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Public sector workers under renewed attack

It is the assessment of the Communist Party that public-sector workers are going to face renewed attacks on their wages, terms and conditions by the Fine Gael-dominated coalition Government, propped up by Fianna Fáil. *Pages 4&5*

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"At the same time the Israelis are becoming like the white-supremacist South Africans, viewing the Palestinians as a lower form of life, not hesitating to kill a great many of them and justifying this on the grounds of self-defence." **Zbigniew Brzezinski** (ideologist of US global hegemony and national security adviser), *Chicago Tribune*, 8 April 2002



Socialist Voice
43 East Essex Street
Dublin D02 XH96
(01) 6708707

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Bus Éireann dispute ends

ALL UNIONS involved in the Bus Éireann strike have voted to accept the Labour Court's recommendation. Jimmy Doran reports

The workers and unions should be commended for their exemplary behaviour during the most difficult of strikes, in the face of unilateral action by the Bus Éireann management.

Workers in the other CIE companies who came out to support them in a solidarity strike played no small part in the securing of a more favourable deal than had been originally proposed.

Although this deal brings in a lot of changes, the unions have managed to preserve core terms and conditions. There are no compulsory redundancies, and the central demand of setting up a forum of the main stakeholders has been agreed. There will be no more proposals from the company before 2019.

This forum needs to be operational as soon as possible to ensure proper funding for the 21st-century transport system that the citizens deserve.

Bus Éireann has been run into the ground over the last couple of years through under-investment and the handing out of multiple contracts to private operators, with much more favourable operating conditions attached. This was the state preparing the ground for the privatisation of the rural transport system; but once again transport workers were not prepared to give up all the gains they had fought for over the years without a fight to defend them.

This dispute is evidence of the continuing attack on workers by state and employers. In spite of this, workers and their unions are prepared to stand their ground and fight back. This is not easy, as workers are saddled with massive debt in the form of mortgages on their homes. The banks are ready to pounce if they fall behind.

Employers are well aware of this and use it as a weapon against workers: as the time for a mortgage payment approaches, the pressure to accept a deal is immense. Workers need to be aware of this and be prepared for this added pressure in today's world.

Workers and unions have to adapt to a changing way of life. It's a dog-eat-dog society that we now live in, and we have to be ready to defend ourselves when we come under attack. The Irish Citizen Army was set up to defend workers from physical attack in the past; today workers are being attacked with a chequebook and a pen.

If workers are to achieve their share it's essential that they have the financial support for taking on the employers. Strike pay on its own is not enough to tide workers over during a strike. A national strike fund should be set up by the unions for this purpose, and all union members should give an extra contribution to finance it. There should be regular fund-raisers to add more to the fund, which would also have union members getting together at social events and building relationships among them.

Employers won't be so cocky when they know we can strike indefinitely; that's the way to fight back in today's world. This will give workers confidence and a heightened sense of fraternity and collective action, as they would know that the national strike fund is being used by them and their fellow-workers in the battle for workers' rights.

It's time that workers' solidarity was rediscovered among the working class, and with it great things can be achieved. A victory for one group of workers benefits all workers, so it's a no-brainer to set up a national strike fund to defend all workers from this sustained attack.

An injury to one is an injury to all!



The people who get up early in the morning

Tommy McKearney

THE CITIZENS of many European countries are being confronted with the invidious option of choosing between aggressive neo-liberalism on the one hand and fascism on the other. Nowhere was this clearer than during the recent presidential election in France, when voters were asked to decide between the right-wing financier Emmanuel Macron and the National Front leader Marine Le Pen above.

The dilemma may not be quite so obvious everywhere, but the trend is nevertheless all too evident.

Nor should we in Ireland be complacent. There is not, at the moment, a significant ultra-right movement in this state, but we are certainly seeing the emergence of an increasingly authoritarian neo-liberal government.

There is no shortage of evidence of this imperiousness in action. We have the Jobstown trial, with its vindictive attempt to punish people in a working-class area who confronted the state; and equally ominous is the blatant attempt to curtail the right to protest.

Then there was the contemptuous

treatment meted out to Bus Éireann workers as they struggled to retain hard-won terms and conditions. And then we, the people, had our queries brushed aside when we demanded to know how the Irish delegation had voted on Saudi Arabia's membership of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women.

We could continue, but lack of space prevents us.

Just as we were beginning to think that things couldn't get much worse, we are now faced with the nasty prospect of Leo "people who get up early in the morning" Varadkar becoming Taoiseach. During a pitch for the leadership of Fine Gael, he made his right-wing credentials crystal-clear, claiming that "unfortunately there are a group of people, very often supporters of the far left, that believe they shouldn't pay anything and that Apple, bondholders or billionaires should pay . . ." Adding to this crude piece of neo-liberal dogma, he stated that if selected as party boss he would curb the right to strike in certain circumstances, by introducing binding arbitration on trade unions—the thin end of a wedge designed to emasculate organised labour.

It would be unwise to treat these comments and proposals as mere electioneering. Varadkar is responding

to the demands of a powerful section of Ireland's capitalist class. They are an elite group within society determined to take every possible advantage from the confusion and demoralisation created by the financial crisis of 2010—a group that at the same time is fearful of the power displayed by working-class communities when they united around the anti-water tax campaign.

To meet the demands of this elite cabal, Enda Kenny's probable successor is setting out his agenda, and it is frankly anti-working class.

Varadkar may well bob and weave in order to obfuscate his real intentions as he offers so-called clarifications. He now says, for example, that his reference to people who get up early in the morning should be understood to recognise those with long journeys to work, and that his proposal to curb strikes is merely an initiative to improve the Labour Court.

In spite of this cynical play-acting, Varadkar's aggressive neo-liberalism is ingrained and is as calculated as his headline-grabbing stunt ostensibly designed to counteract welfare fraud. Worth noting in this context is the absence of any suggestion of preventing white-collar crime, or replacing the discredited ODCE.

The minister for social protection (an oxymoronic title if ever there was one) is moulded in the Fine Gael forge and will seek to ruthlessly protect the interests of capital. There can be little doubt that the next leader of the original corporatist party will ensure that it stays true to the ethos of its blue-shirted founding fathers.

Under these circumstances, however, it is important to recognise that Leo Varadkar is not so much a personality as a product of his class. He may display certain irrelevant idiosyncrasies that set him apart, but in reality any other contender for the party leadership would follow a similar political and economic path. Ever since the Lehman Brothers crash of 2008, capitalism's elite has sought to protect its position by forcing the working class to pay for the financial crisis through what is euphemistically called austerity. Therefore, so long as Ireland is governed by free-marketeers we will have to endure the consequences of being forced to live by the rules laid down by those forces and elements controlling the market.

