

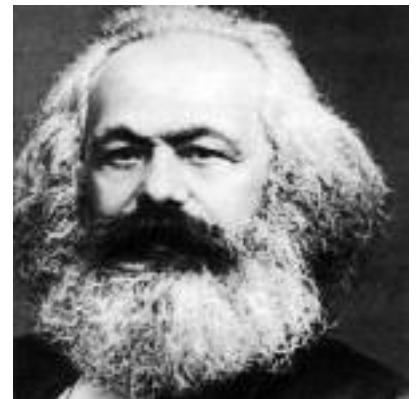
Socialist Voice

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“There must be something rotten in the very core of a social system which increases its wealth without diminishing its misery, and increases in crime even more rapidly than in numbers”
Karl Marx
New York Daily Tribune,
16 September 1859

PEACE PROCESS

THE “PEACE PROCESS” in the North is going through one of what appear to be regular spasms, this time resulting from the killing of two men who the press claim were former members of the IRA in Belfast.

The fall-out from the killing of Kevin McGuigan on the 12th of August rumbles on as a result of comments made by the chief constable of the PSNI, George Hamilton, which sowed confusion and provided the pretext for current developments. In a remark that is open to serious misinterpretation, Hamilton said that former members of the IRA may have been involved in the killing and then went

on to state that the IRA still existed but not for the purposes of military activity.

Hamilton is a political appointee and no doubt is well aware of how language can be misconstrued and reinterpreted in the divisive conditions of the North of Ireland.

Unionism has been quick to grasp opportunistically at this gift horse, with the Ulster Unionist Party pulling out of the Executive, using the alleged continued existence of the IRA as the pretext. In reality this has nothing to do with Hamilton’s contradictory statement but is an attempt to outflank the DUP and Peter Robinson in anticipation of forthcoming elections in the North.

continued overleaf

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‘The backdrop to the current row is the British government’s so-called “welfare reform” and the massive budgetary cuts in social welfare’

continued from page 1

The DUP meanwhile is attempting to use the killings to isolate and push Sinn Féin out of the Executive, or possibly to extract concessions and compromises from Sinn Féin regarding its stance on the proposed “welfare reform” being imposed from London.

The political establishment in the 26 Counties, along with its media, has raised the level of its political attacks on Sinn Féin, not because of a desire to make a positive contribution to political events in the North but rather to score points in the period before the general election in the 26 Counties. In particular, Fianna Fáil and the Labour Party, as the two parties competing directly with Sinn Féin for votes, have, predictably, been most “outraged” by Hamilton’s mischievous statement.

The backdrop to the current row is the British government’s so-called “welfare reform” and the massive budgetary cuts in social welfare. All the parties in the Executive signed up to the Stormont House Agreement in December 2014, in which “welfare reform” was a central plank. But as the campaign against cuts has gained popular support it has caused difficulties for all parties within the

Executive.

Sinn Féin has repeatedly claimed that it would oppose these “Tory cuts” by all means at its disposal. This could be interpreted as meaning that it would consider pulling out of the Executive in opposition to the cuts at the most politically appropriate time, thus strengthening its hand in the coming elections in the 26 Counties.

In many ways it is in the interests of all the parties in the Executive to see either that they all take responsibility for the cuts, so as not to allow advantage to their political opponents, or—the next best thing—to let the Executive collapse and see a temporary re-establishment of direct rule from London. This would let them all off the hook, with the British government taking the blame for budget cuts.

In many ways the present impasse is about how best to do this, and who will take the blame for the cuts. The scheduled 2016 Assembly elections would allow the Executive to be reinstated after the elections, with the period coming up to the elections dominated by “business as usual” as the various strands of unionism fight over who is best at facing down republicans and defending the existing constitutional position.

All parties in the Assembly and Executive are committed to the settlement agreed upon, that is, some form of sharing of administrative portfolios. There is no appetite for a return to armed conflict, and those who would want this have so far come to nothing. But something more than electoral shadow-boxing is called for.

The North will always be prone to sporadic political spasms, as the fundamental fault line remains unresolved. The two political and economic entities imposed on our people by Britain have failed, and will continue to fail. It is not in the economic or political interests of either the Irish establishment or unionism to see a democratic solution. Both are wedded to solutions that strengthen the grip of imperialism on our people.

North and South, the problems are the same, and the same solutions apply: the building of a powerful mass democratic movement to harness the people’s anger and ultimately challenge the domination of our people by the European Union, the United States, and Britain, drawing our understanding of the nature of the struggle from the theoretical legacy of James Connolly to see and chart the way ahead ★

Lansdowne Road

(the Haddington Road Extension)

Alan Hanlon

THIS HEADLINE sums up the proposed Lansdowne Road Agreement. Brendan Howlin and union leaders have been making a lot of noise about pay restoration and the end of the so-called financial emergency.

It has been hyped in the bourgeois yellow press that civil and public servants would receive a pay increase of €2,000 per annum under the deal.

Howlin and the Labour Party spin doctors have tried to give the impression that but for them the nasty Fine Gael party would have given nothing. This is nonsense. Labour is a willing partner in the austerity programme. Even Danny McCoy of IBEC described the pay proposals as modest; and his main worry was that it might drive up pay for the low-paid! At present 26 per cent of the population, or 345,000 people, earn less than the living wage of €11.45 per hour, and 30 per cent earn less than Eurostat's low-pay threshold of €12.20.

In effect, as the Nevin Economic Research Institute has warned, low pay is becoming embedded in the labour market. The Lansdowne Road Agreement is part of this process and aims to copperfasten the pay reductions and extended hours of the Haddington Road Agreement to 2018 and to buy industrial peace until well after the election.

The actual pay proposals come in two parts. The first is a reduction in the pension-related deduction (usually called the pension levy), which would come in two tranches in 2016. This levy applies only to civil servants and public servants. In total, the public sector suffered pay cuts of up to 17 per cent, staff reductions, and longer working hours. With a reduction in the pension levy of €1,000 (gross) there won't be any effect on the total pay bill, merely a paltry increase in take-home pay after tax and USC.

In 2017 gross pay would increase by €1,000 from the 1 September, i.e. €333 gross. After tax this could mean as little as €128 in net pay. So much for the propagandists' €2,000! It will be 2018 before salaries increase by €1,000 gross.

In 2008 the government of the day reneged on its obligations under the "Towards 2016" agreement, on the grounds that it could not pay. From then, and especially under the present

government, a series of agreements were negotiated with the purpose of counteracting any militancy from the public sector and restoring stability in the operation of the state.

