

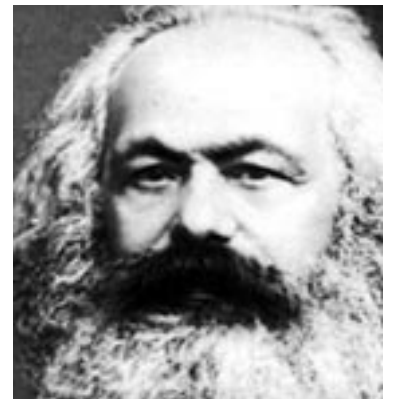
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INFLATION

As inflation is making essential goods ever more expensive, increasing numbers of people are relying on food banks. Politicians and the ruling class blame covid-19 and the war in Ukraine for the “cost of living crisis.” Working-class people know otherwise writes **Patricia Campbell**.



“If money . . . ‘comes into the world with a congenital bloodstain on one cheek,’ capital comes dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt.”

Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1.

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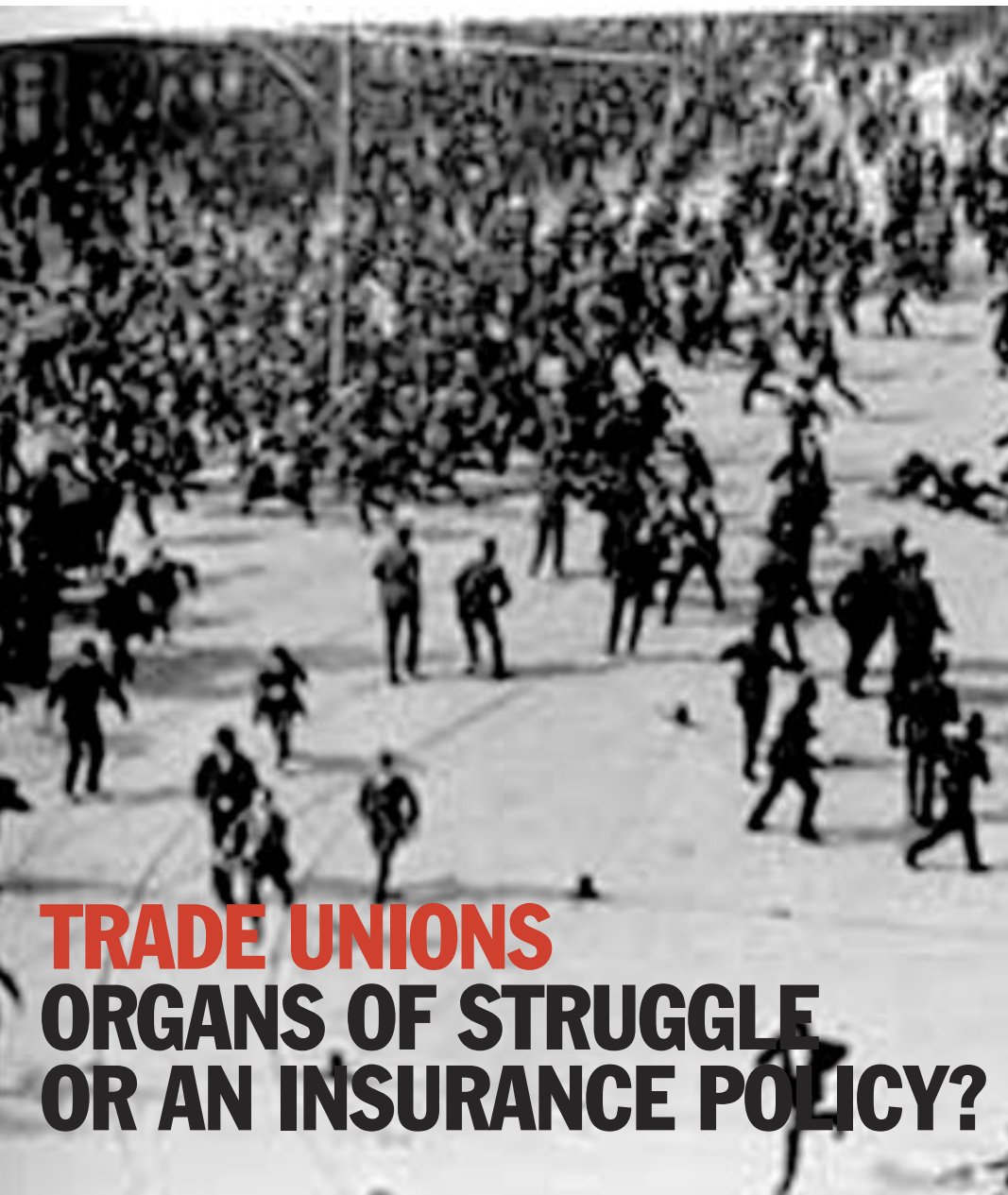


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TRADE UNIONS ORGANS OF STRUGGLE OR AN INSURANCE POLICY?

NIALL CULLINANE

CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS

COMRADE DORAN in the last *Voice* made several thoughtful observations. To this reader, his remark that Irish union members are “infected with a petty-bourgeois outlook, one that views trade union membership as an insurance policy or a last resort, not as organs of solidarity and struggle,” stood out most.

His views touch on an important question for those interested in trade unionism. However, this writer is unaware of any evidence from attitude surveys of the Irish population that supports classifying union members’ outlook as “petty bourgeois.” If we understand “petty bourgeois” as a distinct intermediate social class—typically made up of small business owners and the self-employed, among others—then Comrade Doran’s classification is not ideal.

Even if we accept that the “petty-bourgeois” are prone to self-interested, individualistic “ideological wavering,” depending on their uncertain material position in capitalism, this is not of the same magnitude that unionised workers might have *contradictory* outlooks derived in part from multiple, sometimes contradictory, interests.

That Comrade Doran disparages Irish union members for seeing membership as an “insurance policy” and not a means for “solidarity and struggle” raises several issues.

With respect, it is not unreasonable that workers view union membership as an insurance policy.

DO NOT MANAGE POVERTY



PATRICIA CAMPBELL

AUSTERITY

AS INFLATION is making essential goods ever more expensive, increasing numbers of people are relying on food banks. Politicians and the ruling class blame covid-19 and the war in Ukraine for the “cost of living crisis.” Working-class people know otherwise.

A recent study carried out by the charity Oxfam states that the richest 1 per cent own 46.6 per cent of global wealth; and the richest 1 per cent of people in Ireland now own over a quarter of the total wealth. It made the point that, “for the first time in a quarter of a century, the rich are getting richer while the poor are getting even poorer.”





Unions were founded on this point, emerging from earlier forms of friendly societies. The insurance function is core to what unions do. It emanates from, and is grounded on, the collectivisation of workers in their union as an institution. We should not treat the matter as either-or: insurance or struggle. Trade unionism is both.

To think about this, we can draw on high-quality evidence of what workers value from their unions.

A recent survey of fourteen unions in twelve European countries (Ireland not included) found that “*support if I have a problem at work*” is the main reason people are in unions.* In every union surveyed, more than 55 per cent of members cited *support* as one of the two principal reasons for staying a member. In three unions, more than 70 per cent did.

I would suggest that “valuing support at work” could be interpreted as an instrumental (if limited, workplace-specific) expression of solidarity.

Improvements in pay featured second in the ranking for most unions. Like “support,” the high value placed on “pay” confirms that members want a trade union agenda revolving around fair treatment and improvements in terms and conditions of employment.