In the first instance, this will mean making Ireland conform to directives emanating from those vested interests that manage the European Union. It is

useful, therefore, to bear this in mind and consider the programme now advocated by Germany and France—the core powers within the union. The ruling class in both states is determined to intensify integration, reinforce the currency zone, and accelerate what they like to describe as liberalisation of the labour market.

In a nutshell, this means that fiscal control will be decided by French and German financiers via Brussels and thereafter implemented through regional parliaments performing the task of emasculating organised labour. Leo Varadkar as Taoiseach would be one of those peripheral satraps entrusted with the latter chore—presumably a labour of love for him.

What, therefore, is to be done? From the outset, it's important to recognise that we have entered an era in which old-style social democracy has become irrelevant and redundant, or sometimes even worse. The programmes being advocated by those parties that believe it possible to engage with and moderate neo-liberalism are offering a dangerous illusion. They have failed spectacularly everywhere and, just as has happened to the Labour Party, they are distrusted by a majority of working people and have been left floundering.

Nor is this a matter of appearances and presentation, where the application of a slick marketing campaign coupled with clever spin-doctoring will facilitate their return to power. Neo-liberal capitalism has left little space for placating a compliant working class and has therefore rendered social democracy redundant.

It is important, therefore, that we as a class understand that social democracy is in terminal decline, and not just in temporary retreat. Our choices are now limited, albeit not to those offered by capitalism. **We should be absolutely clear that we do not have to settle for either neo-liberalism or fascism.** There remains the only and perfectly viable option for working people: that is, a workers' republic.

To make this a reality requires, above all else, organisation and unity among the progressive currents in Irish society. The unthinkable alternative is a choice between socialism and barbarism. One option we cannot allow ourselves is to wait passively for events to dictate. We must continue to endeavour to build the people's movement capable of transforming society into one fit for the working class.



A dedicated follower of fashion

Michael Healy

THE YEAR 1967 was a time of upheaval and change in conservative society, attitudes, and fashion, and a confident young working class reflected this change.

It was a period of buoyant demand for youth labour, some of whom decided to pursue careers as apprentices in the hairdressing trade. Government inspectors monitored the conditions, training and wages of the apprentices. (Such inspections are now a thing of the past.)

Michael began a three-year apprenticeship at Raymond's Hairdressing Salon, 24 London Road, Southampton, in June 1967. The proprietor, Raymond Bessone, known as "Teasie-Weasie" Raymond or "Mr Teasie-Weasie," born of poor immigrant parents, cultivated a French accent and came to be regarded as the first celebrity hairdresser.

Raymond trained Vidal Sassoon, who later created the straight geometrical cut. A young Sassoon, together with left-wing and Jewish organisations, broke up meetings of Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists in London; the *Daily Telegraph* called Sassoon an "anti-fascist warrior-hairdresser."

The Raymond salon was fitted with regency chairs, gilt mirrors, and chandeliers, and works of art adorned the walls—the height of luxury in 1967. Receptionists greeted customers at the front desk, cutting and setting and the new-fangled back-wash basins were on the ground floor, and upstairs were colour, perming, and beauty. The female apprentices wore a pink uniform with pink mod-style shoes; male apprentices looked more like waiters, dressed in black with a bow tie. Staff members were called Miss and Mr, and music was not played in the salon. This reflected traditional conservative values at a time of social change.

Social movements also helped shape the concept of fashion. In 1970, the year Michael qualified, he found employment in a unisex hair salon that brought in the era of the cut and blow-dry. He now had the choice not to wear a suit or uniform, and could listen to the music of such artists as Rod Stewart, Bowie, and Neil Young. With a small number of unisex salons in cities and towns, this offered the opportunity to earn a good salary.

In a sad turn of events, the industry is now under attack, with training courses that take a few months or less, and a few weeks to churn out a hairstylist. With a hairdresser's salon on every street corner, it must be difficult for a young worker to negotiate a decent wage, fifty years after Michael entered the trade that once offered working-class youth an optimistic future.



The restoration of stolen pay

Dan Taraghan

THERE IS increasing militancy among the public-sector unions. After nearly ten years of “austerity,” with no pay increases and the so-called “financial emergency” legislation still in place, there is a growing realisation of how much they were shafted.

Public-sector workers had their pay reduced and then, under the “financial emergency” legislation, had a specific tax imposed, called a pensions levy. This “pensions levy” had nothing to do with pensions but was another de facto pay cut.

Some workers were forced to seek family income supplement, as their wages were no longer adequate to sustain them and their families. The deal struck with the Gardaí, who were outside the Lansdowne Road Agreement, backfired on the Government. Those unions within Lansdowne put pressure on the Government to bring forward a payment of €1,000 *pro rata* from 1 September to 1 April to those on salaries up to €65,000. In effect, this was a payment of €750 and was the first stage in the restoration of pay.

The Labour Party, in its attempt to reform capitalism and save the state, was one of the main perpetrators of the war of austerity against the working class. It reaped its just reward at the last election. At that election the Communist Party was the only party to advocate the overthrow of capitalism, as it is incapable of reform. Even now the Labour Party, at its most recent conference, seemed locked into a position of defending and trying to justify its position on Irish Water. The manner in which it has behaved and, along with Fine

Gael, kowtowed to the EU Commission is inexcusable.

The Government faces a new problem in relation to the public-sector unions, and that is that the three main unions may possibly merge into one union later this year. At the time when the Croke Park, Haddington Road and Lansdowne Road Agreements were in negotiation the civil and public service clerical staff were split into three main unions: the Civil and Public Services Union (about 10,000 members), the Public Service Executive Union (about 10,000 members), and Impact (60,000 members). If the three merge, the Government will be facing a united work force of 80,000 in civil service, local authorities, libraries, airports, ports, and hospitals. In effect these unions have the ability to shut the country down.

All these unions have seen the way the Government reneged on the “Towards 2016” pay deal and implemented arbitrary pay cuts and changes in working conditions and added unpaid hours to the working week. The bus workers have already exposed the privatisation agenda at the heart of this Government.

The 80,000 members of the potential new union are well aware that the same will apply throughout the public sector through outsourcing. The fact is that the public sector is the most unionised sector, and consequently working conditions are better than many areas in the private sector. The neo-liberal right will therefore seek to disrupt any merger and try to prevent any restoration of either stolen pay or stolen hours.

Already the right-wing propagandists are at work. We have Cliff Taylor (*Irish Times*, 22 April) stating that the “jump in pay was one of the reasons we got into such trouble in the first place.” He goes on to say that “the country was bust so public pay was cut.”

