



UNITY

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International Women's Day Greetings



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Politics without Ideology.

By Mel Corry

IT has come as a shock to many that former SDLP leader and MP Mark Durkan declared himself as a Fine Gael candidate in the next European election for a Dublin constituency.

A move like this is nothing new, others before have successfully made this transition, John Cushman and Austin Currie immediately spring to mind. Both went South to fight elections and stood as Fine Gael candidates.

Durkan may do well as his long association with John Hume would sit well with many voters in the Republic.

It was however a very public demonstration of dissatisfaction with the SDLP and the direction it has taken under Colm Eastwood who has entered into a deal with Fianna Fail. It is also a sign of our times that politicians no longer require an ideology, principles are malleable and can be cast aside at anytime for personal political gain.

It's hard to discern sometimes when you hear a politician talking whether they are of the left or right as most political discourse takes place within the paradigm of Neo-Liberal Capitalism.

We have a new breed of professional politician who will say whatever is required to secure election and enhance their careers even when what they say on each occa-

sion is at odds with the other.

This is not exclusively a problem restricted to us here in the North of Ireland but a common feature of the other jurisdiction and indeed in Britain. Last week Tom Watson deputy leader of the Labour Party used his position to unashamedly attack his party leader and the manifesto that delivered such promise for many thousands of new members of the Labour party.

Many new members who joined the party here in the North even though the party refuses to fight elections for fear of damaging the prospects of what they used to call their sister party the SDLP must feel let down by the actions of Tom Watson, a man whose communist heritage would make Stalin himself proud. Watson's family involvement in the Communist Party are known to some but not to all.

Imagine if Jeremy Corbyn had such 'skeletons' in his closet, the British media would make some considerable mischief with that kind of baggage, but not a word on Watson.

It would make you wonder who is supporting these people who quite openly are working to ensure that thousands of activists across the labour movement will be denied the prospect of a Corbyn led government. The wave of optimism that followed

Corbyn's successful leadership election campaigns and his robust performance during the 2016 election is being deliberately undermined.

Watson timed his intervention to give support to the traitors who set up their 'centrist' independent group, another example of politics without ideology. He called for people to ignore the internal procedures of the Labour Party and set himself up as the champion of persecuted Jews in the Labour Party.

No-one with any sense of the history of the British Labour movement believes that Corbyn is anything other than a dedicated anti-racist as demonstrated by his career so far.

Corbyn has been labelled everything from a Czech spy to a Provo sleeper and still he prevails. The Tory party is riddled with opponents of equality in all its forms throughout its membership but there is no call for them to driven from the party.

Imperialism, the deep state and the ruling class can not countenance a government that promises such modest demands, perhaps then Labour should adopt an even more radical position like that suggested by James Connolly "Our demands most moderate are we only want the Earth"

Editorial

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A tale of two conferences

ON the 26th January up to 1,500 people attended a gathering organized by "civic nationalists" under the heading *Beyond Brexit, the Future of Ireland*.

The conference lasted a meagre three hours so one would wonder what in-depth discussion could take place in such a short space of time, especially given the title of the event.

One of the organisers wrote in the *Irish News* that it was the most important event of the century or words to that effect. However such a comment would lead the more cynical amongst us to suggest that he would say that wouldn't he ?

Move on a month and we have the holding of a seminar in the Union Theological College, Belfast, under the title *Housing and Homelessness*. This all-day event attracted roughly thirty people of which a third were contributors made up of two main speakers plus seven panelists. The main speakers covered both the situation in Northern Ireland and the Republic.

As our report on the conference states the provision of housing is now dominated by the private sector, and as one panelist stated there are 55,000 unregulated landlords who give no security of tenure.