That workers believe union membership improves their pay demonstrates that they are aware that there must be some *counter-organisation* to employers: members realise that they cannot rely on the latter’s charity. That is a reasonable, if limited, understanding of industrial struggle.

Most European workers showed marked variation in the value placed on a pure ideological support for trade unionism. Membership retention based on “*I believe in trade unions and want to take part*” was ranked as a reason for membership below pay in 10 of the 14 unions. However, it was ranked above “membership benefits” in 11 unions. On average, though, only about 30 per cent of those surveyed highlighted retaining union membership

Unionised workers value practical and immediate gains from their union. However, these practical and immediate gains have a latent, if complex and contradictory, ideological underpinning that reflects in partial form elements of solidarity and struggle.

because they have ideological commitments to the union as an institution.

Incidentally, the union with firmest “belief in unionism” was the anti-communist Polish union Solidarnosc, at 50 per cent of members.

Unionised workers value practical and immediate gains from their union. However, these practical and immediate gains have a latent, if complex and contradictory, ideological underpinning that reflects in partial form elements of solidarity and struggle.

Rather than exhibiting “petty-bourgeois” outlooks, union members show a low or modest degree of “political consciousness” but respectable “trade union consciousness,” refracted through their own individual experiences and interests.

On balance, it seems unfair to dismiss Irish union members’ attitudes simply because they do not match up to the frustrated expectations of some Irish communists. One might recall Lenin here when he said: “*It is not enough to be a revolutionary . . . It is necessary to know at every moment how to find the particular link in the chain which must be grasped with all one’s strength in order to keep the whole chain in place and prepare to move on resolutely to the next link.*”

While communists should lead, they should not lead so far ahead that those they wish to lead remain too far behind. ★

*Jeremy Waddington, “Trade union membership retention in Europe: The challenge of difficult times,” *European Journal of Industrial Relations*, 21 (3), 2014.

It is well known that fuel companies and big businesses are making massive profits while ordinary people are struggling to meet their essential needs, and that private companies are in charge of health and other public services. The reality is that private companies care little about the provision of health or education, or how to drive an ambulance or a train. Their priority is profit, and that means driving down wages and quality services. In other words, they expect us to work more for less so that they can line their pockets.

To help those in need is a noble and decent thing to do; but we must seriously ask, Why do we need food banks, or charities, in the first place? Are we happy to

institutionalise poverty by managing misery?

The solution is simple. We must start by reducing inequality and tax the rich who capitalise on our collective labour. If Oxfam has called for a “wealth tax” to fund essential public services and climate initiatives, we as activists must go a step further, because we know that there is a wealth of skills in our communities.

It is imperative that we reject the capitalist narrative that there isn’t enough money to resource essential services and public housing. We must not be fooled by politicians who validate our economic misery and advocate charities to help us survive. The image of the British billionaire prime minister, Rishi Sunak, dishing out

The solution is simple. We must start by reducing inequality and tax the rich who capitalise on our collective labour.

food to those in need is nothing short of an affront to our dignity and our intelligence.

Working-class empowerment is the key to decent living standards and an environment that is not reliant on donations. A 1970s Aboriginal activists group in Queensland once wrote, “If you have come to help me you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.”

To conclude, it is crucial that we work together to bring about a society that is not reliant on charities, crumbs off the table, or the idea of Robin Hood coming to our rescue.

The answer, in a word, is socialism. ★

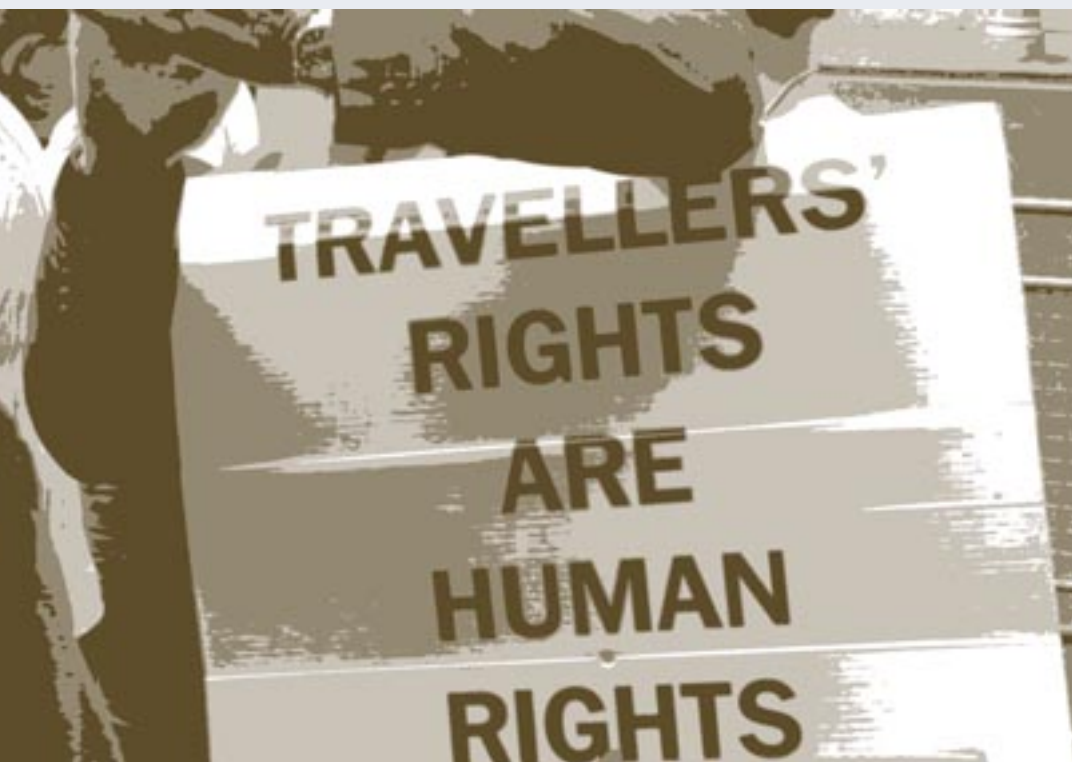


IRELAND

CRISIS AND THE ENDLESS QUEST FOR PROFIT



HOW THE TRAVELLING COMMUNITY ARE TREATED AT WORK



CLOVER CARROLL PROPERTY

AS WE BEGIN a new year we remain static in the progress of society, entrapped in the system of capitalism.

2022 ended with many people from the Cost of Living Coalition taking part in a protest outside the Dáil on the 17th of December. The protest was against Leo Varadkar returning as taoiseach. While a symbolic change, the fundamental aim of the current Government is to protect landlords and the profits of capitalists. This aim is not new, nor is it unique: this has been the aim of capitalism for the past few centuries in all capitalist countries. However, through direct action by the workers, changes have been brought into the system in favour of the workers. These reforms have made it easier for workers to continue struggling for a better life without capitalism. This direct action can be seen throughout 2022.

Looking back to May, we saw the Revolutionary Housing League seize 12–14 Eden Quay, Dublin, naming it James Connolly House and putting it to

NICOLA LAWLOR DISCRIMINATION

TRAVELLERS, OR MINCÉIR, are a minority ethnic group indigenous to Ireland who have a shared language and culture. The biggest blight on “modern” Ireland, without question, is the treatment of the Travelling community. It is a continuing shame on the state and on society more generally.