Taylor and his like would profit from reading Cormac Lucey’s article “Independent Iceland teaches a great deal” in the *Sunday Times* of 19 March. Lucey is a right-wing commentator, but his article makes a number of important points that undermine the usual rhetoric from the Labour Party and others that there was “no alternative.”

In 2008–09 both countries faced the collapse of their banking sector. Iceland, unlike Ireland, let its banks go bankrupt. In Ireland the then Government of Fianna Fáil and the Green Party decided to bankrupt the country and save the banks.

Iceland burned the shareholders and foreign creditors. The Irish Government decided to betray its own citizens and protect the speculators.

The Icelanders also stood up to attempts by Britain and the Netherlands to reimburse deposit guarantee payments, amounting to €4 billion. Michael Noonan, then minister for finance, gave in to threats from Jean-Claude Trichet of the EU Central Bank.

Iceland also had the advantage of having its own currency, whereas Ireland is locked in to the euro, while our main trading partner uses sterling. Ireland, in effect, had to follow the diktat from Berlin instead of pursuing its own interests. Iceland is now booming, while the Irish bourgeoisie worry about Brexit.

Taylor also trots out the line that the Davy Group calculates that a private-sector worker would need a pension pot of €500,000 to match an average public-sector pension. This is the usual arrant nonsense that will be used to create envy between public and private sectors. What Taylor neglected to mention was that Davy were trying to compare the pension payment of a defined-benefit scheme and the notional fund required under a defined-contribution scheme—two very different beasts.

There will be more of this misdirection in the months ahead.



▲ Iceland burned the shareholders and foreign creditors. The Irish Government betrayed its own citizens and protected the speculators.



Political statement

Communist Party of Ireland

National Executive Committee

27 May 2017

The National Executive Committee of the Communist Party of Ireland, meeting on the last weekend of May, discussed the political and economic situation facing workers and working people across the country.

It is the assessment of the party that public-sector workers are going to face renewed attacks on their wages, terms and conditions by the Fine Gael-dominated coalition Government, propped up by Fianna Fáil. The party pointed out that if the trade union leadership accepts the premises as laid down by the Government, flowing from the report produced by the establishment's hand-picked "Public Service Pay Commission," that pay restoration was predicated on the Governments budgetary position, they have willingly walked into the carefully laid trap, accepting the false and artificial division between private and public-sector workers.

This can only lead to renewed attacks on public-sector workers. The whole ideological assault on the working class is for affirming low wages in the private sector by attacking what the establishment call overpaid civil servants with permanent, pensionable jobs. Workers need to clearly understand what is happening. This is the old tactic of divide and rule, splitting and pitting one set of workers against another group of workers.

Experience has shown that when sections of workers make advances, other workers follow, gaining confidence and strength to push forward. On the other hand, when the wages and conditions of one section of workers are lowered, this affects all workers. If the trade union leadership has accepted the logic of the Public Service Pay Commission they are condemning hundreds of thousands of workers in both the public and the private sector to low wages and to a permanent low-wage economy.

Returning to previous failed strategies is not the way forward. Rather, the recent transport disputes, in particular

in Dublin Bus, showed that advance can be won. It also show that there is sufficient support and sympathy within the wider working-class movement and communities.

Counterposing public-sector pay increases against the provision of public services is to place the emphasis and the responsibility in the wrong place. The party stated that it is not the role of workers to provide public services: that is the role of government.

The party once again reiterated its call on the state not to sell its share in AIB but instead AIB should be used as a state strategic investment, to target investment in public social infrastructure, job creation, and developing local businesses.

It is also clear that whichever candidate wins the Fine Gael leadership contest it will not make any difference to government policies; but the rhetoric of the two candidates presages an intensified assault on working people, continued cuts to public services, and a curtailment of democratic rights.

The party again called upon all those activists in the water struggle to step up the struggle to secure a constitutional amendment on the people's ownership of water. The back-room and parliamentary manoeuvring of the establishment of Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and reactionary independent TDs is about blocking and undermining this democratic demand. Workers need to shed the illusion that the Dáil and other institutions of the state are vehicles for achieving their needs and aspirations.

The party also had a full discussion on "Brexit," following the triggering of article 50 by the British government. Working people cannot sit back and allow the European Union and the British and Irish governments a free hand. They will only look after the interests of big business and global financial institutions.

Some forces are using Brexit to weaken opposition to the European Union and to further move away from a position of defending and advancing Irish national sovereignty and democracy. Their strategy is sowing further illusions and eroding opposition to the EU throughout the whole of the country.

The party reaffirmed its call for the opening up of a serious debate regarding the Republic's continued membership of the EU itself and as a first step to withdrawal from the euro zone. The debate over a "hard" or "soft" border once again exposes the many contradictions flowing from the imperialist partition of our country and the divisions that it sowed among our people.

There are no lasting solutions to be found to the concerns and demands of working people either within the British state or the European Union. The party expressed its solidarity with the working class in Britain, both in the struggle to have a "Brexit" that is in the interests of the working class and to maximise the electoral and political opposition to the current reactionary Conservative government.

The party expressed its solidarity with the Communist Party of Britain in its struggle to secure Britain's complete withdrawal from the EU, including the single market and customs union, and for the defence of workers' social, economic and political rights. There is a clear need to challenge the widespread illusion that the EU is somehow the guarantor of workers' rights.

In the forthcoming elections in the North of Ireland to the Westminster parliament the CPI called upon working people to vote for candidates who stand up for working people, who resist austerity, to vote for candidates who actively challenge sectarianism, who are for the advancement of the struggle for democracy and sovereignty.



A republican from Cork who fought fascism

Graham Harrington

KEVIN NEVILLE was born in Cork in 1921 into a family of Fenian stock that played an active role in the Black-and-Tan War. He joined Fianna Éireann at the age of eight and the IRA at the age of fifteen. He is believed to have taken part in all the IRA's main operations in the late 1930s to early 40s, including the seizure of the Cork broadcasting station during the 1940 hunger strike, an attack on the Royal Yacht Club at Cóbh, and the abortive rescue attempt of Tomás Óg Mac Curtáin (along with Michael O'Riordan, later general secretary of the Communist Party of Ireland).

This period—called the “Twilight Years” by Uinseann Mac Eoin—was a dark one for the IRA. It suffered executions, imprisonment, and internment.