After the media campaign against the public sector from 2008 to 2011 and over a decade of "partnership," public-sector union leaders had no appetite for industrial militancy. They also swallowed the austerity plan, hook, line, and sinker. The stability agreements enabled the public-sector union bosses to get back to the negotiating table and away from any militancy.

In this environment Howlin, for the government, was able to achieve pay cuts, longer working hours and pension cuts and to introduce what in effect was a redundancy scheme in the public sector. Those aged over fifty were "encouraged," or, some might say, intimidated, into taking early retirement. A recruitment embargo ensured that they were not replaced. Any vacancies that now arise attract thousands of overqualified candidates, some with masters' degrees, for entry-level grades.

While this is good news for the bourgeois vultures who would love to privatise the public sector, the problem for the public-sector unions is that existing members feel alienated, and potential new members fail to see the relevance of unions.

Pat Rabbitte in a petulant response (*Irish Times*, 16 July 2015) to an article by Diarmaid Ferriter (*Irish Times*, 11 July 2015) summed up the bourgeois ideology of the Labour Party: "So great was the crisis facing this country in the winter of 2010/2011 that only a broadly based government would have held society together. I am convinced that a single-party Fine Gael government—the only viable alternative—would not have survived the first year. That first dismal year saw the new Fine Gael-Labour Government struggle to restore Irish credibility in the EU institutions, keep the troika at bay and contend with Mr. Trichet's threat if we proceeded with burden-sharing, as unemployment exceeded 15 per cent. In helping to bring the country back from the brink, Labour had to take some decisions that in normal times it would never have done."

The Lansdowne Road Agreement, and the other stability agreements, are all part of this process of maintaining capitalism. The Labour Party needs no help from Fine Gael in being a bourgeois party ★

Don't privatise the banks?

Nicola Lawlor

VERY EARLY In the present crisis the CPI argued against nationalising the banks, on the grounds that this would be socialising tens of billions in debts, would bankrupt the state, and would create conditions for a general downward restructuring of the economy.

The party introduced and popularised the slogan "Repudiate the debt" as the clearest anti-imperialist class position, which attempted to challenge both the Irish establishment and the European Union and indeed the global financialised economy.

Seven years later the crisis has not gone away, either for working people or for capital. Instability remains, and working people continue to be made to pay for capital's problems. The banks, in particular AIB and Permanent TSB, are not out of the woods by any stretch of the imagination, but both are returning slowly to profitability and have provisions made—taxpayers' money—for their debts (impaired loans, distressed assets, non-working book, etc.).

So, given that the state imposed the burden of such gigantic losses on our shoulders, now that there are signs of profitability should we not be arguing for holding the banks as public entities, not just to pay back the money received but as valuable state assets to help pay for vital services, as lending agencies that can be directed towards strategic and sustainable investment and as part of a progressive future housing policy?

The banking industry in Ireland previously had a public side, which was used for strategic investment and a degree of planned economic development. The privatisation of this is a small part of the beginning of the collapse of the industry.

Obviously a government led by Fine Gael or Fianna Fáil will not do this; but is the correct progressive policy to demand a continued majority public holding of AIB and PTSB?

Fine Gael's and Fianna Fáil's policy has been for the state to provide for the losses and to privatise the profits through either share sales or outright privatisation at the appropriate time. The banking policy of both these parties has been to drive up house prices. NAMA is premised on this basis; and for the provisions to be adequate for the bad books of these banks, house prices must not drop and preferably should rise.

For house prices to rise, supply needs to be restricted, and demand needs to outweigh supply. The more demand, the quicker the increase in house prices. To a large degree this has succeeded and is part of the reason for the improved state of Irish banks, but at the deliberate cost of increased homelessness, exorbitant rents, and the total waste of vacant and unoccupied dwellings and buildings remaining unused around the country.

At the electoral level, Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil know who their voters are, and many of these are in negative equity, not homeless, and so they have done their political calculations on the impact of their banking policy, and it suits their electoral agenda.

Their policy of socialising losses and privatising profits is class-based and has been implemented with violence and aggression against working people and communities.

We opposed the socialisation of losses. Should we not also oppose now the privatisation of profits? ★



All is not quite what it seems

‘Inescapably committed, therefore, to compliance with EU dictates, and trapped by the vagaries of market-driven economics, the coalition is no more deserving of credit for any upturn than they are for the weather’

Tommy McKearney.....

ACCORDING TO an article by Hugh O’Connell on the web site journal.ie, our now ailing and tetchy Labour Party leader has commissioned a company called Marmalade Films to produce a series of short social-media-based advertisements commending the party’s performance in government.¹

These short film clips deal with the themes of jobs, families, and business, asserting that the Labour Party is good for all three, though offering little evidence to support the claim.

In its anxiety to avoid a humiliating and richly deserved whipping from the electorate, the Labour Party is now frantically promoting Fine Gael’s right-wing narrative of economic recovery and the gradual ending of austerity.

Undoubtedly the headline figure for unemployment has dropped, the Central Statistics Office is also recording an expansion in GDP, and, lo and behold, house prices in Dublin are rising again.

To gain added purchase on the story, some especially nervous Labour TDs have drilled further down into the statistics and found crumbs of comfort for themselves. Joanna Tuffy recently wrote that the number of foreign trips taken by Irish people increased this year by 14 per cent. Perhaps she was referring to a possible uptake among the 13,000 job-seekers who were advised by the Department of Social Protection earlier in the year to accept

employment options in Germany and Norway.²

Is there, though, any real justification for claims of economic recovery and the phasing out of austerity? Moreover, if such a supposedly benign scenario exists, is it affecting beneficially working people? As with much of what emanates from the coalition press office, all is not quite what it seems.

For a start, any examination of declining rates of unemployment must take into account the persistent lowering of wages, the erosion of workers’ rights, bogus employment schemes such as Job Bridge, cutting back on the social wage, and the never-to-be-ignored flood of emigration. Merely providing employment is not in itself of benefit if wages fail to make a proper contribution to a worker’s standard of living. Work should have to pay, and there is ample evidence that properly paying jobs are becoming scarcer in the Republic.

There is then the bland and unanalysed quoting of statistics relating to gross domestic product. An increasing rate of GDP often masks the fact that a significant portion of this so-called benefit disappears as transnational corporations based here take their profits abroad. As a result, the level of Irish GDP is persistently larger than gross national product (GNP)³—a situation greatly facilitated by the government’s biased taxation system. In other words, keep a pinch of salt handy when listening to coalition claims in relation to GDP.