Traditional Traveller occupations, such as tinsmithing (in the past they were often called Whitesmiths as a people, because of their trade), the recycling of metals, horse-trading, or more recently chimney-sweeping, have largely been made redundant by industrialised monopoly capitalism. This has forced Travellers either into social-welfare dependence or into cities to try to integrate in a working culture that doesn’t want them and that forces settled accommodation and patterns of routinised behaviour.

Legislation against Travellers, their lives and occupations was introduced by the British state in the sixteenth century, outlawing travelling from town to town peddling. In the 1920s and 30s the Irish state increasingly took public land for government use that had traditionally



use for the people, housing many homeless people and at least one refugee.

Since then the state has arbitrarily used its power to protect private property from RHL. Eighty armed gardaí raided James Connolly House, under the pretence that it would be used to house Ukrainian refugees. It remains empty, among the other buildings seized by RHL that have since been violently taken back by the state.

This protection of private property has allowed the growth of the homeless population and the wealth of landlords, the same landlords who preside in the Dáil.

But RHL are one part of the action taken by people in 2022. We saw the coming together of a considerable number of organisations in September. Thousands took part in a protest against the rising cost of living, marching from the Garden of Remembrance to the Dáil. This cost of living crisis, which the CPI has continuously and correctly referred to as the cost of capitalism or the crisis of capitalism, is brought on by the endless quest for profit.

We can see through the war in

We go into 2023 with Leo Varadkar back in as taoiseach, a man who said that there has been no history of class war in Ireland. The working class have constantly been fighting to better their lives; the 1913 Lockout and the 1970s rent strikes are just two examples from the last century.

Ukraine, which led to sanctions on Russia, being a part of this crisis. The reduction in oil and natural gas supply has led to price-gouging, raising the cost of fuel, heating, and electricity. This is a conscious decision by those in power; and the protests that are taking place through the Cost of Living Coalition must take this momentum into the new year.

The other aspect of the cost of capitalism in Ireland has been enormous rent increases. This, however, is not brought on by foreign supply being reduced but rather by foreign investment in the Irish housing market. The lack of supply of housing, because of the selling off of public land to these private investors, creates an artificial scarcity. A lack of affordable houses on the market means that most people are forced to rent from landlords, who then raise rents beyond affordability.

While these rents continue to rise, and the landlords in government profit from the policies they make, people's homes continue to crumble from mica and pyrite. The people whose homes are falling down around them demand government aid, but the government would rather profit from a shrinking housing market.

The main argument being pushed by those profiting from the crisis is that

inflation is to blame. Those same people have made record profits, while real wages have dropped. Comrade Kumar's article in December deals with the claim that increasing wages lead to inflation. If it is not the case that raising wages lead to inflation, then the obvious question is, Why hasn't the minimum wage increased at the same rate as inflation?

If wages go up, then profits reduce at the same rate. The system of capitalism requires endless increases in profits; and the shareholders and those who support them in the Dáil will do everything in their power to protect those profits. The system of capitalism is the common denominator in every reason for the crisis we are spiralling further into.

We go into 2023 with Leo Varadkar back in as taoiseach, a man who said that there has been no history of class war in Ireland. The working class have constantly been fighting to better their lives; the 1913 Lockout and the 1970s rent strikes are just two examples from the last century.

Change does not come quickly or easily, and those movements we've seen over the past year will have to keep the momentum going through 2023 to bring real change to Ireland. The workers have the power to bring change. ★

been used by the Travelling community. Conflict with the state was frequent, and continuous, over land use with the Gardai and county councils, often violently, disrupting Traveller campsites that had been used for centuries without any understanding or recognition of this.

Regulations and laws that restricted camping and mobility increased, and this remains at the heart of discrimination and oppression today: a failure to recognise and accept the indigenous Mincéir way of life. Indeed Charles Haughey once stated that "there could be no final solution until itinerant families were absorbed into the general community."

A report then recommended that all Travellers in the state needed to be "registered," and social welfare was offered for twelve months to any Traveller willing to "settle" and get a "normal" job. Variations of this have been state policy since.

The state and capital have in effect worked together to leave these people in a state of oppressive and violent poverty.

56 per cent of Travellers reported that poor physical and mental health restricted normal daily activities; this was compared with 24 per cent of the General Medical Services (medical

Traveller men have a life expectancy of 63 and women 70. These are significantly less than the settled population (78 for men and 82 for women).

card) population. 63 per cent of Traveller women disclosed that their mental health was not good enough for one or more days in the previous thirty days, compared with 20 per cent of GMS female cardholders. Suicide rates are six times higher in the Travelling community than in the settled population. 50 per cent of Travellers die before their 39th birthday.

Let that sink in. It is a frightening reality. Traveller men have a life expectancy of 63 and women 70. These are significantly less than the settled population (78 for men and 82 for women).

And what prospect is there if a Traveller wants to get a job within the settled economy? A survey in 2004 found shocking attitudes to the Travelling community among the settled population. 72 per cent of the population agreed that they were not willing to accept Travellers among them.

With this level of racism prevalent, it is no surprise that the world of settled jobs is not an inviting place. 41 per cent of settled employers say they are not willing to employ a Traveller. In 2011 only 1 per cent of Travellers had a third-level degree.

There is 80 per cent unemployment among the Traveller

population of working age. An Oireachtas committee has heard Travellers directly call for the public sector and the state to lead the way in the employment of Travellers, and participants from the community said it was a myth that Travellers didn't want to work.

Pavee Point activists have also said that Travellers often have to hide or deny their ethnicity in order to get a job. One such Traveller security guard who did this was told repeatedly to watch out for Travellers, who steal. He eventually quit in anger.

The state needs to lead the way in positive employment of the Travelling community and in a way that accepts their culture. It must stop trying to force Travellers into a sedentary way of life. It needs to recognise and provide employment, and flexible employment mechanisms, both for those who wish to remain nomadic and for those who wish a sedentary way of life.

The private sector must also play a role and be made to provide greater flexibility. With technology and greater ability to work from varied locations and to work remotely, a more nomadic work force is possible, and this should be used to end discrimination against Travellers in employment. ★



IRELAND



ACCESS FOR ALL

ALAN FARRELL DISABILITY

ACCCESS FOR ALL Ireland is an advocacy group that highlights the difficulties faced by anyone in Ireland with mobility issues. I sat with Brendan Mulvaney, co-founder of the group, to discuss what the organisation's goals are, how Ireland ranks internationally, and how politics intersects with the issue of accessibility.

A: My interest in interviewing you was based on my mother's experience with reduced mobility and her need to use a mobility scooter. Once she started using it my eyes were really opened to how difficult and inaccessible this country is. Even a short journey from her house to the main street was littered with obstacles: kerbs, difficult laneways, and so on.

"The thing is, disability doesn't discriminate. It affects everyone, regardless of colour or creed. If a

person of colour was told they had to wait 24 hours to take a train, the country would erupt. And rightly so! But for a person of disability it's accepted. And this is the reason why we've become such close comrades with members of the Travelling community. We're not allowed to go to places because it's too expensive to make it accessible, but they're not allowed because of inherent racism in Irish society. They'll apologise to us with embarrassed faces, whereas with Travellers it's just outright rejection. And the amazing thing with the Traveller activists that we've become close to is that they look at us not with envy but with sympathy. And they see the barriers that people in wheelchairs face and think, 'We face those barriers too—but they're all man-made.'

