

- 1 Department of the Taoiseach, “Government announces move to transform the Defence Forces and the largest increase in the defence budget in the history of the State,” 13 July 2022 (<https://bit.ly/3BqsP1V>).
- 2 See Christopher Leebod, “Russian TV host claims Northern Ireland should be spared from nuclear destruction threatened against England, as province will ‘unite with Ireland’,” *Belfast Telegraph*, 19 July 2022.
- 3 Greg Godels, “Towards a New Political Order,” *Marxism-Leninism Today*, 17 July 2022 (<https://tinyurl.com/2p99x3se>).





PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND THE RACE TO THE BOTTOM

DOES **MILITANT** UNION PAY BARGAINING INCREASE **CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS?**



**NIAL CULLINANE
UNIONS**

IN THE JULY *Voice*, Nicola Lawlor proposed that “individual unions should concentrate on . . . strengthening themselves and militantly pursuing big pay claims.” She argues that unions should not be “remov[ed] from” pay bargaining [at the workplace] site of struggle and mobilisation.” Localised bargaining is “an instrument . . . for increasing class-consciousness and militancy in the struggle . . .”

The crux of the argument is that unions militantly pursuing wage demands in the workplace (presumably backed by strikes) can increase class-consciousness.

Now, assume that “class-consciousness” has two dimensions: industrial (willingness to become a

union member) and political (willingness to join or support a workers’ party).

Consider the industrial. Strikes in Ireland are predominantly about wages, so periods of high strike frequency reflect periods of militant pay bargaining. Say high frequency is characterised by 100+ strikes annually: we find that since 1922 high strike frequencies have occurred in the early 1920s, mid-to-late 30s, mid-to-late 40s, mid-to-late-60s, the 1970s, and early-to-mid 1980s. If strike waves result in greater class-consciousness we might expect to see accelerated changes in the annual rate of union membership following periods of high frequency relative to periods where strike numbers are much lower. The increased propensity of workers to strike sends a demonstrative signal to

GO-AHEAD BUS have announced a profit for 2021 of €2.6 million. They operate 200 buses in Ireland and at present employ 620 people, and intend to recruit another 180 as they continue to tender for public transport routes, which will bring them up to a total of 800 workers.

These figures show that they are making €13,000 per bus, or a profit of €4,193 per worker. Coincidentally, Go-Ahead Bus pay their drivers €4,000 per year less than Dublin Bus pay theirs.

These lower wages are the main variable involved when Go-Ahead Bus compete with Dublin Bus and Bus Éireann for public transport contracts. Go-Ahead are akin to an agency for bus drivers, and the bus drivers are akin to a charity for shareholders, as the drivers are paid lower rates of pay in order to create profits and dividends for the shareholders.

Is this the model we want for public transport in Ireland?

When the state opened up the bus market to tenders from other companies it was said that it was to create competition in the market. Competition would imply in most people's opinion a better service, increased frequency, better-quality buses, and cheaper fares. The reality of the situation is that the

It appears that the ideologues in Leinster House have forgotten the needs of our citizens and ignored the original purpose of the public transport system on their never-ending journey of privatisation and the transfer of public wealth into private hands.

buses are owned by the National Transport Authority, the fares go directly to the National Transport Authority, and the routes and schedules are set by the National Transport Authority. The only place there is actual competition is in the price that companies offer to operate the services for. The main method they use for reducing costs is paying their workers lower wages.

Go-Ahead is not there to compete with the state-owned operators: they are there to reduce wages in a race to the bottom in transport workers' pay.

Lower pay leads to lower standards of living, lower quality of life, poorer diet, mental health problems, higher obesity levels, to name but a few, which in turn adds costs to the state and puts extra strain on an already creaking health service. The lower levels of pay also lead to lower levels of disposable income for workers to spend in the economy.

The ideologically driven politicians who make these decisions should look at the bigger picture. There is a knock-on effect to bring in this so-called "competition" to public transport. The dividends and profits of Go-Ahead go back to their shareholders in Britain.

CIE was set up under the Transport Act (1950). Section 15 (subsection 1) of the act states:

It shall be the general duty of the Board so to exercise its powers

under this Act as to provide or secure or promote the provision of an efficient, economical, convenient and properly integrated system of public transport for passengers and merchandise by rail, road and water with due regard to safety of operation, the encouragement of national economic development and *the maintenance of reasonable conditions of employment for its employees* and for that purpose it shall be the duty of the Board to improve in such manner as it considers necessary transport facilities so as to provide for the needs of the public, agriculture, commerce and industry."