It wasn't meant to happen

Ciarán Larkin

IT WASN'T MEANT to happen. As presidential election day in the United States approached, pollsters and pundits, bar-stool sages and the proverbial man in the street chorused with swelling confidence that Trump could not win. The American people would pull back from the appalling vista of a Trump presidency and elect the safer Hillary Clinton, consigning Trump's bid to a somewhat ludicrous, if deeply disquieting, historical footnote.

Instead the people did what, for the capitalist class, is a distressing habit they tend to have: they did the complete opposite. They voted for Trump in greater numbers than anybody could have predicted.

They didn't give Trump the presidency: the Electoral College ensured that. They didn't even give him more votes than Clinton: she won by more than three million in the popular vote. But they gave him enough votes to swing crucial states away from the Democratic Party and secure his election.

At this point it's important to stop

and state that while the election of Clinton would have been preferable, a Clinton victory would have made scant difference to the American worker. Yes, a few sops would have doled out to minorities, with much high-flying rhetoric about fairness, equality, and justice; but the material circumstances of the workers would not have advanced a single millimetre with Clinton in the White House.

While Trump might preach a message of absurd capitalist nationalism, Clinton is very much an acolyte of neo-liberalism, that purest form of capitalism that over the last forty years has cowed workers around the globe into submission, forcing them to accept lower wages, longer working hours and reduced living standards and submerging their lives in an endless river of fear and uncertainty about the future.

In the days after the election many Americans asked just how Trump had come to be elected. Others asked perhaps a more vital question: just how had the Republican Party been invaded and ultimately cannibalised by a group of rabidly racist, misogynist, fascist-leaning right-wing fanatics, for whom

Trump became their figurehead.

This was, after all, the party of Lincoln, a radical party founded in the mid-1850s that espoused the abolition of slavery and complete civil rights for black people. It was only the veto of Andrew Johnson (Lincoln's successor and a Democrat) that denied full equality.

By the 1880s the radical zeal of the party had ebbed and it had aligned itself with the interests of the capitalist class. Still, Republicans tended to display more socially liberal tendencies than their Democratic counterparts, the support of many of whom was anchored in the socially conservative South. The Democrats' Southern support would not finally collapse until the 1960s, when much of it migrated to the eastern and western coasts.

So what had happened to the “Grand Old Party” of American politics? The Republican Party always had right-wing elements: one only has to think of Joseph McCarthy and his anti-communist witch-hunts of the 1950s. But the leadership remained predominately eastern “WASPs” (white Anglo-Saxon Protestants). In many



In 1940 the IRA's chief of staff, Charlie Kerins, was hanged by De Valera's government, with the executioner Albert Pierrepoint brought in from England to do the job. Neville's Cork comrade J. J. Kavanagh was shot while unarmed by the Garda Special Branch as he was engaged in building a tunnel to rescue republican prisoners in Cork Gaol.

Like O'Riordan, Neville was interned by De Valera's government in the Curragh in the 1940s. In total he spent three years in Cork Gaol and the Curragh Internment Camp. It's possible that it was here that he became convinced of left-wing politics, possibly

in the camp lectures by communists such as Neil Goold in the Connolly Group.

In 1941, after the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, Neville took the advice of some socialists in the Curragh and, along with five others, enlisted in the fight against fascism, making the difficult decision to join the British air force, which gained him his release.

After he returned there was no place for him in the IRA because of his having served in the British military. In the early 1950s he joined the newly formed Saor Ulaidh group, which was making preparations for armed struggle in the Six Counties, before and during the IRA's border campaign. In 1955 he participated in the attack on Roslea Barracks in Co. Fermanagh, which left Connie Green, a fellow-member of Saor Ulaidh, dead.

Neville subsequently became the commander of Saor Ulaidh's Southern Command and was involved also with the left-republican "Irish Revolutionary Forces" in Cork. In 1963 the group's office, where its paper, *An Phoblacht*, was produced, was raided by the IRA. Neville, at the age of forty-two, along

with seven other IRF members, then raided the IRA's local hall in Cork to show they would not be bullied.

He died on 14 June 1964 from cancer at the age of forty-three. A fellow-member of Saor Ulaidh, Frank Morris, said in his oration:

Kevin Neville was no mere patriot following in old traditional steps. He was a progressive revolutionary, a man who preached the doctrine of James Connolly, that the fight was useless if we merely changed flags and masters and did not change the whole social and economic system. He also believed that a revolutionary's main principle should be the achieving of his object, that his hands should not be tied by petty principles, and that he should change his tactics to meet changing situations.

A commemorative committee was established in 1965, with the participation of local members of the then Irish Workers' Party, Jim Savage and Maura Sheehan. A monument was subsequently unveiled at Inishcarra.

cases these were both capitalist and patriarchal. It was in the early 1960s that a splinter group comprising mainly white middle-class office workers and small businessmen began their slow agitation against the party leadership.

While the post-war years have often been described as a golden period for capitalism, they were in many ways the high-water mark of trade union success. Heavily unionised work forces were able to leverage their strength and extract a range of concessions from employers, such as higher pay, better working conditions, and a larger slice of the profit pie.

And while large transnationals such as Ford and American Steel could afford such concessions, the petit-bourgeois element could not. Caught between the demands of Labour and big Capital, they saw their profit margins shrinking and a Republican Party leadership that was wilfully adding erosion of their profit line. The insurgency was on.

The first inkling of rebellion came with the nomination of the right-wing Barry Goldwater in the 1964 presidential campaign. Goldwater lost the election to Lyndon Johnson in a landslide; but the message was clear: the old elite of the Republican leadership would no longer have free rein.

For the next forty years the revolt continued, ebbing and flowing in strength but all the while eroding the elitist core of the party, pushing liberal Republicans either to the margins that the ultra-right had once occupied or, in most cases, out of the party entirely.

Yet the capitalist, elitist centre, through offering minor concessions to the hard right on marriage law, abortion, and affirmative action, were able to remain dominant. Then came the perfect storm of the Bush and Obama governments and the financial crisis. The Republican electorate became even more radicalised as they witnessed the bank and home-owner bail-out.

From this anger the Tea Party burst forth, uniting older white managers, professionals and small business people with younger middle-class ranks, all of whom resented the bail-out of "undeserving" home-owners and corporate welfare.

The capitalist leaders of the Republican Party, seeing an opportunity to defeat Obama's modest health reforms, offered an alliance to the Tea Party, which was gleefully seized.

The partnership was initially a fruitful one. They were able to thin out much of the more radical elements of the Affordable Care Act. Still, and despite successes, such as capturing the House

of Representatives in the 2010 elections, tensions continually bubbled to the surface.