As for those smug boasts about increasing house prices and a return to the good times for property markets—well, need we do more than point to the unedifying and cruel spectacle of the increasing number of homeless families in Dublin.

Notwithstanding the questionable nature of the coalition’s claims for an economic recovery and an end to austerity, there is an altogether more important fact laying bare the flaw surrounding this hype. Neither coalition party has now or has had in the past any meaningful control over where the economy is heading. The Fine Gael and Labour coalition, just as with the previous Fianna Fáil and Green Party coalition, is obeying an order from the Troika to cut spending on the social wage and thus to force working people to repay speculative loans made by international financiers to Ireland’s gambling bankers and speculators.

Moreover, the places where the Republic’s economy has apparently benefited are due in large measure to happenstance rather than any inspired management by the government. As *the Financial Times* commented in July this year, Ireland should be careful about celebrating its delivery from misery.⁴ The pink paper rightly pointed out that while such factors as cheaper oil, lower borrowing rates and euro-zone quantitative easing helped, these were matters beyond Ireland’s control, and could turn negative just as quickly. Equally ominous was the paper’s observation that much of the Irish “recovery” was dependent on exports to thriving British and American

markets, both of which are vulnerable to global market events.

So now, bring on stage China and its alarming economic difficulties. Whatever the eventual outcome of the crisis now affecting the Chinese stock markets, this is precisely the type of unpredictable financial earthquake that will derail economic recovery in the Republic as well as elsewhere. Capitalism is by its nature cyclical, and, with neo-liberalism reinforced by modern technology and globalisation, the frequency of cyclical crises appears to have accelerated, and there is nothing the coalition can do to alter this reality.

Inescapably committed, therefore, to compliance with EU dictates, and trapped by the vagaries of market-driven economics, the coalition is no more deserving of credit for any upturn than they are for the weather. What they are responsible for, though, is attempting to mislead the people with hype—a wrong compounded by concealment of the fact that working people in this society are paying for the life-style of a privileged minority, here and abroad.

In reality there is no more chance of answering this situation through a market economy dominated by forces controlling the EU than there is of finding answers in a marmalade pot, or a marmalade film company. There is no humane substitute for a rationally planned economy concentrating on its citizens' needs and not the greed of a few. Whatever argument may be made in favour of a transition towards socialism, there is no case to be made for misleading working people about the transient nature of a temporary economic upturn favouring a diminishing band of the well-to-do.

As the South Africans say, socialism is the future; build it now ★

1 Hugh O'Connell, "Here's the real story behind those Labour ads you might have seen lately"

(www.thejournal.ie/labour-facebook-ads-2285835-Aug2015).

2 Sarah Bardon, "Welfare officials tell 13,000 people to find a job OVERSEAS," *Irish Mirror*, 5 January 2015.

3 Valentina Romel, "Ireland is the wealthiest economy in Europe . . . or not," *Financial Times*, 13 May 2015 (<http://blogs.ft.com/ftdata/2015/05/13/ireland-is-the-wealthiest-economy-in-europe-or-not>).

4 "Dublin should be careful not to celebrate too soon," *Financial Times*, 23 July 2015.



The Challenge for Trade Unionism

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New pamphlet from the Connolly Youth Movement www.cym.ie



An Undesirable Alien: Jimmy Gralton: The Life of a Leitrim Socialist, 1886-1945

Des Guckian
€4.50 (£3.50)

News in brief

Gaza aftermath

A year after the devastating war on Gaza, thousands of families are still sleeping in the rubble.

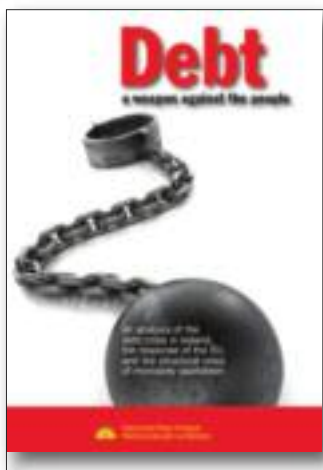
● Thousands of tonnes of building materials are ready to be delivered to Gaza, but the Israeli government is preventing it. All the necessary money to pay for those materials has been sent, and the building materials are waiting to cross the border into Gaza, but the Zionist government refuses to allow it to cross. It is still punishing the people of Gaza.

● Only 3½ per cent of the 6.7 million tonnes of steel bars, cement and building materials needed for rebuilding after the 2014 war of aggression has been permitted to enter Gaza. At this rate it could take nearly twenty years to rebuild, with tens of thousands of people sleeping among the rubble of their former homes. This is all taking place while western governments sit back. By their silence they encourage the Israeli government.

"Something to throw the electorate"

Reporting on the massive national demonstration against water charges on the 29th of August, David Davin-Power, RTE's distinguished political correspondent, remarked that the Government now needs "something to throw the electorate in the election campaign to come."

We know that this is how the elite and their hangers-on talk about the people, but it's not often that they let it slip in public.



Debt: a weapon against the people
€3.50/£3
from Connolly Books

One step nearer to privatising schools

Dónall Ó Briain

THE NATIONAL school on the island of Inis Meáin, Co. Galway, needs a second teacher—not because of the number of pupils (there are only nine) but because of the number of subjects to be taught.

Up to now the solitary teacher has been expected to teach the whole national school curriculum. Now the school has been "rescued"—by a transnational insurance company.

Zurich Insurance is still staggering from a price-fixing scandal in the USA, where it was obliged to make a settlement of \$171 million when its anti-competitive scheme was exposed. Earlier, in 2007, a subsidiary was forced to pay \$16.8 million to settle a case with the US Securities and Exchange Commission for helping hedge funds to disguise their identities during improper trading practices.

This is the first time that a national school has been subsidised by a transnational corporation, bringing us another step closer to the outright purchasing of schools by profiteers, as promoted by the EU and now by the proposed Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership. They may not covet small schools on islands, but once the principle is established it will be very hard to pull back.

Sadly, the development has been welcomed not only by the media (what would you expect?) but also by parents and the local community, frustrated by the refusal of the Department of Education to allocate another teacher.

The community has even launched a web site for further fund-raising (otherwise the government's job) and to publicise the "generosity" of the transnational corporation. It must be manna from heaven for the Department of Education, desperate to close "uneconomic" schools.