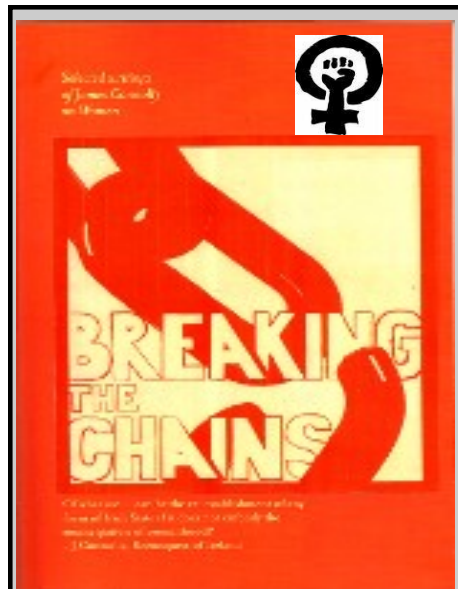
In the Republic we have the situation where people have to use a particular telephone number on a daily basis to find out if they have been granted accommodation in hotels, hostels and B and Bs.

Significantly the proposed lowering of corporation tax, on which Stormont spent £417,000 in its bid to lower it, was a feature of comments made by one of the contributors to the *Beyond Brexit* debate who claimed that harmonization of corporation tax rates would boost the north's economy.

This is a comment that would be music to the ears of big business but not to the homeless who would see £300 million lost to the public purse.

Equally significant was that there was no mention of homelessness in the glossy publication *Beyond Brexit* produced.

No mention of housing whatsoever. It was definitely a tale of two conferences but which one was the most important ? Quality not quantity!



**Breaking the Chains:
Selected Writings of James
Connolly on Women
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*Thanks to Gerard D and Peter
Latham for donations*

Homelessness: a horrendous crisis, north and south

By Ernest Walker



ON 26th February a seminar was held under the title of Housing and Homelessness in the Presbyterian Church Union College Belfast.

Around 30 people attended the gathering and that included 2 main speakers and 7 panel-list.

What we heard about was a horrendous crisis in housing and homelessness both in the north and south of Ireland.

What we also heard was that there is no “political will” to invest in public housing and that priority is given to the private sector whether it be developers or housing associations which are becoming more prominent in housing provision.

This even though, as one main speaker said, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive has been one of the success stories in Northern Ireland.

However due to years of underinvestment and lack of political vision the HE has warned that it may have to decommission 43,000 of its housing stock.

There are nearly 37,000 people on a priority waiting list and, according to the organisers of the seminar between 2011 and 2018 148 people regarded as homeless died while waiting for a house.

One of the speakers, Dr Stewart Smyth, who has written extensively about social housing in Britain and Ireland stated that the private sector has overtaken the public sector in the provision of housing, all part of the rolling back of the state advocated by Thatcher.

He gave figures confirming this trend. In 1975-76 the HE built 5,090 units, in 2017-18, 0.

In the same periods housing associations built 60 increasing to 1210

but significantly private developers went from 3,780 to 5,960.

Reference was made to the support by the main political parties for the lowering of Corporation Tax to a figure which would mean a loss of £300 million to public funds.

Interestingly this same figure is needed over the next five years for public housing provision.

According to Smyth this would create 4,200 jobs and pump £900 million into economic activity.

As regards the HE Smyth made reference to the DUP’s Gregory Campbell and their claim that it was biased towards the nationalist community in housing location.

When no evidence was forthcoming he changed tack claiming its employment practices were open to question.

From an ideological point of view the DUP would be no supporter of public housing.

Smyth questioned why Sinn Fein, claiming to be the heirs of 1968, had never demanded the position of housing minister.

As regards the SDLP he referred to Margaret Richie who advocated transferring housing stock to housing associations.

In the Republic there is an equal crisis with 10,000 families being homeless due, in many cases, to being evicted because of the inability to pay high rents.

As a number of contributors pointed out homelessness is not just about rough sleepers, it is much deeper than that.

Housing is a social provision not an outlet for profit hungry privateers.



Trade Union Left Forum public meeting, followed by a discussion and workshops on anti trade union legislation and how it affects the workers north and south.

Speakers Dave Gibney, Mandate

Mel Corry, Trade-mark Belfast .

Saturday 23 March, 12:00 noon

Connect (6 Gardiner Row), Dublin

See the PDF version of the International Working Women’s Day Supplement on the CPI web page:

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