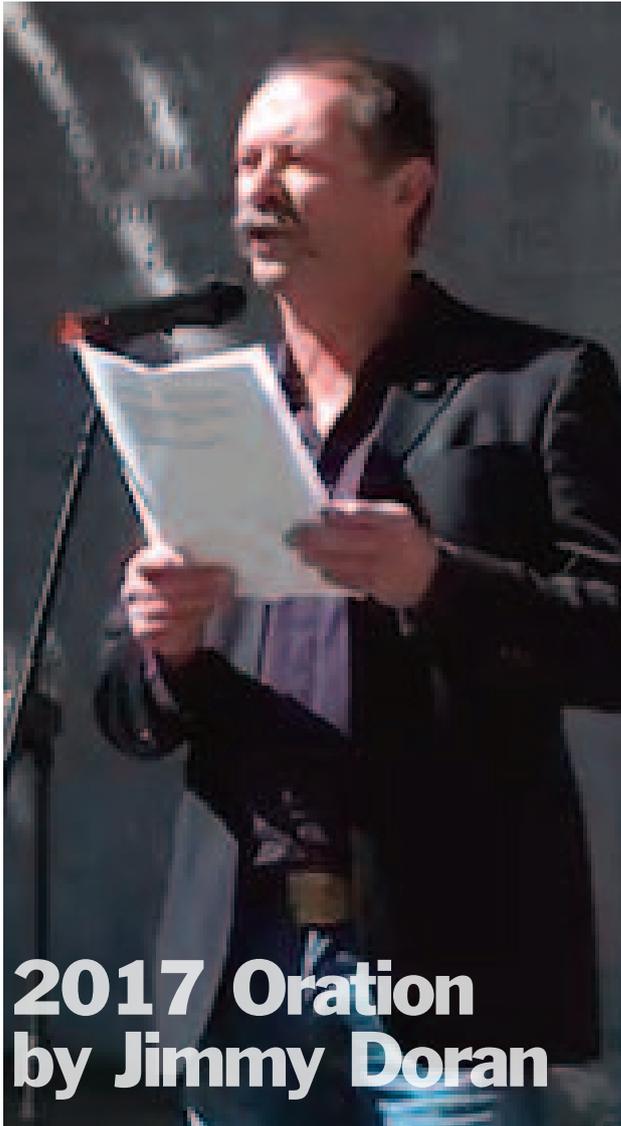
The Tea Party tenaciously refused to toe the line, especially on economic matters. They supported stricter limits on immigration and advocated an economic nationalism utterly at odds with the capitalists' neo-liberalism, and they had no qualms about pushing the country to the brink of a federal default.

All this was too much for the capitalists, who broke off the alliance. But they had underestimated the depth of the radicalisation that had taken hold of the working-class and middle-class component of the Republican Party. When Trump announced his candidacy, the radicalised right-wing elements of the Republican Party and middle class flocked to him. Many of the traditionalist stalwarts of the party, repelled by Trump's economic nationalism and his views on free trade, fled to Clinton.

It mattered little. Trump, by rejecting the elements of neo-liberalism that had impoverished sections of both the middle class and working class, gained huge swathes of votes. He ran a campaign primarily based on fear, and it worked.

The ultra-right had captured the Republican Party, and American politics had changed utterly.

JAMES CONNOLLY COMMEMORATION



2017 Oration by Jimmy Doran

COMRADES AND FRIENDS, we are here as an expression of our continued opposition to British imperialism and partition and to reaffirm our commitment to the struggle for national unity, political and economic independence, and national sovereignty.

We must study Connolly's politics, learn from them, and use this knowledge to advance our struggle today.

We have spent the last week celebrating the centenary of the Russian Revolution as part of the James Connolly Festival, and it is no coincidence that the working class are under sustained attack since the defeat and betrayal of socialism in the Soviet Union. The capitalist class have tightened the screw on workers all over the world, because now they don't have to compete with the Soviet Union and the huge gains achieved by workers under socialism.

Lots of political parties and groups claim James Connolly as their inspiration. James Connolly was a socialist, a Marxist, an anti-imperialist,

an internationalist, and a trade union organiser. James Connolly would have had no hand, act or part in the 1990 Industrial Relations Act, or "social partnership." He certainly would have nothing to do with the prosecution of children for peaceful protest. Connolly was always on the side of the oppressed, not the oppressor.

He would be down on the runway in Shannon defending our neutrality and stopping the American war 3 genocidal wars.

He would have no truck with the imperialism of the European Union, and he would laugh at the deluded suggestion of using Brexit and membership of the European Union as a means of uniting the country by surrendering our national sovereignty and democracy to the imperialism of the European Union.

James Connolly fought and died for a socialist republic, not the gombeen partitioned country with a divided people that the counter-revolution installed.

There is one thing in common between these two parts of Ireland: the unelected power of private business determines the course of both economies, through investment and production decisions. This gives them total power over government, no matter what party or jurisdiction we are talking about.

What unites the people is our labour power, our class. Without the workers, capital is powerless. We have to set about reorganising the economy so it is no longer dependent on private capital.

War has been declared on the working class all around the world under this neo-liberal globalised economy that we now live in. Let's call it what it is: it is imperialism, and under this imperialism 83 per cent of all goods manufactured in the world are now manufactured in the Global South, in sweatshops for slave wages, with little regard for health and safety and total disregard for the environment.

As result of this super-exploitation of workers in the poorest areas of the planet, half a trillion dollars is shipped back to the richest countries from the profits earned on the backs of these exploited workers every year. Neither slavery nor the genocidal clearances of indigenous people, nor the worst excesses of colonialism, could achieve a wealth transfer of this magnitude. What military force could not achieve in the last couple of centuries market

forces are doing on a massive scale every year; and they call this foreign direct investment. Foreign direct imperialism—the plunder of the poorest peoples of the world—goes on unabated.

So how does foreign direct investment operate in Ireland? It is the preferred option of Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, and the Labour Party. Sinn Féin are quite fond of it too. In order to attract FDI into Ireland they fall backwards over each other with grants, tax breaks, and a supposed 12½ per cent corporation tax, despite the average being paid of 2.2 per cent. In the case of Apple, our government has refused €13 billion in taxes from them.

This is why we hear Noonan, Bruton and a plethora of right-wing politicians and economists constantly going on about the need to increase competitiveness and broaden the tax base.

What they mean is reducing wages and corporation and employment taxes on the one hand and on the other hand increasing the tax taken from wages, either directly by PAYE or indirectly through VAT, or property tax, bin charges, or cuts to public services. This is "the broadening of the tax base." This brings citizens who don't earn enough money to pay tax on their income into the tax net by taxing them indirectly, thus cutting their income. This is done to facilitate the low-tax regime for business.