Like bus routes, hospitals, and post offices, schools will be fair game, especially if the vicious TTIP agreement is ratified. Sadly, one victimised community has decided to give in to spurious charity and to go out with a begging-bowl instead of to stand and fight. ★



Samir Amin

A life that continues to be lived

NICOLA LAWLOR argues that Samir Amin is one of the most important and most inspiring living Marxist theoreticians and philosophers.

BORN IN CAIRO in 1931 and at one point a member of the French Communist Party, Amin deals with both deep theoretical issues, such as the Marxist law of value in contemporary globalised structures, and the most practical political questions, such as the recent Scottish referendum on independence.

He has worked as an adviser to both the Egyptian government, 1957–1960, under the progressive moderniser Gamal Abdel Nasser, and the government of Mali, 1960–63, under the African socialist Modibo Keita. He is now a director at the Third World Forum in Sénégal and remains an incredibly fresh, original and responsive writer, in touch with his class and its movements, at eighty-five.

His analysis of the world, of inequality, power and class, is very much rooted in the anti-imperialist Marxism of the Leninist tradition but can be seen more clearly as part of the tradition, which includes Connolly, that stems from the anti-imperialist struggles of colonies and post-independence movements for socialism in peripheral countries, in particular in Africa.

I would strongly recommend that people read his regular articles in *Monthly Review* (posted on the MR e-zine) and his books, most notably his

recent publications *The Law of Worldwide Value* (second edition, 2010) and *The Implosion of Contemporary Capitalism* (2013).

Two excellent expositions of Amin's politics are available on line. The first is an interview with an American black radical web site, Black Left Unity Network,¹ and the second is an article celebrating Amin's eightieth birthday in 2011 by John Bellamy Foster, editor of *Monthly Review*.²

The law of worldwide value

Amin doesn't sit back and accept the past as dogma, but neither does he cast away what has been achieved and experienced. Both politically and theoretically he builds on the struggles, movements and lessons up to the present time. He looked at the traditional Marxist theory of value and sought to update it and place it in the context of an increasingly monopolised, centralised and financialised world, or what Amin describes as a system of "generalised monopolies," where monopoly power is the rule, not an exception, with small and medium businesses largely locked in to a network of relationships determined by monopolies.

Consequently, employment and labour are equally subject to monopoly power.

Building on earlier works and experience, Amin published *The Law of Worldwide Value* in 1978 and revised and expanded it in 2010.

He looks at the structure of

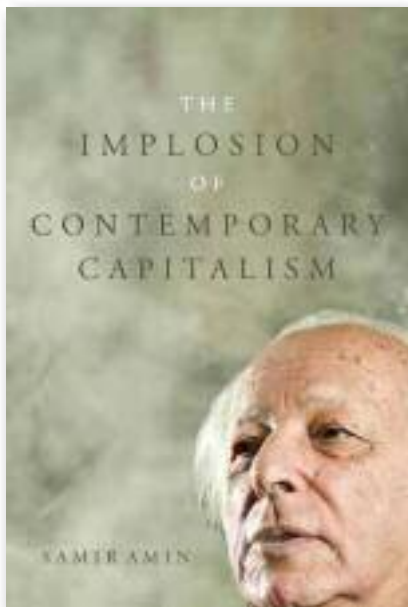
THE LAW OF
WORLDWIDE VALUE
SAMIR AMIN

capitalism that has created a centre and periphery and in particular the massive systemic underdevelopment of African and Asian society following formal independence. Based on Marx's law of the value of labour power being related to the cost of reproducing labour in a given society at a given time, he analyses the hierarchical nature of the price of labour power (wages) and concludes that, in contemporary society, monopolies in the imperial centres, with their ability to control production around the world, extract an imperialist rent from the application of labour power in Asia and Africa. And this worldwide value continues to re-create the subject relationships of global colonial structures in a contemporary imperialist age, giving us empires with no colonies.

As Amin puts it, "*the capitalism of generalised and globalised monopolies is a system that guarantees these monopolies a monopoly rent levied on the mass of surplus value (transformed into profits) that capital extracts from the exploitation of labour.*"

The triad of collective imperialism

Developing the tradition of Lenin, Bukharin, Hilferding and others in seeing imperialism as a development of capitalism in its competitive phase, through critical engagement with their theories Amin views the world as being dominated by three leading imperialist geo-political, economic and cultural forces, which compete but also co-operate, as distinct from the inter-imperialist rivalry of Lenin's day. He calls this the collective triad of the US, the European Union, and Japan.



“This system of generalised monopolies is the product of a new phase of centralisation of capital in the countries of the Triad (the United States, Western and Central Europe, and Japan) that took place during the 1980s and 1990s.”

Within the EU, which Amin sees as a bloc dominated by the imperialist interests of Germany and France, the leading powers have colonised most of central and eastern Europe and parts of southern Europe and are seeking to expand into Asian countries. But the EU is not itself a state and so is subject to the combination and interplay of the independent states’ ruling classes. So, for example, the German state represents the interests of German monopoly capital within the EU, and, given its leading position, the EU becomes a mechanism through which German interests can be imposed internally on member-states and externally on the peripheral world.

Amin still sees the nation-state as the guarantor of monopoly capitalism and class rule. It is the state that militarily intervenes, both internally and externally, to safeguard the private accumulation of capital, and it also socialises capital’s losses through its political and legal system, again protected by the military should any protest or uprising threaten this.

The politics of change and anti-imperialism

This means that Amin sees the politics of change and transformation as necessarily anti-imperialist and the necessity of challenging the ruling class of the nation-state as well as the international system.

Echoing Lenin and certainly

Connolly, Amin also sees the momentum for change largely coming from the South and oppressed peoples. According to Amin, because of the imperialist rent that is extracted by the collective triad, largely, but not exclusively, off African and Asian peoples, the working class of the centre is “bought in” to the system. They often operate a managing, supervising or non-productive role (in an M–C–M sense), such as marketing, and so are paid for and through the exploitation of labour elsewhere, and the imperialist rent that Amin describes, affording them the ability to buy luxury goods and placing their short-term self-interest in the continued exploitation of labour elsewhere.

In seeking change at this moment, and in understanding the nature of imperialism today, Amin does not see, nor does he desire, the conditions for a social compromise. This is again what makes Amin such a valuable radical thinker. He doesn’t use Marxism to try to manage capitalism better than the capitalists, as many on the left try to do: he uses knowledge and experience to try to chart a way out of underdevelopment and out of subjugation for the majority of people on this planet, and one that is actually necessary for securing the future of life on earth.