"If you build society from the ground up, inclusive for everyone, then it's cream all the way to the top. But the capitalist mentality is 'That costs too much money.' And it's acceptable

RIGHT-WING THREAT REQUIRES A UNITED RESPONSE

Tommy McKearney FAR RIGHT

HOW SERIOUS IS the far-right threat in Ireland today? The question is being widely discussed because of a series of high-profile protests. At first these were outside asylum-seekers' accommodation, and more recently they targeted Sinn Féin TDs.

Prominent members of fascist organisations have taken part in these demonstrations. It is not yet clear, however, whether they have organised all the events or joined in opportunistically. Whichever is the case, it is a disturbing development that demands a response.

It is necessary, however, to put into perspective the definition of "far right." Is it only those nasty, uncouth neo-Nazis, or does it not include a wider spectrum of ultra right-wingers? What about, for example, a party founded by an avowed supporter of Hitler who recruited mercenaries for General Franco?—A party that has presided for the past decade over a cruel anti-working-class neoliberal agenda; a party, don't forget, that has been kept in power during much of that period by the equally profit-driven Fianna Fáil.

First, though, it is important to analyse the background and context for these dangerous protests. To do so we need to look at this situation in a global setting before dealing with its specific Irish manifestation.

There have always existed reactionary, right-wing political currents for so long as

capitalism has controlled the principal means of production. At certain periods in history this has become more aggressive than at other times. We are now experiencing one such period. Trump's followers in the United States, Europe's Giorgia Meloni and her "Brothers of Italy" or Jair Bolsonaro's riotous supporters are but the most strident practitioners of the trend.

Moving in tandem with this tendency is a NATO-led warmongering alliance that is willing to risk nuclear holocaust in order to retain its economic dominance.

The underlying cause for this rising tide of ultra-aggressive reaction is the problems threatening capitalism's hegemony. The current neoliberal phase was launched during the Thatcher-Reagan era. In what had always been an unequal and brutal economic system the United States and the European Union abandoned even the limited checks and balances afforded by post-war Keynesianism and the welfare state. Neoliberalism became the order of the day.

For just over two decades the system appeared unchallengeable. Then came the economic crash of 2008. Capitalism globally experienced a crisis, and responded by cossetting the wealthy while hurting working people. Central bankers provided cheap money to financial institutions, generating a boom for stockbrokers and speculators.

Yet all the while social welfare and wages were pared to the bone as working class communities were hammered by



discrimination. We've had to work very hard to get that into our socialist politics. Socialist politics is about workers primarily, but there's some work coming out that's starting to emphasise this aspect. There's an economy around people with disabilities that they contribute to, and it could be an addition to the public economy.

"In 2008, when they switched to home help and moved to the private model, now workers are on zero-hour contracts, with no benefits, on low wages. We should be supporting this industry through the state and not privatising."

A: It sounds like you see your struggle within a general inaccessibility of life, in terms of urban design constricted by free-market paradigms.

"I see a great movement among people—typical to a union, when workers come together to organise. There's the same opportunity for us to come together for a greater vision of society. When I talk about inclusion it's very broad—not necessarily just about getting a train. When myself and Seán [other co-founder] first got together we

had this discussion. We knew to get across our message we had to think of an issue that affects everyone. The thing for us was the lifts in DART stations in Dublin. Thirty-two stations; they should all be fully accessible, and at any given time half could be out of service. Obviously, things can break down, but they need to be fixed, and fixed quickly. And it isn't just people with disabilities: commuters with bikes, families with prams—you can't drag a pram up five flights of stairs. So we realised that this would be a uniting issue."

A: That's how it got started, with the lifts?

"Seán himself got stranded at Clontarf DART station for half an hour in 2016 because there were no lifts working and no information around them. He was coming for an IWA [Irish Wheelchair Association] driving lesson, and the instructor couldn't even help get him down from the platform. Obviously he felt vulnerable and alone. Eventually he got a DART to Killester and took a southbound DART until he eventually got to a station with a working lift. After that he said he'd

"If you build society from the ground up, inclusive for everyone, then it's cream all the way to the top. But the capitalist mentality is 'That costs too much money.'"

never take the DART again, because he couldn't trust it."

A: So how does Ireland compare, say in EU terms?

"We're only ahead of Romania and one other eastern bloc country. We're the third-worst country to live in with a disability in the EU. It's interesting to watch these politicians squirm when a young person explains to them how they're making their lives worse."

"Kayleigh, who has got involved with us recently, lives in assisted living. At the end of the month all she can afford is milk and bread. She fell recently, and the Fire Brigade had to break into her house to help her. And older people would tell her that it was never this bad before the state privatised care work. People would be friends with their carers, who worked well-paid state jobs with full benefits. Now it's totally different."

"And it's very hard to hear her say that she just wants once a month to go for a meal and a movie. And she doesn't have it; it looks like a luxury for her! What a failure that is for us, for our society. And we get told that we're all communists when we ask for this!" ★

austerity. Free-market-led governments simply made Labour pay for mistakes made by Capital.

Nor has the Irish working class been spared this assault on living conditions.

There is a free-market-created housing emergency, the tip of which is marked by tens of thousands of homeless people. This, the most visible aspect of the crisis, tends to obscure the still greater numbers living precariously in rented accommodation. The need for decisive action to instigate a large-scale programme of public housing is painfully obvious.

Yet despite experience of the value of this measure in the past, the coalition parties refuse to act. Adding insult to injury, the Fine Gael leader is now lamenting the withdrawal of some private landlords from the rental market, claiming this reduces the number of properties available for those in need.

Adding to the misery caused by a housing crisis we have also experienced the virtual collapse of the public health service in the Republic. Day after day the media, both mainstream and social, report on the dire situation in our overrun, under-staffed and under-resourced public hospitals and care sector. No such problems are faced by those able to afford private health facilities. Rubbing salt into this wound are the frequent television advertisements reminding the public that the costly private sector has sufficient capacity to treat paying patients immediately on admission.

Under such conditions of hardship

and despair it is little surprise that some misguided individuals would unthinkingly vent their anger in the wrong direction. Let us be absolutely clear about something, though. The issues fuelling these dangerously reactionary protests, and thereby opening the door for far-right exploitation, have been created by those who have governed over recent decades.

The problems giving rise to the protests did not suddenly emerge over the past few months and certainly not with the arrival of those fleeing war in Eastern Europe or the Middle East. In common with other free-market economies, the Republic is experiencing the unavoidable consequences of decades of unbridled neoliberalism.

Consequently, it is not only wrong to blame asylum-seekers for the dire conditions in which we find ourselves: it is also a profoundly mistaken direction to take in order to protest against uine injustices.

As a recent statement from the Peadar O'Donnell Socialist Republican Forum pointed out, asylum-seekers and refugees are not responsible for the collapsing public health services, money-grabbing landlordism, non-availability of public housing, poor wages, or absence of job security.

The blame lies with the Irish elite: the landlords, both corporate and local, the employers who pay slave wages, and those who govern over this state of affairs. People are right to be angry but must make sure to hit the right target, i.e. the 1 per cent who run and control our

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lives. The solution is to change the system that's at fault, not to blame those who are not responsible.

While the right-wing ruling class must carry full responsibility for creating the hardship now affecting working-class communities, it is nevertheless necessary to assess the role of the fascist far right. It is important not to dismiss them as mere bit-players; because, while the powerful may publicly condemn their violence, they will often privately condone and quietly support it. They do so for the crude reason that they see the fascists playing a useful role in fracturing working-class unity.