So when the Labour Party state they didn't cut social welfare rates and protected the minimum wage rate, it is a lie, because they did this by broadening the tax base. Smoke and mirrors, comrades: smoke, mirrors, and spin.

A permanent pensionable job is now a thing of the past. Work is all short-term rolling contracts, part-time, minimum or zero-hour contracts, and of course bogus self-employment. When you don't know how much you are likely to earn from week to week, from day to day or hour to hour, it's impossible to plan your life ahead. This uncertainty is intolerable, and there is no doubt that soaring levels of depression and suicide among our people are added to by precarious employment. This is wage slavery.

Half of the people earn less than €28,000 a year. Average rent in Dublin is €300 a week—that is, €15,600 a year. That is over half the gross pay of half the population. When taxes and stoppages are deducted it

▲ Arbour Hill, Dublin, 14 May 2017

Jimmy Doran is chairperson of the Dublin District of the Communist Party of Ireland

leaves very little left to live on.

Recovery? What recovery? Recovery for who? Recovery for the employers, whose soaring profits are barely taxed, and the rack-renting landlords who have increased rents by 66 per cent in six years.

Homelessness is at an all-time high of over 7,000 citizens, including 2,500 children.

According to the 2016 census, home ownership is at its lowest level since 1971. Overcrowding has increased for the first time in fifty years. Private renting is the predominant type of housing in our cities today.

The state's answer to the problem is to hand over eight hundred sites—approximately 5,000 acres of publicly owned land—to private developers to build houses. Private developers cannot be trusted. Priory Hall, Longboat Quay, property bubbles and crashes are examples of what happens when the building of homes is handed over to the private sector.

In the 1930s, after several tenements collapsed, killing over a hundred citizens, the government was forced to act. The answer was then, as it should be now, a massive public house-building programme, from planning to completion. This is the way to give decency, dignity and certainty to our citizens in housing: public housing, not social housing.

When the banks required €64 billion because of reckless trading by them and big business, the government chose to borrow this money in our name, thus putting private banking debt on the backs of our citizens. This was a choice: they prioritised the banks over the people.

On the May Day rally in Dublin

recently there was a chant “*Cuba has no waiting lists—that’s because it’s socialist.*” The reason there are no waiting lists in Cuba is that the Cuban Communist Party prioritises the citizens and the environment above everything else. It is a policy decision. Cuba provides state creches for all the children of the country. Ireland provides a monthly payment and abandons the care of children to the private sector, whose priority is profit, not child care.

That’s the difference. These are choices and priorities that either cause a problem or solve the issue.

Allied Irish Bank is now owned by the state and should be kept in state ownership as a National Development Bank. That’s a priority decision in the interests of the citizens. The Government have other ideas. Who will this benefit—you and me, or big business?

The state wants to sell off Allied Irish Bank for a one-off short-term gain. If we retain the bank as a National Development Bank its investments will be made in the interest of the common good. It will take a lot of the decisions on where the state is to invest out of the hands of private capital and will set the standard for other banks. The bank made a profit last year of over a billion. It makes no sense to sell it.

War has been declared on the working class. It’s time we exposed the lies. Workers have realised that austerity *does* work, and it works very well for those who designed it: the ruling class. We must not forget the tens of thousands of Irish citizens who marched, refused to pay water charges and blocked the installation of water meters to stop the Government

privatising the natural resource that is our water. From the start of the water campaign the Communist Party of Ireland called on the state to hold a referendum to enshrine public ownership and management of our water in the Constitution.

The former Labour Party leader Joan Burton is trying to get peaceful protest outlawed in the courts by having children and elected representatives charged with her “kidnapping” during a peaceful protest in Jobstown. If she is successful it will have massive implications for protests in the future, whether it be protest marches or the picket lines of striking workers. Once again social democrats have been exposed as the last pillar that props up capitalism. They are but traitors to the working class.

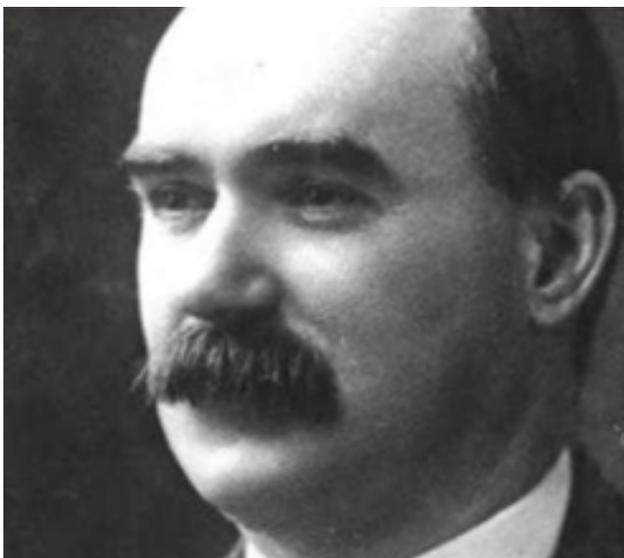
The ruling class tell us at every opportunity in the media and speeches, and drum it into our young people in schools and colleges, that there is no alternative.

What would James Connolly say? James Connolly would say that if humanity is to survive and flourish in Ireland and the world—

- There is no alternative to the common good.
- There is no alternative to public housing and health care.
- There is no alternative to peace.
- There is no alternative to ending world poverty.
- There is no alternative to this environment.
- There is no alternative to decency and dignity for our people.

Comrades, there is no alternative: it’s socialism or barbarism.

We only want the Earth!



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A poem that could make a difference

Gabriel Rosenstock introduces and translates another poem from the Indian sub-continent.

“Pandu, the Masseur in Goa” by Abhay K is a previously unpublished poem that every tourist should read. I’d very much like to see it as a poster poem in airports around the world.

Its raw immediacy strikes home. Its message is unavoidable and unambiguous. I love the irony in the line “this time I’ve voted for the

opposition.” As if that’s going to make one damn difference! But this is a poem that could make a difference, that could change our attitude—and the way we all behave when we take a holiday. How many poems today manage to do that? I suppose you could call this type of poetry “exposure poetry.” Well, then, we could do with a lot more of it.