“We are not living in a historical moment in which the search for a ‘social compromise’ is a possible option. There have been such moments in the past, such as the post-war social compromise between capital and labour specific to the social democratic state in the West, the actually existing socialism in the East, and the popular national projects of the South. But our present historical moment is not the same. So the conflict is between monopoly capital and workers and people who are invited to an unconditional surrender. Defensive strategies of resistance under these conditions are ineffective and bound to be eventually defeated. In the face of war declared by monopoly capital, workers and peoples must develop strategies that allow them to take the offensive.” ★

1 www.blackleftunity.org/samiraminspeaks.htm.

2 Available at <http://monthlyreview.org/2011/10/01/samir-amin-at-80-an-introduction-and-tribute>.

Seven reasons why I am not a capitalist

Richard Bryant

1 It is not the perfect system that it has been advertised to be. It had a beginning and a middle, and we are now at the end. It will not self-perpetuate into the indefinite future. The responsible solution is to search for alternatives not rooted in austerity and oppression.

2 Capitalism can only be maintained through political, military and economic force.

3 Capitalism forces debt upon the poorest people to maintain the inherent inequality caused by stagnant wages, rampant inequality, and no economic growth.

4 Capitalism can only succeed by blaming today’s failures on policies that failed in previous generations. There is little political or social will to ask “why?” of the present.

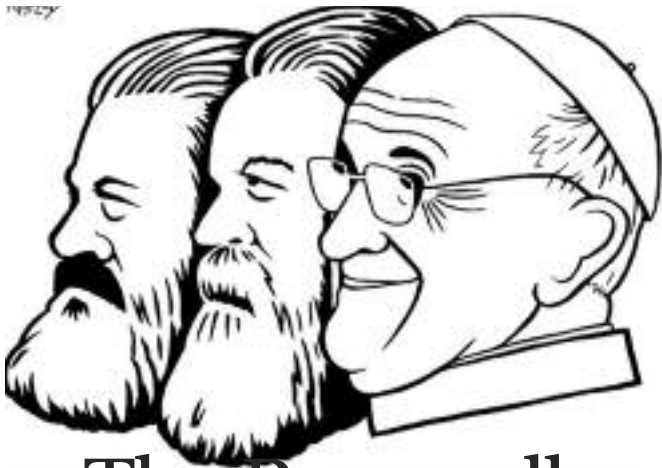
5 Lower corporate taxes haven’t improved the quality of life for most people in western Europe or the United States. Those with vested interests in large financial institutions, the stock market and major corporations have suffered little since the last economic crisis in 2008. They continue to make the important decisions regarding financial, political and military policy. Their economic losses have completely recovered. Meanwhile individual taxpayers have been forced into higher levels of personal debt (through pay-day lenders) at exorbitant interest rates in order to maintain illusory standards of living. Inequality, fuelled by debt, feeds more inequality. The system is eating itself from within. This disconnect is capitalism.

6 Economic and social privilege is a right that can never be fully realised by those who seek it. This type of privilege does not appear in waiting-rooms, police stations, and housing estates. It is never heard clearly and only witnessed through the well-crafted lenses of those who gaze across the inequality chasm.

7 I identify my own collusion with the existing system and my desire to look beyond to exist apart, look beyond and critique the harsh realities of the present system.

There is a better way. Support the party, the right to water, and the end to austerity everywhere. ★





The Pope calls capitalism's bluff"

The present Pope blames the relentless pursuit of profit and political short-sightedness for the continuing exploitation and consequent degradation of the terrestrial and marine environments.

Tomás Mac Síomóin

POPE FRANCIS is no 21st-century Karl Marx. But when it comes to the critical analysis of modern monopoly capitalism and its role in the creation of human suffering on a massive scale, the Italo-Argentine and the German Jew sing from the same hymn sheet.

True to his roots in liberation theology, Francis offers, in his recent encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, a blistering criticism of contemporary capitalism. He expresses scepticism about market forces, criticises consumerism, and warns about the social costs of growth. Furthermore, he deals critically with specifically modern problems, such as global warming and its disastrous implications, that had yet to surface in Marx's era.

The present Pope blames the relentless pursuit of profit and political short-sightedness for the continuing exploitation and consequent degradation of the terrestrial and marine environments. The most vulnerable victims of this recklessness, he emphasises time and again, are the world's poorest people, who are being dislocated and disregarded.

He extends his analysis beyond the politics of climate change to the repudiation of all political-economic-institutional modes of domination, above all monopoly capitalism, whose class-based wealth accumulation involves the ruthless exploitation of impoverished Third World and First World working people. Thus, contemporary capitalism makes of such domination an acceptable

moral value of political economy.

Himself a trained scientist, Francis proposes a fusion of moral and political economy as a means of eviscerating the latter's exploitative purpose and features. Technology makes human beings into commodities and destroys forests for agricultural and other forms of development, he says. Thus development as such becomes the bane of working people and the poor, being organised for profit, not human needs.

Political economy, deprived of any moral compass, liberates the barbarity of wealth, which, given the greed and fratricidal struggle for control of the capital-accumulation process, almost inevitably leads to war.

Laudato Si' has as much to say about seeking the welfare of humankind as about seeking oneness with God, which for Francis are two sides of the one coin. His basic idea is that in order to love God you have to love your fellow human beings, and you have to love and care for the rest of creation. It gives Francis a solid traditional basis on which to argue for the inclusion of environmental concern at the centre of the Christian faith.

A like perspective is shared by Marxists. Herbert Marcuse, for example, noted that science divorced from, and not informed by, a moral sensibility becomes an amoral framework applicable to the policies of dominant groups, in which empty or neutral social values can be used to justify oppression.

The encyclical emphasises the way science denies responsibility for its uses: "Our immense technological development has not been accompanied by a development in human responsibility, values and conscience." With *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis becomes the voice of the conscience of humankind. Those who marginalise this voice by building an artificial wall between politics and morality defend inequality, privation, human suffering, all in the name of progress.

Demands that Francis stick to morals and leave politics to the politicians have already been made by well-known illuminati of the American Republican Party right, such as Jeb Bush, Marco Rubio, and Rick Santorum—all professed Catholics. However, they all seem to be unaware that acceptance of the content of the Pope's latest encyclical is not optional, it being now official Catholic doctrine. But free-market fundamentalism is pure science, conservative academics assert, hence value-free. Thence belief in the euro, or dollar, and the unlimited development and unfettered globalisation of mega-

transnationals, all guided by the maximisation of profit rather than by scientifically unprovable moral platitudes, is their predictable stance.