It appears that the Ideologues in Leinster House have forgotten the needs of our citizens and ignored the original purpose of the public transport system on their never-ending journey of privatisation and the transfer of public wealth into private hands.

The profits of public transport should not be measured in euros but in the benefits provided to the citizen, to industry, to education and the public well-being by transporting people to their places of work, education or social activity quickly, safely and efficiently in a sustainable fashion.

Poverty wages are not sustainable.

others and raises their industrial consciousness.

Yet only the waves of the 1930s and 40s are associated with significant changes in the annual rate of change in trade union membership growth. The other waves do not replicate that trend. There was stagnation in the rate of membership change. There was also a deceleration of employment density from the late 1960s onwards and through the 1970s. Such trends occur despite the historically high strike frequency of that period and the larger number of workers involved relative to the 1930s and 40s.

This suggests that high frequency (and even large numbers of strikers) may not always increase industrial class-consciousness if benchmarked by increased rates of workers joining unions. It may depend on the character of the strike, i.e. offensive v. defensive strikes.

Now consider political class-consciousness. Consider the trajectory of the Communist Party of Ireland as representing class-consciousness par excellence. Lacking data on membership and vote share, we can look at the official (re)constitution of the CPI over time—1921, 1933, and 1970—instead. Evidence suggests that

Strike waves might be positively associated with increased political class-consciousness evident in establishing and voting for left parties.

all three (re)constitutions occurred in periods of high strike frequency. Strike waves were associated with a desire by a small number of militants to (re)establish a class-oriented political party.

Strike waves were also associated with an increased electoral share for the Labour Party (except in periods associated with coalition government). A similar trend occurs with Clann na Poblachta and the Workers' Party, but such shares do not hold up well.

Strike waves might be positively associated with increased political class-consciousness evident in establishing and voting for left parties. If we assume a causal link, the effects seem tiny, however, confined to small groups of activists or manifested in modest and transient vote shares. This assumed "activist effect," although small, might be very important in sustaining the political organisations of the working class.

One could refine these (impressionistic) assessment with a more precise statistical analysis. Nonetheless it seems to suggest that Irish communists should use episodes of militant pay bargaining, backed by strikes, to identify, educate and recruit valuable activists. It seems less

reasonable to expect seismic uptakes in the rate of union membership due to strike waves without more fully understanding the character of those strikes.

Finally, it is not unreasonable to suggest that localised militant pay bargaining can have adverse effects on "net aggregate" class-consciousness. We might balance workers whose class-consciousness increases by localised militant pay bargaining with those workers who fall prey to reactionary postures. The latter is probably because of actual or perceived negative experiences of strike action, e.g. disruption to goods or services for workers as consumers, higher wages passed on in the form of higher prices to workers as consumers or retired workers as pensioners, workers' susceptibility to the capitalist media, manipulation by anti-worker political forces, petty sectionalism, etc. Such "debts" from the "account" of class-consciousness seem likely if local action is isolated.

Workers and their unions probably need the support of a robust political organisation to help counter well-organised reactionary forces at a sufficiently broader societal level.



THE FREESTATERS' RED NIGHTMARE



MICHEÁL MAC AONGHUSA
ANTI COMMUNISM

STUDENTS OF the *coup d'état* of 1922 will be interested in the following letter, which appeared in the *Freeman's Journal* of 5 August 1922 under the headline "Irregulars' Eager Allies | Policy of the Communist Party of Ireland."

The following excerpts from The Workers' Republic of 28th July—the "official organ of the Communist Party of Ireland (an organ of the Third International)"—should enlighten the people of Ireland as to the sinister forces rallying to the help of the Irregulars in the attempt to defy the Irish people's Government—"The Labour Party, supported by the Communist Party, backing the Republicans and appealing to the people with a proper social

programme, will be absolutely invincible. The programme would be based upon the present needs of the masses, comprising confiscation of the land, the big estates and ranches to become the property of the landless peasants; social ownership of creameries, etc.; confiscation of all heavy industries, banks, etc.; repudiation of all debts, and the controlling and running of industry, land and housing to be in the hands of councils elected by the workers and peasants.

"Republicans, here is your chance; with the workers behind you the Free State, relapses into the black hell from whence it came.