Such unity is a prerequisite in order to answer the dire situation in which working people now find ourselves. Only a socialist economy, built within a Workers' Republic, will provide the means to do so. To bring this about requires a politically literate and united working class.

It is this unity that the fascists endeavour to shatter, through employing crude reactionary populist strategies. Our task in the short term must be to combat this tactic by working energetically with the anti-war movement on one hand and simultaneously intensify efforts to strengthen unity among the working class. By doing so we can defeat the fascists and their rapacious patrons.

As a parting word, a couple of appropriate lines from the late Woody Guthrie: (left)

Yes sir, all of you fascists bound to lose:

You're bound to lose! You fascists:
Bound to lose! ★



**CAPITALISM'S
GREED FOR
PROFIT DRIVES
INFLATION**

**WE CAN FREEZE
PRICES WITH**

FRUCES WITH SOCIALISM

IRISH COMMUNISTS SERIOUS ABOUT **SOCIALISM**



Communist Party of Ireland
Páirtí Cumannach na hÉireann

HISTORY

REPUBLICANS, MARXIST-LENINISTS, AND CLASS FIGHTERS



GRAHAM HARRINGTO
THE CPI IN THE THIRTIES

THE COMMUNIST PARTY of Ireland managed to make several successful, and at times dramatic, interventions in the class-national struggle through the Revolutionary Workers' Groups, which became the refounded CPI in 1933. In 1932 it managed an inspiring victory when it led unemployed workers in Belfast in the outdoor relief strike, uniting Catholic and Protestant people against the Orange state.

Even the RUC noted that the RWG "seemed to be the organisers of the whole show."

Tommy Geehan, a former IRA member from the Falls Road, was the figurehead of the outdoor relief strike, along with several other communists, such as Betty Sinclair and Seán Murray. At one meeting he said to the workers: "If you want anything done in the line of getting better conditions, then you are going to be damned foolish to wait for the next general election to do it."

At the early stages of the strike the workers went around different communities and work-places and held street meetings. Parents got their children to go on strike from school. At one rally in Belfast more than 60,000 attended. The state deployed armoured cars to patrol both Catholic and Protestant areas. Policemen were

RED BOOKS DAY



SAJEEV KUMAR
LITERATURE

A GROUP OF working men assembled in a bar in London but for a different reason: they were in a hurry to put together a programme for their organisation, the Communist League, which consisted mostly of German migrant workers. They delegated Marx and Engels to carry out the task.

The Communist League had previously been called the League of the Just, and they changed their slogan from "All men are brothers" to "Working men of all countries, unite!" (the last sentence of the *Communist Manifesto*).

Like an invisible atom that has a potential to release enormous amounts of energy, this small book created big movements and shook the capitalist world. Marx and Engels in their youth were the ones behind this explosive and at the same time magnificent piece of literature.

The first edition had 23 pages, with a dark-green cover, and was originally named *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. Engels asked Marx to rethink the "Confession of Faith" format to avoid the appearance of a catechism, and



imported from England. Two workers were killed by the RUC, with 100,000 mourners at the funeral of one, where two communists were pallbearers.

The RWG received an influx of members, workers from the Shankill Road as well as IRA volunteers. After the outdoor relief strike ended, with most, but not all, the demands being won, the IRA was approached by Protestant workers involved in the Great Northern Railway strike who requested the IRA to blow up parts of the railway. It would be impossible to imagine such a scenario before the outdoor relief strike, or ever again after the recent conflict.

The RWG, later CPI, had achieved a massive success in its political leadership of the outdoor relief struggle. The fact that there were not many communists at the time meant that there were limitations on what the struggle could achieve; and anti-communism was rampant, north and south. An RWG member, Jimmy Gralton, became the only citizen deported from the Irish state, after he opened the Pearse-Connolly Hall in Co. Leitrim. (The event was the subject of the film *Jimmy's Hall* in 2014.) In 1932 a mob burned down the head office of the RWG.

Internal reports of the CPI in the early 1930s reported that the majority of members were involved with the IRA. The culmination of this engagement led to the Republican Congress, put together by socialist republicans Peadar O'Donnell,



Frank Ryan, and George Gilmore. Congress concentrated on bringing together republicans, trade unionists, housing activists, and Protestant workers from the Shankill.

Congress never survived the damaging split in 1936, when the CPI, along with O'Donnell and Gilmore, took an opposing side to Mick Price and Nora Connolly over whether Congress should call for a Republic or a Workers' Republic, and, more importantly, whether Congress should continue as it was or work to launch as a political party.

In defence of the CPI's position in the debate, it should be pointed out that there were not just one but two attempts at building just that revolutionary party that Price and Connolly supported. In 1932 the IRA established Saor Éire, at the nudging of O'Donnell, as a left-

Left: Belfast
1932

'... the IRA was approached by Protestant workers involved in the Great Northern Railway strike who requested the IRA to blow up parts of the railway.'

republican political project, only for it to face intense Church opposition and be shut down, with much of its enthusiasts joining up with the Republican Congress.

The second revolutionary party was the CPI itself; and it is difficult to see how Price and Connolly could have done better than the already existing party.

Price and Connolly lost the debate by a narrow margin and never continued with Congress, with the project dying altogether. Both later joined the Labour Party. The former London Branch of Congress later became the nucleus of the Connolly Association, led by C. Desmond Greaves, and its approach to the Six Counties would lay the ground for the civil rights movement in the 1960s, with the former outdoor relief leader and CPI member Betty Sinclair a central figure. Many former Congress participants would later go to fight in Spain.

The CPI faced many challenges in this decade of struggles, from intense anti-communism to objective factors such as emigration taking many of the young militants from Ireland, many to die on the battlefields of Spain. The unity of workers in Belfast and the demise of the Republican Congress would lead to a growth in economism in the party, which would lead to a demise of the national emphasis in the party's programme during the 1940s. Tommy Geehan left the party in 1938 over what he saw as the ignoring of British imperialism in the Northern work of the party. ★

suggested that the book be called *Communist Manifesto*. The German edition (1872) and subsequent editions of the book, after some changes in the text owing to the Paris Commune (1871), was named *Communist Manifesto*.

Marx and Engels refrained from making further changes to the *Communist Manifesto*, as it had become a historic document and so they felt that they had no right to change it.

The first English translation was made in 1850 by Helen McFarlane and later by Samuel Moore in 1888. Today the *Communist Manifesto* has been translated into 200 languages.

The day the *Communist Manifesto* was published, 21 February (1848), was almost forgotten in history until an attempt was made to revive the spirit of the *Communist Manifesto* by commemorating it as Red Books Day. Over the last few years it has snowballed into a movement throughout the globe, encouraging people to read the works of Marx, Engels and other revolutionary men and women who lived and died for the overthrow of the capitalist system.

The idea of Red Books Day is to read books on Marxism-Leninism in a public

space, to spread the revolutionary spirit and increase the momentum towards socialism. Covid lockdown did not stop the movement, and it was done on line using modern technology.

To borrow the words of the American poet Muriel Rukeyser, "exiles from the future time," communists are in fact exiles from the future who are in the present to sow the dreams of a world to be born, a world without exploitation.

The Marxist scholar Prof. Aijaz Ahmad points out that the reason the *Communist Manifesto* is still relevant is that it is not just a description of capitalism of its time but a reflection of the logic of capitalism: how impossible it is for capitalism to survive without expanding, and therefore needs to colonise the world with aggressive imperialism.