Consistent with such irresponsibility, the director of Harvard University's Environmental Economics Department, Robert Stavins, holds that the Pope is out of step with the thinking of "experts," who opine that climate change is best managed by market-based policy instruments: carbon taxes or cap-and-trade systems. He berates Francis because he reflects the views of a "small set of socialist Latin American countries that opposed the Washington Consensus, fear free markets, and are dismissive and uncooperative in international climate negotiations."

That the free market constitutes an imperative beyond all moral sanction and considerations of environmental degradation, including global warming (for which we are bound to find a technological fix beyond carbon trading), is neo-liberalism's *sine qua non*.

Francis, on the other hand, attributes our burgeoning environmental crisis to wealthier, industrialised countries that extract non-renewable resources to feed the insatiable desire for consumer goods. Even Christians, he says, have been seduced by consumerism, despite the tradition of asceticism and the teachings on simplicity by St Francis and others. "Christian spirituality proposes an alternative understanding of the quality of life, one capable of deep enjoyment free of the obsession with consumption." No wonder Pope Francis is increasingly seen by free-marketeers as the bull in the china shop of monopoly capitalism and its political economy!

The question here is, What will adherents of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, clerical and lay, make of the Vatican's radical stance as outlined in *Laudato Si'*, an encyclical that is mandatory reading for all who call themselves Catholics? Will most of them, the hierarchy included, ignore its clear mandates? Will they continue to align themselves ideologically with a socio-economic order that Pope Francis finds to be intrinsically evil in its wanton disregard for Mother Earth, whose future is being placed in jeopardy by the acolytes of that order?

Or will his challenging and revolutionary encyclical impel them to have a serious and objective look at the world about them and take the necessary steps to square their thought and action with that of their spiritual leader, and thus ally themselves with those of us who share Francis's social and ecological ideals? ★



PAUL DORAN gives ten reasons why the privatisation of drinking water could spell doom for the Irish people and many of the world's 6 billion-plus people

1 Price increases have been used globally as a way for private water companies to maximise profits. The bottom line for these companies is profit, which translates into higher prices and inferior service for consumers. The companies are under no obligation to provide water or a service when water is defined as a marketable commodity rather than a human right. So, when consumers can no longer afford the price increases, water is simply cut off.

2 Privatisation undermines water quality. Because the profit motive drives the water corporations' agenda rather than serving the public interest, environmental standards are continually weakened. In the United States the National Association of Water Companies, representing the private water industry, intensively lobbies both the Congress and the Environmental Protection Agency to prevent higher water quality standards from being adopted. The water companies continually request that all official regulations be based on "sound" cost-benefit analysis. What this means is that public health is compromised for the sake of higher profits.

3 Companies are accountable only to shareholders, not to consumers. Many water companies make deals with government agencies that include exclusive access to distribution for twenty-five or thirty years. These private monopolies tend to undermine accountability, resulting in poor customer service. The company is under little pressure to respond to consumers' concerns, especially when the product in question is necessary to the lives of consumers.

4 Privatisation fosters corruption; the very structures of privatisation encourage corruption. Checks and balances that could prevent corruption, such as accountability and transparency, are conspicuously missing from the process. With water contracts being worked out behind closed doors, executives and government officials are free to make deals in their own interest rather than that of the public.

5 Privatisation reduces local control and public rights. When water services are privatised, public control is transferred to the private company, be it domestic or transnational. Once water rights have been signed over, very little can be done to ensure that the private company will work in the interests of the community.

6 Private financing costs more than government financing. When water services are privatised there is often a false perception that the financial burden has shifted from the public to the private sector. So the company promises to repair, upgrade and maintain infrastructure, seemingly saving the taxpayers money. In reality the public pays for these projects through their monthly bill payments. Tax-free public financing usually translates into lower-cost projects. Taxable private financing, however, invariably brings with it higher interest rates. As a result, the consumers—who are already paying executives' salaries and bonuses, and dividends to shareholders—will also be forced to make these higher payments on company loans.

7 Privatisation leads to the loss of jobs, putting service and water quality at risk because of understaffing. Redundancies and poorer working terms and conditions are used to reduce costs and increase profits. This happened when refuse collection was privatised, with the notorious example of Greyhound. Following privatisation in Britain, for instance, the number of employees in water and waste water in ten major companies was reduced by almost ten thousand over ten years. In most cases the companies responded to demands for lower rates by sacking employees.

8 Privatisation is difficult to reverse once part or all of the water has been handed over to a private company. If the company fails to live up to its end of the bargain, proving breach of contract is a difficult, complicated and costly proposition. Multinational trade agreements, such as the TTIP, provide corporations with powerful legal recourse. A private company could use TTIP's closed tribunals to challenge the reversal of privatisation as being a forbidden action tantamount to "expropriation."

9 Remember when our bin collections were privatised not so long ago, and the rampant rise in these costs to the citizen? We were told that would not happen. It did.

10 It is we and our parents and grandparents who built and paid, through our taxes, for the infrastructure to bring the access to water that we have today. It is crucial that we have a referendum to amend the Constitution to enshrine the keeping of water in public hands. ★



No reproductive freedom in Ireland, North or South

'Women in Ireland deserve to have their voices heard and they should be the only people making decisions about their own bodies.'

**John Douglas
General
Secretary
Mandate"**

Scarlett Hoy

THE AVAILABILITY of safe, legal abortion and affordable, reliable contraception is really good for women. Being able to decide if and when to have a child (or more children) improves women's educational outcome, our career prospects, our health, the health of our relationships, the well-being of our children, our lifetime earnings, and our sex lives.

Women benefit tremendously from reproductive freedom, and so does society as a whole.

However, access to abortion remains a controversial issue around the world. In Ireland, North and South, legal restrictions have resulted in Irish women being compelled to travel to Britain and further afield to obtain an abortion, while others are forced to purchase the "abortion pill" from internet sources.

On average 1,000 women a year leave the North and 3,000 leave the South to gain access to their reproductive rights in Britain and beyond. It is time to end this discrimination and trust women to make the right decisions for them and their families. What is required is legal reform, both North and South, so that women who seek termination for varied and complex reasons when faced with a crisis pregnancy are enabled and supported to do so.