"Everything is in a whirl, war, ambushes, raids, searches, attack and defence everywhere. Amidst it all the Communist Party has two duties to perform: First, to

STRANGER THAN FICTION



LAURA DUGGAN
LITERACY

ANYONE WHO is politically active knows the importance of reading—and knows the weight of books one ought to have read. It is easy to become overwhelmed with the sheer volume of works to be read and the knowledge to acquire and process, and not only from weighty political tomes.

For a person not used to reading, or who has difficulty reading, it can be an intimidating exercise to embark upon and can lead to a fear or paralysis about reading at all. This fear or inability can cut them out of access to works intended to develop or expand one's own knowledge in quite a direct way.

The Bolsheviks understood the importance of people having the means to free themselves from ignorance through literature. They knew that access to knowledge was power, and emancipatory in itself. This sentiment was captured in 1919 when V. I. Lenin signed the decree *On the Eradication of Illiteracy among the Population of the RSFSR*.¹ All Soviet citizens from eight years old were required to be literate in

their native language, the cornerstone of what is now called emancipatory literacy.

In 1917 only an estimated 38 per cent of the male population above seven years old was literate, and only 12½ per cent of the female population. The gendered aspect of illiteracy was an essential component of the campaign, and the Zhenotdel (Women's Department of the Bolshevik party) played a leading role in both the dissemination of pro-literacy pamphlets and the running of literacy classes and education and employment courses for women. The success of this work could be seen in the 1950s, when the Soviet Union was able to celebrate nearly 100 per cent literacy, for men and women.

Today, just over a quarter (26 per cent) of adults in the Irish state score at or below level 1 on the numeracy scale; this is slightly higher in the North of Ireland, at 27 per cent.

The *OECD Adult Skills Survey* (2013) shows that up to 6 per cent of Irish university graduates are functionally illiterate.² The general illiteracy rate stands at 18 per cent, or about 1 in 6. Illiteracy in this survey was defined as being below level 1 on a five-level literacy scale. At level 1 a person may be unable to understand basic written information. This figure stands at approximately 20 per cent in the North of Ireland.

“Amidst it all the Communist Party has two duties to perform: First, to maintain its own forces intact, to increase their power and influence, and keep prepared for all emergencies.”

maintain its own forces intact, to increase their power and influence, and keep prepared for all emergencies. Second, to do all we can in every possible way to assist the Republicans against the Free State, to show them how they can win, to attract the workers and peasants to their side to aid them in their struggle, to prove to them that only with this aid is victory possible for their cause.

“Remember you are the Red Guards of Communism in Ireland. And be assured of this—your brothers in the British Party are watching your struggles, ready and anxious to help in every way they can—the whole international movement looking upon the fights of the valiant little Irish section with admiration, the whole Communist International is rallying all its forces to our assistance, directly and indirectly in every way it can.”

This is a succinct contemporary statement of the CPI position in 1922. Unfortunately, it had no influence whatsoever on the Labour Party and very limited influence on the leadership of the republican resistance.

The letter-writer comments:

So that is the plan—make Ireland the cockpit for the bloody revolutionist schemes of the Nihilists, Bolsheviks and cunning Communists of England and the Continent of Europe!

“Create social discontent and hasten the bloody revolution” is the motto of the Communists. But they won’t try that game in England—oh no! “Seize factories”—yes, In Ireland, thiggin thu? [sic!] Burn down factories, blow up bridges, destroy creameries, smash up railways—do all you can to make Ireland a hell, a blackened, bankrupt land of desolation, with the blood of its citizens flooding the ashes of their homesteads—and then salute the foul idol of Anarchy set up by the Communists and Bolsheviks.

What a glorious dream for the dupes of *The Workers’ Republic*!—and what a significant compliment to Mr. de Valera and his Irregulars to be patted on the back by such thugs. “To do all we can to assist the Irregulars”—quite so, and the Irregulars are showing by their mad policy and criminally destructive methods and tactics that they are congenial comrades for Communist-

Bolshevist allies. It must be the new way to “show the world the might of moral booty.”

The letter continues:

This “Official Organ of the Communist Party of Ireland” is so consistent in its international sympathies that it bears the imprint of a London printing firm—possibly to help to make Irish workers discontented by boycotting the Irish printing trade—it is printed by C. W. Long. Printer (T.U.), 104, Dawes Road, London, S.W.6.

(It wasn’t the CPI that boycotted the Irish printing trade. It was the other way around. The party could not get a printer in Ireland for its paper.)