Soon after the publication of the *Communist Manifesto* in 1848 there was a national uprising throughout Europe, which started from Italy and spread to France and Germany. It was named the "Springtime of the Peoples." The national question came to the forefront at the same time that working-class interests were trampled. Marx and Engels felt that the national question was real and that

The idea of Red Books Day is to read books on Marxism-Leninism in a public space, to spread the revolutionary spirit and increase the momentum towards socialism.

communists should intervene; if they don't they will be sidelined. The challenge was about the ways to transform the chauvinistic nationalism of the bourgeoisie into a proletarian revolution while engaging in the bourgeois uprising.

Today we can see a semblance of that scenario in the national aspiration of a unified Ireland. The national question of unified Ireland is a reality: we have to engage with it; but the nature of the unified Ireland we achieve depends on how we transform the struggle for national unification into a struggle for an Ireland free of class exploitation and a struggle against imperialism.

Therein lies the importance of reviving the spirit of the *Communist Manifesto* and showing solidarity with this international movement on 21 February (which is also the UN's International Mother Language Day) to celebrate the publication of the most powerful political document in human history; to spread the spirit of revolution and amplify the thunderous words at the end of the book: **"The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Working men of all countries, unite!"** ★



THE BANSHEES OF INISHERIN



JENNY FARRELL

IRELAND

INTERNATIONAL FILM awards are by no means a good film guide. And this applies to *The Banshees of Inisherin* as much as to the rest of them.

The story is set in 1923 on an island off the west coast of Ireland (“Inisherin”—*Inis Éireann*), filmed in fact on Achill island and Inis Mór in Galway Bay. This setting during the Civil War is made clear early on: throughout the film occasional bombs go off on the mainland, and the local policeman is chuffed to have been asked to participate in some executions—he knows not for which side, nor does he care.

In fact no-one on the island seems to be in the slightest bit interested in the war; amazingly, it is not a topic of conversation, nobody is touched by it, no-one is involved; there are no discussions about the Treaty terms, which had such a momentous impact on post-independence Irish history. And all this on “Ireland Island.”

One can only wonder why. Did Martin McDonagh not wish to offend any side? Might any partisanship have affected awards, and gross profits? Might the film even have caused controversy in Ireland itself? We will never know, because it manages to steer clear of any possible offence caused by reflecting actual sensibilities during this time.

Anybody who wishes to know what these sensibilities were needs to read Liam O’Flaherty, not watch Martin McDonagh. O’Flaherty, native of Inis Mór, not only wrote about the Civil War on the mainland (“The Sniper” and *The Martyr*) but also refers to the way



Käthe Kollwitz (1867-1945): ‘Woman with a dead child’, 1903, line etching, drypoint, emery and vernis mou with printing of handmade paper and Ziegler’schem transfer paper, with gold-colored, injected clay stone. The depicted child is the youngest son Peter Kollwitz (1896-1914) at the age of seven years.

POEM AND TANKA

GABRIEL ROSENSTOCK

“Gan Teideal” (Untitled) is an Irish-language transcreation of a poem by Marius Mason, who describes himself as a transgender anarchist, environmentalist, and animal-rights prisoner. His activities were reported to the authorities by his husband, and he was sentenced to twenty-two years’ imprisonment.

Marius—a father of two—who has worked as a musician, gardener, writer, and volunteer for a free herbal-healthcare collective, did not approve of government-backed research on genetically modified moth-resistant potatoes and took the law into his own hands.

You may write to Marius (tinyurl.com/4ktywcmd). There are many constrictions, however. For instance, the envelope must be white, your message must be in English, no newspaper cuttings enclosed, and so on and so forth.

it affected people in terms of their class on the Aran Islands. And O’Flaherty took part in the battle of Dublin himself (on the Republican side).

Amusingly, the cottage in which Pádraic Súilleabháin (Colin Farrell) lives with his sister Siobhán (the absence of Ó and Ní in their surname troubles an Irish-speaker) is set in Gort na gCapall, O’Flaherty’s home place.

But McDonagh clearly does not wish to go there. His reluctance to engage with this very obvious Irish issue is reflected too in the musical score. McDonagh’s instruction to Carter Burwell for the score was not to use Irish music, as McDonagh “hated that ‘deedle-dee’ music.” So instead, bewilderingly, and jarringly out of place, the atmosphere is underscored musically by a mix of Brahms’s “Lieder,” a Bulgarian piece at the start of the film, and Indonesian gamelan music.

As Colm Doherty (Brendan Gleeson), one of the two main characters, is a fiddler, and this is central to the plot, there is also some Irish music. This features as part of the story—not the musical score which supports the atmosphere and emotional reinforcement of the film. Apparently the thinking was that these musical pieces from around the world and different cultures would increase the appeal to an international audience.

The opposite is in fact the case. The more specific a story is, the greater its universal appeal. A story that tries to please everybody simply rings hollow; and although Brahms’s German Lieder are hauntingly beautiful, they don’t fit the atmosphere on Inisherin. An *a capella* sean-nós solo voice would simply have been more fitting.

In addition, and in parallel to this, there is the unhappy absence of any kind of Irish-language speech, song, signage—indeed anything in the native language. Again, this is profoundly out of joint with the time, and the place, shown on screen.

What is the film about? A falling out between two islandmen, because of one of them panicking about ageing and therefore ostracising the other. The older man has decided overnight he wants to immortalise something of himself—in traditional music.

Few people in the film do any actual work. The height of it is walking some cattle down the bohereen, or caressing the pet donkey or dog. There is no field work or other rural labour to be seen.

For this proposition to work McDonagh makes the younger man out to be somewhat infantile. Burwell sees him as a Disney character (!) and gives him a matching musical theme. Doherty is simply suddenly bored with Pádraic Súilleabháin. (Is there any significance in the fact that the “simpleton” has an Irish name, while Doherty uses the English spelling?) Even Pádraic’s sister, Siobhán Súilleabháin—the strongest character outside of the two protagonists—finds island life tedious.

Few people in the film do any actual work. The height of it is walking some cattle down the bohereen, or caressing the pet donkey or dog. There is no field work or other rural labour to be seen. People just somehow get along without it—going to the pub in the middle of the day—and yet they have the money to do so and clearly have enough to eat, dress, and furnish their houses.

O’Flaherty’s short stories about island life, in contrast, are defined by people working. He does this easily and naturally, as he grew up in this community—which McDonagh did not. Where “despair” appears as a theme in O’Flaherty, as it does in the expressionist novel *The Black Soul*, or his play *Darkness*, this is rooted in recent events, namely in the experience of the First World War—another recent (at that time) event with which the islanders on McDonagh’s island have no connection.

And so the film ends up feeding old stereotypes about Ireland. This ignorance of people’s daily working lives affects the film badly and is the reason why McDonagh can suggest that their lives (not to mention their music) is dull.