Although abortion is legal in Northern Ireland in very restricted circumstances, the pathway into the National Health Service is severely limited by the continuing failure of the Department of Health to publish final Termination of Pregnancy Guidance. The last guidelines, which were

withdrawn after a legal challenge, threatened professionals with prosecution for providing any abortion services.

In April 2015, after mounting public pressure because of the publicity surrounding the Sarah Ewart case, the Department of Justice issued a consultation on abortion law reform only in the case of fatal foetal abnormality and not on grounds of rape or sexual crime (incest). Sarah Ewart, a woman from Northern Ireland who was identified as having a fatal foetal abnormality and was refused an abortion in the North, allowed a local journalist to follow her to London and to document her story, which was then shown on local television.

In June 2015 the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission began legal proceedings in the High Court against the Department of Justice, arguing that the existing law is a violation of human rights. It is seeking a change in the law to allow abortion in cases of rape, incest, or "serious malformation" of the foetus. The judgement has been reserved until the autumn of 2015.

In July a mother was prosecuted in Belfast for supplying abortion pills to her daughter, and her case will be heard this autumn also.

The continued harassment of women using the Marie Stopes Clinic in Belfast since it opened in October 2012 has been exacerbated by the overturning in June 2015 of the harassment case of the former director, Dawn Purvis, which she won against the director of Precious Life, Bernadette Smyth. This led to all charges being dropped against the Precious Life protesters, culminating in a physical assault on one of the clinic escorts in July. Alicea Brennan of Precious Life was arrested for the assault the following week outside the

Belfast clinic.

A recent public opinion poll carried out by Millward Brown Ulster on behalf of Amnesty International's campaign "My Body, My Rights" clearly showed that people in Northern Ireland were in favour of abortion—60 per cent on the grounds of fatal foetal abnormality, 68 per cent in the case of incest, and 69 per cent on the grounds of rape. Repeated surveys have shown that the majority of the population and medical professionals support a change in the law. The politicians' continued inaction reflects their ignorance and their disregard for opinion in the North.

In the South the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution of Ireland in 1983 introduced a constitutional ban on abortion, asserting that "the State acknowledges the right to life of the unborn and, with due regard to the equal right to life of the mother, guarantees in its laws to respect, and, as far as practicable, by its laws to defend and vindicate that right." This, therefore, makes the life of the foetus equal to that of the mother.

In July 2014, at the conclusion of the fourth periodic examination of Ireland's human rights record by the UN Human Rights Committee, the chairperson of the committee, Nigel Rodley—a leading expert in international human rights law and a former UN Special Reporter on Torture—commented: "The recognition of the primary right to life of the woman who is an existent human being has to prevail over that of the unborn child and I can't begin to understand by what belief system the priority would be given to the latter rather than the former."

In March 2012 Savita Halappanavar began to miscarry in a Galway hospital. She repeatedly asked for a termination and was refused. She died a few days later from septicaemia and organ failure. In 2013 the Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act was passed by the Dáil, which made it legal to obtain an abortion in some cases. The circumstances in which an abortion can be granted have proved so difficult as to prevent most people from exploring that avenue. The act also criminalised abortion, with a prison sentence of up to fourteen years. Terminations in the case of fatal foetal abnormalities are prohibited.

In 2014 the Abortion Rights Campaign launched its petition and campaign to repeal the Eighth Amendment. Article 40.3.3 of the Constitution is clearly a relic of a bygone era, the era of symphysiotomy,

mother-and-baby homes, the Magdalen laundries, and clerical sexual abuse. Opinion polls have consistently shown that attitudes to abortion in Ireland have changed radically.

The Eighth Amendment is a barrier to progress and a major source of inequality and discrimination. Its effects are particularly harsh for women on low incomes, as abortions are expensive (€1,500–€2000), and getting time off work is difficult. For many migrant women the situation is worse: they cannot travel abroad.

In August 2014 a young migrant woman who was pregnant as a result of rape sought an abortion on the grounds of a danger of suicide under the 2013 act. After she had been forcibly fed and lied to about the possibility of a termination, her baby was delivered by Caesarean section at 25 weeks.

In December the same year a clinically dead woman was being kept alive on a life-support machine, against the wishes of her parents, as doctors were unwilling to turn the machine off because of the Eighth Amendment.

John Douglas, general secretary of Mandate, said: “Trade unions are more than about representing workers in their jobs. We are a community, representing workers and their families, both in work-places across this country and in wider society. That’s why repealing the Eighth Amendment is one of the most important issues for our movement right now. Women in Ireland deserve to have their voices heard and they should be the only people making decisions about their own bodies.”

As women we recognise that the control, regulation and stigmatisation of female fertility, bodies and sexuality is politically and culturally policed in Ireland. Reproductive health and justice are an integral part of the global movements for women’s rights and against poverty that are contained within the global human rights framework.

What we need is the decriminalisation of abortion in line with international human rights standards so that health professionals can provide such care without the threat of prosecution. Every woman who has been forced to travel to obtain an abortion that should be safe and legal in their home country is an indictment of the Irish state and the Northern Ireland Assembly. ★

Trade Union Campaign to Repeal the 8th Amendment

Therese Caherty

ABORTION IS a work-place, equality and human rights issue. Since its formation in September 2014 the Trade Union Campaign to Repeal the 8th Amendment has argued that this is the case.

Article 40.3.3 of the Constitution of Ireland equates the life of a pregnant woman with that of an embryo or foetus. Abortion is prohibited in all cases, except when doctors believe the woman’s life is at risk. The ban extends to cases of rape, incest, and fatal foetal abnormality.

But criminalisation has not stopped abortion: instead it has forced women and girls to travel abroad—or to look for abortion pills on the internet, with all the attendant dangers. For those on low incomes there is great hardship: abortions are expensive; getting time off work is difficult. The situation is worse for migrant women, because they cannot travel abroad. Look at the recent treatment of Ms Y, a young migrant rape victim denied access to abortion and then compelled to have a Caesarean section.

And, thanks to the amendment, we have an unequal health system: once a woman or girl becomes pregnant she has only a qualified right to care. The distinction between a pregnant woman’s life and her health—made possible by the Eighth Amendment—is dangerous for women and has created an impossible situation for doctors and nurses. Their care for patients is limited by a constitutional provision and its possible interpretation. Its chilling effect can prevent doctors from acting in a pregnant patient’s best interests.