The same letter was published in the *Wicklow People* of 12 August 1922 under the heading “Hellish advice.” It was signed by “Peadar Mac-h-Uibhir, Dublin.” It is hard not to suspect that it may have been concocted on a letter-writing table in a propaganda nest in Dublin Castle or Portobello Barracks.

The letter shows two aspects of the Free Stater mindset: the need to blacken the republicans by playing on the prejudices of a growing anti-communism and, deeper still, the “nightmare” evoked by popular support for socialism.

Literacy allows a person to seek out information, explore subjects in detail, and gain a deeper understanding of the world around them; its absence leaves a population easy to distract, control and appease with less.

Higher levels of literacy are essential for a country to thrive. Higher rates are associated with healthier populations, less crime, greater economic growth, and higher employment rates. For a person, literacy is a foundational skill required for developing critical thought, grasping the understanding of important concepts, and the ability to debate and present arguments. Literacy allows a person to seek out information, explore subjects in detail, and gain a deeper understanding of the world around them; its absence leaves a population easy to distract, control and appease with less.

While the gaps do seem to be closing, there is still a stark age, gender and class component of illiteracy. People over the age of fifty-five report higher levels of difficulty with literacy, while women in this cohort are more likely to report difficulty than men. *The National Assessments of English Reading and Maths* (2014) show the proportion of pupils in second class performing at level 1 or below in reading to be 22 per cent. The Programme for International Student Assessment (2015) showed that the proportion of fifteen-year-olds performing at or below level 1 was 10 per cent. These percentages were much more pronounced in DEIS³ schools and will have a lasting effect on already disadvantaged, marginalised and forgotten communities.

It’s worth making the comparison at this point with countries that have continued in the tradition of the Soviets. Cuban literacy for 2012 was 99¾ per cent. Before the revolution, Cuba’s rate of literacy was 77 per cent, but through a literacy campaign initiated in 1961 by Fidel Castro (at the behest of Che Guevara) this rate had already increased to 96 per cent by 1962. Cuba has been able to maintain this high rate of literacy despite the blockade because of a continuous valuing of the importance of education for both the country and the people’s individual benefit. They have made a concerted effort to promote it in all fields.

The literacy rate of India is 78 per cent, while Kerala has emerged as the most literate state in the country, at 96 per cent. Much credit has been given for this to the royal family of the region, and while this may be partially true it is also worth noting that it is Kerala’s communist legacy of governance that has built upon this, alongside the ensuring of a relatively higher and equitable access to education, nutrition and health services among its residents than in other regions of India.

Kerala and Cuba prove that there is no justifiable reason that any person should be left without literacy. It is never a personal failing to be left without the skill required to make it in this world but

rather a systemic one that does not value the potential contribution of all. We all deserve better than that.

Ireland meanwhile continues to promote itself as “the best small country in the world in which to do business”; but when we have such stark gaps in our education that sizable numbers of people are being left behind, even at third level, it raises the question of who our education system serves, and who we want that to be. Is its role simply producing workers for capitalists—workers who know enough to perform their assigned role—or do we want all people to have access to information independently for their own uses and their own benefit?

■ For anyone seeking assistance, the National Adult Literacy Agency runs free personal and on-line courses for adults who wish to improve their literacy or numeracy. Information can be found at www.learnwithnala.ie. In Dublin, classes are held in the SIPTU offices in Liberty Hall.

- 1 Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic.
- 2 The 2021/22 iteration of the OECD survey of adult capabilities involving literacy and numeracy is still in progress, and results have not been published yet.
- 3 “Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools.”



EXPLOITATION

WORKERS IN IRELAND NEED A BIG PAY RISE TO MATCH CEOS' PAY RISES AND PROFITS



Fat cat cartoon
by Andy Vine

EUGENE MCCARTAN
WAGES

AS EVERY worker knows, the cost of living is spiralling far beyond pay increases. More and more working families have their backs against the wall, trying to survive.

In particular, the cost of energy has been rising for the last eighteen months or more, which has been added to from illegal US sanctions against Russia for its invasion of Ukraine.

Massive profit-gouging has been carried on by the global energy

corporations, at the expense of working people, while grocery prices have risen by 7¾ per cent against what they were a year ago.

The latest figures from Eurostat show that Ireland has the fourth-highest residential electricity prices in the EU. Electric Ireland announced an increase in its unit rate of 11.35 per cent and for gas of 32 per cent. Its standing charges also increased by the same amounts. These changes came into effect for more than a million customers from August.