Set at a momentous time in Irish history, the film could have had a great deal to say to people in similar situations, then and now; McDonagh instead chooses to ignore this history and working lives and instead, possibly for box-office returns, feeds modern sensibilities about ageing—and does not even do this credibly. ★

Gan Teideal

téigh ag longadán ar meisce i dtreo na fírinne
is é sin na ciorcail i mbís dheirbhíseach
ag casadh, ag druidim i dtreo an láir
ag síneadh amach chun breith ar an ollphictiúr
faoi bhun na spéire réaltógaí, dubhaithe ach fós
faoi bhrat réaltaí
cén lámh a chorraigh an t-anord seo ina áilleacht?
an uile phonc suntasach, uathúil, neamhspleách
ach le chéile cuirid a dtine féin leis an iomlán
agus é go léir chomh mór sin thar ár n-eolas
iontas chomh fairsing leis an spéir féin
is é fréamhaithe sa Domhan, méara mo chos do mo dhaingniú,
is mé ag péacadh chun an solas seo a bhrath
le lámha a shantaíonn cruth eile
is crann mé, an droichead eadrainn,
agus buaileann an oscailt súl seo in aghaidh na brastinte
réalta eireabaill ag scipeáil ar chiumhais an atmaisféir
agus is ann Di i mbloghanna
ionamsa agus lasmuigh díom
labhraíonn Sí i bhfriotail réaltógach
is tú an uile ní is neamhní thú
i do mhianta agus id’ choimhthíos
bí Liomsa
agus beimidne
Niamhrach

stagger drunkenly towards truth
meaning circles in a dervish spiral
spinning, coming closer to the centre
reaching out to grasp the bigger picture
beneath this night sky, blackened and still
blanketed with stars
what hand moved this chaos into beauty?
each point singular, unique and self-sufficient
but collectively, contributing its own fire unto the
whole
and all of it so huge past understanding
a wonderment of firmament proportions
rooted in the Earth, my toes dig in to hold me
stretching up to touch this light
with hands aching to be more
I am a tree, the bridge between,
And revelation slams into perception
like a comet skipping on the edge of atmosphere
And She is there in pieces
within me and without me
She speaks to me in stars
you are the everything and nothing
of your own desire and detachment
be with Me
and We
are Beautiful.





DUBLIN COMMUNITIES AGAINST RACISM

SV News Desk RACISM

ON JANUARY 28TH 2023, concerned about a rise in anti-refugee protests across the country, long-standing community and political activists in Dublin gathered at Leinster House under the banner of Dublin Communities Against Racism to condemn the policies of the present and previous governments that have brought about conflict and division in our communities and exposed them to the poisonous influence of far-right agitators, who have nothing to offer the working class but misery.

In particular we condemn—

- the abject failure of the present and previous governments to provide adequate housing for the people of Ireland due to an ideological affinity with private property that only serves developers and landlords, including foreign vulture funds. The fact alone of 166,000 vacant homes fully demonstrates this
- the total failure of this and previous governments to provide a fit-for-purpose health system. At the same time we acknowledge the dedicated efforts of health care workers, including many immigrants, who work under extremely difficult conditions
- the ongoing neglect of the poorest, marginalised communities; the lack of services, particularly youth and health care services, including mental health and drug rehabilitation services, the failure to address educational disadvantage, and the failure to address ever-worsening income equality.

It is these failures which provided fertile ground for the unseemly “protests” in communities over recent weeks, for which we hold the government fully responsible.

We unequivocally state that refugees are welcome in Ireland; but that does not mean support for Irish government policy on the issue. It is impossible, for example, to overlook the difference in treatment by the government of refugees from Ukraine compared to those seeking International Protection, which has served to foster a mindset of good refugees and bad refugees and underpin racist thinking. The recent decision to house Ukrainian refugees and not those from other parts of the world amplified this discrimination, bringing great shame to the country, and we condemn it.

We further condemn the failure to abolish the inhumane direct-provision system, designed to allow those in the loop to make a fortune out of refugees. And one has to question the degree of responsibility of the government in declaring that Ireland could take any number of Ukrainian refugees in however short a timeframe (while providing benefits unmatched in most EU countries) without any thought or planning given to accommodation, education, healthcare, etc. This was, intended or not, a gift to the far right and has led to a backlash against all refugees, particularly those seeking International Protection, who communities have generally accepted for decades.

Whatever about the rash promises the government made to the EU, and their struggle to fulfil them, as community activists we reiterate and reconfirm the long-standing principle of community development that communities must be consulted about plans for their areas. We note that proper consultation would have served to defuse a great deal of the opposition that has arisen in communities to the housing of refugees. We reject the characterisation by the government of community consultation as “a right of veto” and emphatically

We call on people to reject the propaganda of the far right that there is no housing crisis in Ireland, no health crisis and no cost-of-living crisis but simply an immigration crisis. This lie only serves to whitewash the failures of the establishment, and is designed to do so.

affirm that communities must be properly resourced to accommodate and provide services where significant additional numbers are to be housed.

We call on people to reject the propaganda of the far right that there is no housing crisis in Ireland, no health crisis and no cost-of-living crisis but simply an immigration crisis. This lie only serves to whitewash the failures of the establishment, and is designed to do so. Similarly, we have noted the targeting of Sinn Féin and left -wing parties while little is said about Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, who have governed the state since it was established.

Again, in the traditional role of fascists, this is to help maintain the status quo; and there can be no doubt the far right is being funded to do this. We would particularly caution all who consider themselves patriots to steer well clear of the far-right parties, as you could well end up discovering that you are working for foreign state or non-state actors. We would remind everyone that the far right is not only anti-immigrant but anti-women and anti-LGBT and viciously opposed to working-class organisations, like trade unions, while supportive of a socio-economic system under which the rich get richer while the needs of the people remain unmet.

In recent weeks, in response to the targeting of refugees, the call “take it to the government” has arisen in communities. We are acting on this and urge all decent people who are struggling to pay bills, angry about the lack of housing, angry about the health system, and so forth, to join us in future actions in holding those directly responsible for the problems to account. We should not be diverted from fighting for a better Ireland for all.

<https://twitter.com/DubsCommunities>

<https://www.facebook.com/DublinCommunities>

<https://www.instagram.com/dublincommunities>



OBITUARY

ROBERT NAVAN

Damien Farrell

South Inner City community activist

Liam O'Brien

Ballymun community activist

Dean Scurry

Ballymun community activist

Cat Inglis

Coolock community activist

Bernie Hughes

Finglas community activist

Diarmuid Mac Dubhghlais

Finglas community activist

Helena McCann

Athy community activist

Tom Crilly

Ringsend community activist

Joe Mooney

East Wall community activist

Eoin O'Flaherty (

Clonmel community activist

Marie Casey

Dungarvan community activist

Ado Perry

Cabra community activist

Reuben Hambakachere

Navan community activist

Yvonne Clarke

Coolock community activist

Ray Sparky Corcoran

Ballymun community activist

Martin Hughes

Balbriggan community activist

Paula Kearney

North Inner City activist

Gina Nicoletti

Charlemont Area community activist

Derek Byrne

Donaghmede community activist

Billy Duggan

Ballymun community activist

Eileen Flynn

Senator

Dean Mulligan

Fingal councillor

Alan Lawes

Meath councillor

Pat Dunne

Crumlin councillor

Sophie Nicoulaud

Ballyfermot councillor

Cieran Perry

Dublin Central councillor

Micheál Choilm Mac Giolla

Easbuig Gaeltacht Dhún na nGall councillor

Dan Kerr

Mid-Ulster District Council councillor

Eamonn Keenan

Fermahagh-Omagh Council councillor

Noeleen Reilly

Ballymun councillor

Barry Monteith

Mid-Ulster District Council councillor

Joan Collins TD

Tommy McKearney

community activist ★



▲ Robert Navan with Daniel O

Robert's life was a rich one. He brought Latin American and world music to an Irish audience, in many cases to an audience completely unaware of such cultural richness.