Pandu, the Masseur in Goa

My name is Pandu,
I am a masseur from Kolhapur,
the state of Maharashtra

I can do foot massage, head massage
I can massage your genitals
I have been massaging since past twenty years,

mostly Americans, English and Danes
but now the beach is full of Russians
and I don’t know much Russian sadly

My fellow masseur met a Swiss woman
they got married and went to Switzerland,
now he asks me give him a massage (chuckles)

I work here only six months in a year—
October to May, then I go back to Kolhapur
to work in the fields, to grow vegetables and fruits

earlier I used to sell grass, opium and drugs
not any more, it has become too dangerous
but don’t worry, I still have got some contacts

I can get you whatever you want—drugs, women
please let me give you a massage,
please don’t tell anyone what I am telling you

the beach shack owner does not pay me
he does not give me food or any drinks
I pay extortion to the police every month

all I earn is from massages I do
so please let me massage you,
this time I’ve voted for the opposition

look at my finger tip, the dot of Indian ink,
they will give licences for five years
to run the beach shacks

Government did nothing much in the past six years,
I am building a home here in Goa, I have taken a loan
and have to pay a huge sum as interest every month

please let me give you a massage,
my family will die of hunger back in Kolhapur
be kind, take pity on me, let me give you a massage.

Pandu, Suathaire i nGoa

Pandu is ainm dom,
is suathaire mé as Kolhapur,
stát Maharashtra

Is féidir liom suathaireacht cos a dhéanamh, suathaireacht cinn
d’fhéadfainn do bhaill ghiniúna a imchuid duit
táim i mbun suathaireachta le scór bliain anuas,

Meiriceánaigh is mó, Sasanaigh is Danmhargaigh
ach bíonn an trá lán de Rúisigh anois
níl mórán Rúisise agam faraor

bhuail mo chomh-shuathaire le bean as an Eilvéis
phósadar agus chuadar chun na hEilvéise,
larrann sé ormsa anois suathaireacht a thabhairt dó siúd (scig-gháire)

ní oibrímse anseo ach sé mhí in aghaidh na bliana—
Deireadh Fómhair go Bealtaine, ar ais liom ansin go Kolhapur
d’fhonn na goirt a shaothrú, glasraí is torthaí a fhás

roimhe sin bhínn ag díol raithní, óipiam is drugaí
ní dheinim níos mó é, tá sé ródhainséarach anois
ach ná bí buartha, tá roinnt teagmhálacha agam i gcónaí

gheobhaidh mé rud ar bith duit is mian leat—drugaí, mná
lig dom suathaireacht a thabhairt duit,
ná hinis d’éinne led’ thoil an méid atáim á rá leat

ní íocann úinéir an bhotháin trá mé
ní thugann sé bia ná deoch dom
íocaim sracadh leis na póilíní uair sa mhí

níl de theacht isteach agam ach an tsuathaireacht
lig dom suathaireacht a thabhairt duit led’ thoil,
thugas vóta don bhfreasúra an babhta seo

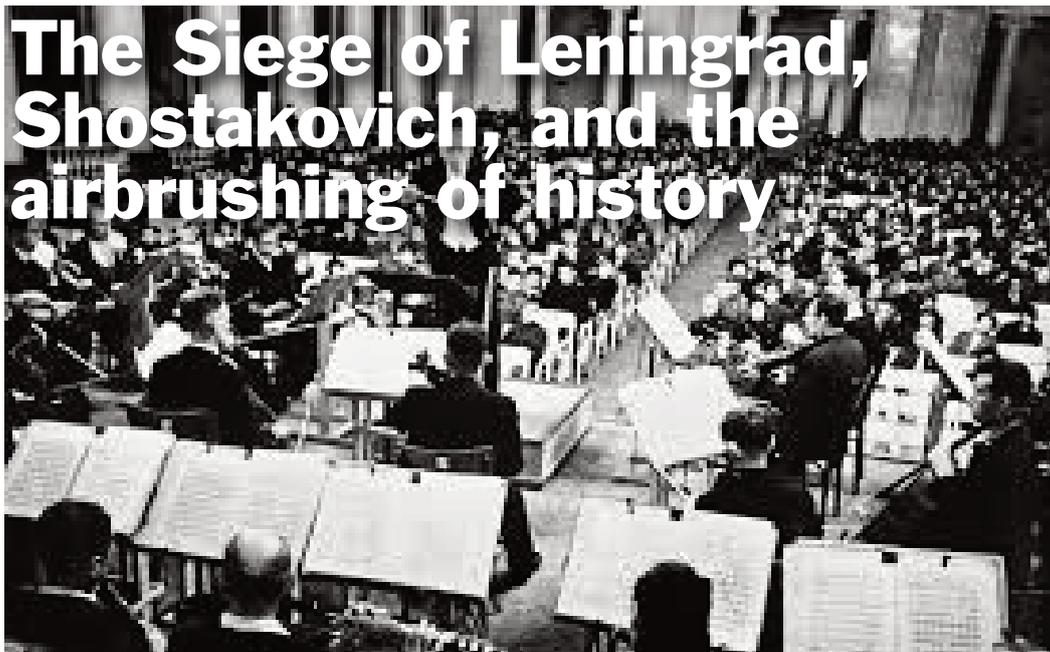
féach ar bharr mo mhéire, ponc de dhúch Indiach,
eisíonn siad ceadúnais ar feadh cúig bliana
chun na botháin trá a rith

níor dhein an Rialtas mórán le sé bliana anuas,
tá tigh á thógaint anseo agam i nGoa, tá iasacht faighte agam
agus suim mhór a híoc agam mar ús gach mí

lig dom suathaireacht a thabhairt duit le do thoil,
caillfear an teaghlach den ocras thoir in Kolhapur
bí cineálta, bíodh trua agat dom, lig dom suathaireacht a thabhairt duit.



The Siege of Leningrad, Shostakovich, and the airbrushing of history



Jenny Farrell

THE COLD WAR against Russia—and previously the Soviet Union—continues. This includes the removal from public memory of the many atrocities committed by Nazi Germany on the Soviet population and the latter's heroic role in the defeat of fascism.

▲ Karl Eliasberg conducting, 9 August 1942

Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony, the *Leningrad*, is available on Youtube.

On 22 June 1941 Germany invaded the Soviet Union. This resulted in a slaughter of holocaust proportions: 25 million Russians perished, more than half the dead of the Second World War.

One of the most horrendous acts of barbarity was the German blockade of Leningrad. For almost 900 days, from 8 September 1941 to 27 January 1944, all supplies were cut off, and the people of Leningrad systematically starved to death. More than a million Leningraders died.

Fast forward to April 2017 and a fatal terrorist attack (by groups rather than states) takes place in St Petersburg (Leningrad). After similar attacks in western European cities, the national flag of Russia has been projected onto Berlin's Brandenburg Gate as an expression of solidarity—but not this time, because St Petersburg has no "special relationship" with Berlin, according to the mayor. Perhaps the airbrushing of history meant he had never heard of Leningrad.