The following energy companies have already implemented price increases, with more to follow.

- Prepay Power increased electricity by 9.9 per cent and gas by 19.9 per cent from April.
- Bord Gáis Energy raised electricity and gas prices in April 2022. Gas will go up by 39 per cent and electricity by 27 per cent.
- Energia increased its prices by 15 per cent from April.
- Electric Ireland introduced a price increase of 23 per cent on electricity and 25 per cent on gas in May.
- SSE Airtricity increased its standard household gas and electricity unit prices by 24 and 32 per cent, respectively, from May.
- Panda Power increased electricity by 14¾ per cent and gas bills by 15 per cent from May.
- Flogas raised electricity prices by 27 per cent and natural gas prices by 29 per cent from May.

The cost of household energy is spiralling, with more than thirty different price increases announced over the past year. According to the Government's most recent strategy for

CPI PARTICIPATES IN CONFERENCE ORGANISED BY THE CPC



COMMUNIST PARTY
SISTER PARTIES

AT THE END of July the Communist Party of Ireland participated in an on-line International Marxist Parties Forum organised by the Communist Party of China. The theme of the forum was "Adapting Marxism to the National Conditions and the Times of the 21st Century."

The CPI was represented by Eugene

McCartan, Graham Harrington, and Unu Li. Nearly 300 participants from a large number of countries in Latin America, Africa, Asia, North America and Europe represented more than a hundred political parties.

The conference was opened with a message of support from Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC. He emphasised the need for Marxist parties to adapt Marxism to their specific national conditions.

Other messages were received from the general secretary of the Communist Party of Viet Nam, Nguyen Phu Trong, and the president of Cuba, Miguel Díaz-Canel. The vice-president of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Pany Yathotou, also participated in the meeting.

The opening speaker was Liu Jianchao, minister of the International Department of the CPC. He described the huge economic and social advances



Irish workers need a pay increase to match inflation, as do those on state benefits. Working people must come first, not EU rules, which are only there to protect and advance the interests of European and global monopoly capitalist corporations.

tackling energy poverty, up to 28 per cent of households are in “energy poverty,” or at risk, equivalent to some 475,000 households.

It is very likely that energy poverty will increase considerably in 2022, as the annual inflation rate for energy products was 43½ per cent by March. The Society of St Vincent de Paul experienced a 49 per cent increase in the number of requests for help with energy costs in February 2022 compared with the same period last year.

Profits soared for energy companies between 2020 and 2022.

The ESB announced a pre-tax profit of €670 million in March, paying a dividend of €126 million to the government, while the Irish arm of the company that operates the Corrib gas field, Vermillion Energy, recorded a profit of more than €760 million last year.

Bord Gáis Energy’s operating profits rose by 74 per cent in the first half of the year, as its British parent company, Centrica, also reported a massive jump in earnings. It had an adjusted profit of £33 million (€39.5 million) in the first six months of 2022, compared with a profit of £19 million (€22.7 million) in the same period last year.

Bord Gáis Energy raised prices three times in the past twelve months, with significant increases in August and October 2021 and again in April 2022. Centrica, the owners of Bord Gáis Energy, announced a group profit of £1.34 billion for the six-month period—more than five times the amount it earned a year before.

Bord Gáis Éireann was once a state company. Under EU competition rules it was broken into two separate companies, privatised as a condition of the EU-IMF “bail-out,” which required the government to sell off

some state-owned assets to help pay off loans and reduce Ireland’s debt burden. The state was too willing, and servile, to oppose such a strategy. In 2012 it announced that it would sell Bord Gáis Energy, its customer supply arm, as required under the terms. Then, in 2014, it was sold to a consortium of Icon Infrastructure, Centrica and Brookfield for €1.1 billion.

Global energy corporations have the people by the throat.

At the global level, the largest oil and gas producers made close to \$100 billion in the first quarter of 2022, with Shell making \$9.1 billion in profit, almost three times what it made in the same period last year, while Exxon made \$8.8 billion.

Twenty-eight of the largest producers made close to \$100 billion in combined profits in the first three months of 2022; in 2021 the same companies made a combined profit of \$183.9 billion.

War is very profitable for global oil corporations.

While the media have been blaming the Russian invasion of Ukraine for rising energy costs, they ignore the fact that it is the illegal sanctions imposed on Russia that contributed to the increase in energy prices and thereby the huge increase in profits for the global energy corporations.