Article 40.3.3 of the Constitution has been criticised repeatedly by international human rights organisations as a violation of women’s right to bodily integrity. The recent case of a brain-dead woman whose body was used to incubate a foetus illustrates the invasive and destructive reach of the Eighth Amendment in the medical sphere. Amid appalling violations of the woman’s dignity and rights, her family had to go to court before a medical decision to remove life support could be effected.

In relation to reproductive rights, the issues facing women in Ireland, North and South, are similar. Earlier this year the Trade Union Campaign to Repeal the 8th Amendment welcomed the ICTU’s response to Northern Ireland’s public consultation on the criminal law on abortion. We particularly welcomed the statement by Congress that “barriers to reproductive rights are barriers to full social, economic, political and work-place equality” and that “restrictive abortion practices and barriers to access to safe abortion to the full extent of the law are gender-discriminatory, denying women and girls treatment only they need.”

And we argued that, just as “legislative change is essential to end the daily attack on women’s reproductive rights in Northern Ireland,” the repeal

of the Eighth Amendment is equally and urgently needed.

In 1983 Congress opposed the Eighth Amendment, stating that “the rigidity and inflexibility of constitutional directives on social and moral issues was inappropriate in a democracy.” We contend that all the arguments put forward to the consultation in Northern Ireland apply equally to the Eighth Amendment. On that basis our campaign has asked Congress to call for a referendum seeking its repeal without delay.

For the past year, many of our supporters have succeeded in having motions on repeal passed at branches and annual conferences. Trades councils have come on board. Several youth councils and committees have signed up. But, despite the ground gained, many unions continue to resist our call, urging us instead to concentrate on the “real” stuff of union work: employment issues.

It’s fair to say that we have our work cut out for us. But there is reason to believe that, as with opinion polls, support in our movement is beginning to turn our way.

We must mobilise at the grass-roots level, where trade union members have the potential to make a huge difference. We could put women and their rights, as opposed to conservative lobbying groups, at the centre of the debate. For this reason we are asking unions, their members and trades councils to work with us to secure a referendum to remove Article 40.3.3 from the Constitution.

Activists can put our sample motion (below) to their branches, industrial and trades councils. We’re also happy to come to branches or work-places to explain our work and its progress. If you would like to register your support, log on to our Facebook page and fill in the Google form you will find there. (Your information will be used only for e-mail updates relating to the Trade Union Campaign to Repeal the 8th Amendment.)

We are affiliated to the Coalition to Repeal the 8th and are supported by Mandate, Unite, CWU and ICTU youth committees, and Dublin, Bray and Waterford Trades Councils. We can be contacted at tradeunions2014@gmail.com or at 086 0704036.

Draft trade union motion

This branch calls for the immediate repeal of the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution.

The branch demands that a referendum be held on this issue without delay.

The branch calls on the Government to put a proposal to the Dáil to amend the Constitution to remove the Eighth Amendment and to hold the referendum on this issue without further delay.

The branch calls on the Executive of this union to campaign for the repeal of the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution.



Democratic Programme for the 21st Century

Comrades,

The Democratic Programme for the 21st Century is timely, not just in its connection to the many coming centenaries and memorials over the next number of years, kicked off with the recent O'Donovan Rossa events, but also in the context of recent events in Greece and a coming election in Ireland.

SYRIZA's implosion, and the left's scramble in Ireland in preparation for the election, highlight and demonstrate the limitations and dangers of opportunist electoral politics and the lack of a clear anti-imperialist programme. Many of the same people who scrambled after Obama and pined for an Irish SYRIZA and are now celebrating the British Labour Party's leadership candidate Jeremy Corbyn have no clear programme or commitment to an anti-imperialist socialism.

And what other kind of socialism can you have? One that refuses to break with the EU? No. One that talks about internationalism while refusing to give priority to national sovereignty and democracy? No.

It has been fascinating to see the hipster left present the scramble to SYRIZA as internationalism, and abandoning it just as quickly, as if Greece has only just existed recently, whereas the CPI has been visiting the working-class movement in Greece for years and inviting militant Greek workers over to Ireland for years, building sustainable, long-term, principled connections between communist workers in their country and ours.

This debate about imperialism and socialism is not new. It was held a hundred years ago by James Connolly and William Walker. Yet the lessons are ignored. You cannot build socialism in Ireland while refusing to challenge imperialism. And imperialism still exists in Ireland today, in the form of the EU and American foreign direct investment and war planes and of course the continued British control over the six-county statelet.

I feel that now is the time to build such a necessary anti-imperialist movement, pulling together non-opportunist republican, community, trade union and communist forces in Ireland. And the Communist Party is well positioned to approach individuals and groups to do this in a principled and equal way.

Anti-imperialism in a peripheral country is opposition to both the domestic ruling elite, their power and privilege and structures (the state) that place the country in a position of subjection and subordination and, equally, opposition to the international imperialist structures and system more generally that prevent the free development and democracy of the people.

Such a movement would need an immediate programme to mobilise workers and communities around but also a more long-term programme, far more ambitions in its design, to increase public wealth, ownership, control and governance (nationalisation and socialisation).

Both these programmes will by necessity challenge imperialism (European, American and British) in Ireland or they are meaningless and of no value to our class.

Margaret Devereux

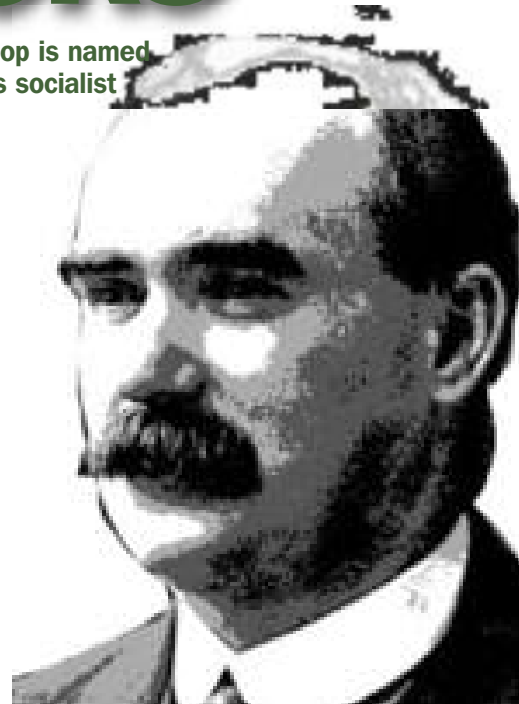
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