IN THE first week of January 2023, Mount Jerome crematorium was packed as activists from around Ireland gathered to pay their respects on the passing of Robert Navan.

Our country and progressive causes have lost a principled and committed anti-imperialist activist in Robert.

Robert began his political engagement with anti-imperialist and progressive politics as chairperson of the Ireland-Nicaragua Solidarity Group, an extremely effective group in mobilising solidarity with the Sandinista Revolution. The INSG raised money to aid the Sandinistas as well as direct solidarity in sending volunteers to pick coffee in Nicaragua as part of the international coffee brigades.

The INSG also secured a visit to Ireland by Daniel Ortega, leader of the Sandinista Revolutionary Government. Robert was the key in securing the cream of Irish progressive culture to play at a packed-out concert to celebrate the visit of Ortega.

Even after the defeat of the Sandinista revolutionary process, resulting from the counter-revolutionary activities of the "Contras" in Nicaragua, armed and trained by US imperialism, Robert kept up his long commitment of solidarity with the people and revolutionary forces of Latin America—from a lifelong solidarity with revolutionary Cuba to Venezuela. He lived long enough to see once again the Sandinistas winning elections in Nicaragua.

Robert was a founder-member of the Latin American Solidarity Centre, which carried on the work of solidarity.

Robert's life was a rich one. A man of culture, including films, he was a founder-member, with members of the CPI, of the Progressive Film Club, which put on progressive films from around the world when venues for showing such films were difficult to find. He was the central figure in the founding of Club Sandino, which raised money for both Nicaragua and other progressive struggles. He brought Latin American and world music to an Irish audience, in many cases to an audience completely unaware of such cultural richness. The main radio and television stations, then as now, gave very little access for such musical forms, and indeed to even Irish culture, more obsessed with banal Anglo-American cultural influences.

During the funeral ceremony the rich and deep respect in which Robert was held by his family and his many comrades was clear to be seen. Quotations from Fidel Castro and Che Guevara rang loud in the crematorium. Robert had a great commitment to collective solidarity and collective liberation. His approach to solidarity was imbued with a spirit of rebellion. He had a very enquiring and sharp mind, and for him life was always fresh and full of fun. He was always a great person to meet and go for a coffee or a beer with.

In a statement, the Communist Party of Ireland said: "We would like to express our deepest sympathy to all the family and friends of Robert Navan, in particular to his wife, Michelle, his lifelong companion and comrade; we know you will miss him deeply. We will all miss his charm, his sense of humour, his warm, firm handshake. He was one of the most decent and beautiful human beings that you could meet on life's journey. The peoples of Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua will feel the loss of his unbreakable solidarity. We mourn your passing. Salud, dear comrade!"

Robert will be greatly missed by his lifelong best friend, Comrade Michelle. We once again express our deepest sympathy and solidarity with Michelle and with all Robert's family. His loss to progressive struggles here in Ireland is unmeasurable. We dip our red banners



ALEX SAAB AND THE DEATH OF DIPLOMACY

Dear friends,

Two years ago, we started the campaign to release Alex Saab, a Venezuelan diplomat incarcerated in a United States federal prison in Miami. Venezuela's Special Envoy to Iran was arrested on June 12, 2020, when his plane was forced to stop in Cape Verde to refuel, local authorities arrested him, opened his diplomatic pouch, and eventually kidnapped him, despite the fact that he should have been granted immunity under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.

At this moment, about 40 countries are subjected to North American unilateral coercive measures (sanctions). The Venezuelan diplomat was intercepted while fulfilling his mission to obtain urgently needed goods by circumventing these illegal sanctions. His success in this regard made him a target of Washington. The jailing and prosecution of Alex Saab represent a violation of international law and undermine respect for the security and immunity of special envoys and other diplomats worldwide.

Your support has been key to shed light on the illegality of sanctions and their use as a destabilisation tool. Your solidarity in 2023 can make a difference in the struggle to defend the sovereignty and self-determination of peoples subject to U.S. unilateral sanctions.

Will you join the fight for Alex Saab's freedom?

We have been denouncing the kidnapping of the Venezuelan diplomat since his arrest, and it has grown into an international movement calling for his unconditional release. During the past two years, we have organized protests in multiple cities in the United States, marches, talks, webinars, and film screenings of the Alex Saab case.

Through webinars, in which figures such as Roger Waters have joined us, we have managed to overcome the siege of disinformation created by the US.

In 2023, we will continue to center Alex Saab's freedom in our work and will not rest until he is home.

In solidarity,
William Camacaro
International Committee to Free Alex Saab

RECRUITMENT FOR FOREIGN ARMIES

Dear Editor,

I refer to plans to build British Army Memorials in 2023, for example in our area, Killester, on Dublin's north side. Many well-meaning people in this country see no harm in the numerous British War Memorials, thinking that they are just remembering the past glories of the British Empire

Historically, Ireland was a valuable source of food and recruits for the British Army and Navy. Even after 100 years of the state, this part of Ireland still supplies a lot of recruits for the British Army because of that long tradition, which is kept alive by the practice of supporting the War Memorials up and down the country.

It is not OK that Irish youth are made available year after year for recruitment into a foreign army, allowing it to continue to hold on to remnants of its empire with modern "interventions" to support their assets in the modern world. Irish government policy should actively discourage recruitment for foreign armies here.

We should protect our hard-won neutrality by opposing any further British War Memorials in Ireland.

Pat O'Connor
Killester
Dublin

SV NEWS DESK
TRADE UNIONISM

ON SATURDAY 21 January comrades from around Ireland gathered in Dublin to analysis their involvement in trade unions. The day was an enjoyable one, with a well-arranged programme of events and stimulating talks.

Some people ask, "What have the unions done for me?" It is important to list briefly what unions have done for us, things that are now just taken for granted, such as weekends off, paid holidays, paid sickness leave, child labour laws, social security, a minimum wage, an eight-hour working day, overtime pay, health and safety, health care, dental care—the list is endless, and our forebears have gone to prison to fight for these rights.

History has shown that the political class have never given something for nothing; they serve their own class and never do anything willingly. Throughout the length and breadth of Ireland, unions such as Connect, Unite, Fórsa (Civil Service Division), comprising some 500,000 workers, as well and the Students' Union of Ireland, have been calling for the Industrial Relations Act (1990) to be taken off the statute book.

At the ICTU biennial conference in 2021 delegates voted for and agreed to the following motion: "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."

We all know from our experience that the union leadership needs to be pushed and shoved into action—that is human nature. We need all the forces within society to seek out and contact their local elected political representatives, be they councillors, TDs, or senators, and community leaders, asking them to push the agenda for workers' rights and, most importantly, to ensure that the 1990 act is abolished.

They need to do this today and tomorrow, and keep pushing. Small steps are what is needed. To broaden the scope of union membership, the movement needs to take on the major issues of today, the concerns of people in their membership.

One of the major issues is climate change. The planet is dying. The metabolic rift is not healing. Overproduction is a failure of capitalism at its most basic, and the costs are catastrophic for humanity. These concerns are being felt within every family, every household. We must act, or we will become a thing of the past! ★

**FIGHT FOR
SOCIALISM
JOIN THE
COMMUNIST
PARTY**



name

address

post code

email

phone

Send to CPI 43 East Essex Street Dublin D02 XH96