Wars are good for profits, and not only for the arms manufacturers.

For all the talk of sanctions, from April to June this year Saudi Arabia imported 647,000 tonnes (48,000 barrels per day) of fuel oil from Russia by way of Russian and Estonian ports. That was up from 320,000 tonnes in the same period a year ago. Estonia is a member of the European Union.

The Russians are selling their fuel oil at knock-down prices. This benefits

the Saudi regime during a period of peak summer demand, at a time when the Biden government has been trying to twist the arms of the Saudi regime to increase oil production.

Saudi Arabia is in a bind. It and Russia are two of the largest oil exporters. It has to maintain its co-operation with Russia in the alliance of global producers known as OPEC+. The two are the de facto leaders of OPEC and non-OPEC producers, respectively, in that group. The Saudi regime has been importing Russian fuel oil, which can reduce its need to refine crude oil for products and cut the amount of oil it needs to burn for power generation, thereby leaving it with more unrefined crude to sell on international markets, at higher prices.

The oil sanctions are having an impact not on Russia but on working people and the poor around the world. The sanctions have provided a great cover for massive profit-gouging by the global energy corporations.

The Irish government is in effect supporting the NATO proxy war in Ukraine when it should be pursuing a peace strategy and demanding a ceasefire and peace negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations, the ending of all arms shipments to Ukraine, and the lifting of sanctions.

Irish workers need to be demanding the public ownership of all energy companies and all natural resources, including energy sources such as oil and gas, both on land and in our territorial waters, regardless of what EU rules demand.

Irish workers need a pay increase to match inflation, as do those on state benefits. Working people must come first, not EU rules, which are only there to protect and advance the interests of European and global monopoly capitalist corporations.

Socialism cannot be copied or exported but rather is the result of conscious struggle by the people themselves.

made in China, applying socialism with Chinese characteristics. The key to this success was the application of Marxism to Chinese conditions, taking into account China’s particular context and the needs of its people. We were informed that Marxism has not failed China, and China has not failed Marxism.

There were very interesting contributions from Rosario Pentón, member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba, who outlined the political and economic situation in Cuba arising from the sixty-year illegal US blockade and the recent impact of the covid pandemic, as well as important interventions made by senior political figures from Viet Nam and Laos.

Communist parties from South Africa, Portugal, the United States, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Russia, India, Kenya and Venezuela, as well as a number of non-communist parties, made contributions. The gathering included a significant number of parties that declare themselves Marxist but are not necessarily communist, such as the United Socialist Party of Venezuela.

The general secretary of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, Gennady Zyuganov, described how the overthrow of the USSR shows that a communist party can never discard its leading role—a lesson that the CPC has learnt.

The central theme was the importance of building and strengthening anti-imperialist solidarity

and of struggling for global peace and for people-centred economic and social development, the need to enrich our understanding of capitalism, to apply Marxism to the real, concrete material and national conditions as well as applying the generalised experience of the international workers’ movement.

Socialism cannot be copied or exported but rather is the result of conscious struggle by the people themselves.

The meeting was informed that the parties represented had more than 100 million members. Several parties were governing parties; others, such as the CPI, were parties involved in important working-class struggles, including the struggle for peace. This was proof that the “end of history” has not happened.



It is often said that to know how things work you need to live that experience. Over the last number of years, be it on my holidays in the occupied Six Counties or listening to friends and family, I have heard so many stories of a system that isn't working for its people.

Local people in Newcastle, Co. Down, are constantly complaining of how when you ring the local health practice you can wait up to two hours before getting through. You then have to share your personal details with a receptionist, and from there it is decided whether you will get a consultation with your GP.

Unfortunately the doctors are otherwise occupied, as they act like mercenaries, working in private practice within our public health system. (This seems so familiar to us who live in the 26 Counties.)

During the long war in the North it was so easy for politicians, from whatever persuasion, to get their supporters onto the streets in their thousands to defend Unionist or Republican ideology with passion and vigour. It is almost impossible to get people onto the streets to protest about the privatisation of the National Health Service. These class issues are not being discussed, be it workers' rights, the NHS, or elderly care. The mainstream media control the narrative, and most journalists, being middle class, are remote from the lives of the working class.

I know of one young man who is waiting for an operation on his arm. The symptoms were neglected for months, and the infection got worse. The bone needs to be removed, which involves another operation, taking bone from his leg. The surgeons and doctors are so tied up in their private work they cannot agree a time to operate. It has been postponed yet again, and this time he has been told there could be an amputation.

The NHS isn't given enough resources. The bean-counters have taken over and are allowing the privatisation agenda into the mainstream, at the expense of providing public-service quality care. Health care should be based on people's needs, on socialist principles. We should not be afraid to talk about socialism and medical care. We see all around us the public services that work so well for everyone. Just look at our public libraries, fire service, forestry, and public work programmes.

It cannot be allowed for the Six Counties health system to be a mirror image of the failed medical care system in the 26 Counties, whereby you are afraid to call your doctor or go to your local A&E department, as you cannot afford the expense of doing so, and you linger on, hoping the pain will go away.

What we really need is an all-Ireland health service, free to all, based on socialist principles.

Paul Doran
Dublin

A STORY OF CAPITALIST CONTRADICTION

SAJEEV KUMAR
SOLIDARITY

THIS IS AN old story that is told in Marxist circles, still relevant, and never loses its novelty. It's a conversation between a little girl and her mother during a cold winter evening in London when the father has not returned after going out in search of a job.

The two are sitting in front of a fire whose flames are getting shorter.

Girl: Mother, put on some more coal. I'm feeling cold.

Mother: This is the last piece of coal we have, dear. We have none after this.

Girl: Why can't you buy some?

Mother: We haven't got the money, dear.

Girl: Why?

Mother: Because Father lost his job.

Girl: Why?

Mother: Because he and his friends, working hard in the coal mines, dug out coal that is left unsold, and they had to stop mining.

Girl: Why was it not sold?

Mother: Because people couldn't afford to buy it.

Girl: So in spite of Father and his friends digging out so much coal, we are left with no coal to keep ourselves warm?

The conversation ends there, because the mother had no answer. But the person who knew the answer was Karl Marx.

In this story there is an abundance of coal at one end, and there is a need for coal at the other. The reason they were not able to obtain it is the contradiction of capitalism. That's the moral of the story.

The way to resolve this contradiction is to go beyond capitalism—that is, to change the way things are produced and distributed, which means socialism.

The worker who enters the market as a seller of his commodity (labour power) is at the same time a buyer (of other commodities he or she needs). So

in a society where labour power is exploited, the capacity to buy is also decreased, which shrinks the market, resulting in crisis.

Capitalism is already in a structural crisis, which means that the measures it takes for coming out of crisis land it in deeper crisis. These structural crises give a lot of opportunities for the working class to fight back.

But whether the working class seizes the opportunity depends on whether the left forces are strong enough. Unfortunately, the left forces all over the world are weak; as Arundhati Roy once said, "capitalism is dead, but there is no one to remove the stinking corpse." The working class is swayed by nationalist feelings: that is why wars are created during crisis, which overtakes class identification, and the fascist forces being unleashed to suppress even the spontaneous struggles.

The hope lies in creating bonds with the left forces all over the world by standing in solidarity with each other's struggle and engaging with the spontaneous outburst of protests.

We have to think how the death of millions of people from covid-19 is normalised, how hunger and long queues at food banks are normalised, how the crisis that is overcome by further exploitation of workers is normalised, how inflation and the flattening of real wages is normalised, how the grave danger of climate catastrophe is swept under the carpet, how war crimes of the imperialist countries are accepted without any guilt by the people of those countries, and how consent is manufactured.

If we don't find answers to these questions, the rights that we have won by sacrifice, which are being snatched away by the ruling class, will be a distant dream to our next generation.

If we fail in discharging our historic duty of fighting this mode of production, forgetting all our petty quarrels and minor differences, we will be doing a severe injustice to the future generations, who will never forgive us, or there will be none left to forgive.





NEW FAMILY CODE IN CUBA

CLOVER CARROLL
DEMOCRACY

ON THE 1ST OF February this year the Cuban government began drafting a new family code for the country's constitution. This new family code will change how the state sees a family, which will broaden rights for many citizens, including children and the LGBTQ+ community.

The drafting of the new family code involved more than 6 million people and more than 79,000 meetings—an impressive amount of work, which involved more than 57 per cent of the country's population, showing the rest of the world how to truly involve the citizens in building their country.

The existing family code in Cuba's constitution does not include recognition of marriage for same-sex couples. It also does not state what a family is: it simply states that "marriage is the voluntarily established union between a man and a woman, who are legally fit to marry, in order to live together," and that "the parents have the duty to provide nourishment for their children . . . contribute actively to their education and integral development . . . It is the children's duty, in turn, to respect and help their parents."

While parts of the present constitution regarding the rights of children are advanced for when it was written, it needs updating to match modern life in Cuba and the people's wants and needs. Among

the issues that were raised by the popular constitution were marriage equality, parental responsibility, adoption, the order of surnames, and violence in the family. The new document brings together 483 articles covering the issues raised during the meetings. Some of these articles include the right to form a family without discrimination, which includes same-sex marriage, the right to a family life free of violence, and that adolescents and children will be seen as subjects of rights and not objects of protection.

Yamile González Cabrales, president of the Civil, Administrative and Labour Chamber of the People's Provincial Court in the province of Granma, explained that the legal framework for children and adolescents should be updated according to their duties and rights.

On 15 May the National Electoral Council delivered its conclusive summary of the popular consultation, which includes statistical data, to the National Assembly of People's Power, the only body in Cuba that is vested with both constituent and legislative authority, and which holds its meetings publicly. It gave all data received to the drafting committee, which was established last year.

According to the minister of justice, Oscar Silvera Martínez, "the drafting of this critical, historic document has been a work of consensus-building and meticulous study." The drafting committee was responsible for making decisions on any amendments and modifications that are based on the popular

consultation that was held for the public to make amendments. This draft was then sent back to the Assembly of People's Power, which will be voted on for a referendum.

While a traditional family unit will remain common, it is important to recognise and protect the rights of citizens to choose how they wish to form their own family. Article 81 of the constitution reads: "The State recognises and protects the family, no matter how it is organised, as the basic cell in society and it creates the conditions to guarantee that its purposes may be achieved as a whole. Families may be constituted legally or by common law, based on love and the equality of rights, obligation and opportunities for its members." The new family code is to be in line with this article.

The democratic process that Cuba has gone through to change this part of its constitution is a lesson in democracy for the rest of us. Involving the population throughout the process of drafting and amending, the document creates a society in which voices are heard and taken into account. Bringing the general population into the debate and discussion on new legislation will allow the issues within existing legislation and policies to be heard by those in the party. Only through allowing the general population to voice their opinions and take part in the process of drafting and amending their country's legislation can true democracy be achieved.

The referendum will take place in September.



END NOTES



WILLIAM ORPEN AND SEÁN KEATING

GABRIEL ROSENSTOCK

TWO BILINGUAL tanka, in Irish and English, "Hail the Deserters" and "Weeping in their Graves," 31-syllable poems (5-7-5-7-7), in response to work by two Irish artists, William Orpen and Seán Keating.

When the First World War broke out, Orpen's assistant, Seán Keating, returned to Ireland, avoiding conscription, but Orpen stayed on, to support the "war effort."

William Orpen has sixty-eight works on display at Wikiart, Seán Keating none.

Hail the Deserters

tréigtheoirí abú
fíor-laochra na cinniúna
a fhógraíonn an tsíth
teithigí ó pháirc an áir
leagaigí uaibh bhur n-airm

Hail the deserters
true soldiers of destiny
harbingers of peace
flee the sordid battlefields
all sides—lay down your arms now!

LEFT: William Orpen: Weeping in their Graves



Weeping in Their Graves

A recent tanka title from Gabriel Rosenstock is "Daybreak: Poem-

Prayers for Prisoners" (<https://tinyurl.com/9fkW4487>).

á, dá bhfeicfidís
ár nÉire iar-choilíneach
Coronation Street
leagáid lom uile na nGall
le deora líonfaí a n-uaigh

could our heroes see
post-colonial Ireland now
Coronation Street
all of England's bare baggage
how they'd weep in bitter graves!

LEFT: Seán Keating, Men of the South

CONNOLLY BOOKS

Connolly Books is named
after James Connolly,
Ireland's socialist pioneer
and martyr

★ Irish history ★ politics ★ Marxist classics
★ feminism ★ philosophy ★ environmental issues
★ progressive literature ★ trade union affairs
★ radical periodicals

43 East Essex Street, Dublin, between Temple Bar
and Parliament Street.

Opening Hours: Tuesday to Saturday 10.00 to 17.30
<https://www.connollybooks.org>

JOIN THE
COMMUNIST
PARTY



name	
address	
	post code
email	phone
Send to CPI 43 East Essex Street Dublin D02 XH96	