The Siege of Leningrad was recorded not only in books but in music. A resident in Leningrad at the time was the composer Dmitri Shostakovich. He began work on a symphony immediately the attack began, expressing his thoughts on Soviet life and the ability of his people

to defeat the fascists. This, his Seventh Symphony, is known as the *Leningrad*.

It has four movements. The first is entitled "War" and begins with lyrical music describing a peaceful life in the USSR before the fascist invasion. A solo violin is interrupted by a distant drum and the "invasion theme," which is repeated twelve times, with a growing number of instruments, growing ever louder and shriller, creating a profound sense of unease. Military drums punctuate this section, which ends in an outcry of pain and horror. A quieter passage follows—a solo flute, then a bassoon, grieving the dead. Accompaniment is fragmented, so expressing the broken people it bewails. Dissonances dominate.

In the second movement, "Memories," the mood changes to happier times, some dance melodies, although a note of sadness is also present.

The music of the third movement, "Wide Expanses of Our Land," affirms the heroism of the people, their humanism, and Russia's great natural beauty. The movement is a dialogue between chorale, the solace given by the splendour of the homeland, and the solo voice, the violins, the individual in torment. Both the second and the third movement express Shostakovich's conviction that "war doesn't necessarily destroy cultural values."

About the final movement, "Victory," Shostakovich commented: "My idea of victory isn't something brutal; it's better explained as the victory of light over darkness, of humanity over barbarism, of reason over reaction." The

movement begins by describing, musically, people at work in peacetime, full of hope and happiness, as the drums and guns of war overcome them. The music marches, fights, and resists.

Victory does not come easily. Shostakovich begins with the timpani roll that concluded the slow third movement and gradually adds other voices. Slowly the music moves towards its conclusion, with brass fanfares and cymbal crashes. It forces its way into bright C major—the upbeat key of victory. Yet the final chords in this most magnificent of keys contain a sorrowful sound. In full recognition of the realities, the unimaginable suffering of war, the symphony cannot end in simple triumph.

Shostakovich composed most of the symphony while under siege in Leningrad. Several months into the blockade, and despite his objections, the Soviet government evacuated the Shostakovich family, along with other artists.

The *Leningrad Symphony* was performed on 9 August 1942 in his besieged home city. The score was airlifted in across Nazi lines. The orchestra had only fifteen musicians left, but more were recalled from the front.

A clarinet-player at this historic performance, Galina Lelyukhina, recalled rehearsals: "They said on the radio that all living musicians were invited. It was hard to walk. I was sick with scurvy, and my legs were very painful. At first there were nine of us, but then more people arrived. The conductor, Eliasberg, was brought on a sledge, because hunger had made him so weak."

On 9 August 1942 the hall was packed, with windows and doors open so that those outside could hear. The music was broadcast on the streets and to the fronts to inspire the whole nation. The Red Army pre-empted German plans to disrupt the performance by shelling the enemy beforehand to ensure silence for the two hours needed for the concert.

A survivor of the blockade, Irina Skripacheva, remembers: "This symphony had a huge impact on us. The rhythm incited a feeling of elevation, flight . . . At the same time we could feel the scary rhythm of the German hordes. It was unforgettable and overwhelming."

Seventy-five years later, along Russia's western border, NATO (including German) tanks and troops prepare for war.



Ireland and Syria

In May, Clare Daly posed a question in the Dáil to the Government. It said as follows: “To ask the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the organisations to which the government provided funding in Syria, with particular reference to the oversight and scrutiny which took place regarding the destination of these funds; and if he will make a statement on the matter.” The reply was as follows:

“Minister of State, Mr. Joe McHugh T.D.: Since 2012, Ireland has provided more than €76 million in assistance for the humanitarian crisis as a result of the devastating conflict in Syria. At the Supporting Syria and the Region high-level conference in Brussels last month, I pledged that Ireland would provide at least a further €25 million in 2017.

“Ireland’s funding is channelled through a range of partners who are best placed to respond to people’s urgent needs on the ground, both inside Syria and in neighbouring countries hosting large numbers of refugees. These partners include both the UN and International Red Cross and Red Crescent agencies and NGO partners, who provide humanitarian supplies and urgently needed health, education, water and sanitation services, as well as protection for children and vulnerable families.

“We decide on the allocation of funds on the basis of categorisation of needs and assessment of which partners are best placed with capacity

to respond and access to those in need. Any partner Irish Aid works with in a high risk environment such as Syria is subject to careful systems assessment and review. All grants are subject to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform provisions on the Management of and Accountability for Grants from Exchequer Funds. All recipients of public funds are required to demonstrate transparency, accountability, and effective and efficient use of funds.

“A rigorous monitoring approach is applied with all grants, including reviews of annual performance reports and audited accounts, annual bilateral meetings with partners, and field-level monitoring visits, where possible. In addition, Ireland regularly participates in international donor co-ordination mechanisms that monitor and oversee the work of our UN and Red Cross and Red Crescent partners.”

The Minister then went on to say: “I recently visited Jordan and Lebanon to see at first hand how Ireland’s assistance is helping refugees affected by the crisis to meet their daily needs. Officials from my Department have also recently travelled to the region to monitor funding provided to NGO and Red Cross and Red Crescent partners.”

It is unfortunate, and possibly deliberate, that those NGO partners are not named but include GOAL, which works exclusively in Syria. Why can he not name them and where the money actually goes?

He then says all Ireland’s partners are kosher, open, transparent etc. but does not name any of them. Simple follow-up question: **Outside of the UN/RC/RC who are Ireland working with and funding? Will**

he name them and say where specifically the money goes? Yet it is generally believed who specifically got the money we gave in Damascus, Maloula and Aleppo in May.

Yet the Irish government refuses to send TDs or senators to government-held Syria; they allow ISIS and MI6 thugs attack the Belgian, Russian and other embassies. The Minister for Foreign Affairs has been clear in this writer’s view that the bulk of Syria’s civilians can go f**k themselves because they do not live in the stone age Idlib Caliphate that Ireland’s fund goes to.

In April 2017 in the Dáil, Mick Wallace TD posed many questions to the Minister for Foreign Affairs regarding Syria. (See Dáil Debates, 13/04/17, Topical Issues, and link to Youtube.)

The Minister is his usual effusive self, not answering directly the questions asked, and yet this state willingly gives out our money, and without any accountability or scrutiny. It also reveals Flanagan basically saying we are into regime change and we are helping to build up the infrastructure of rebel Syria. But no-one is building up that infrastructure, as their economy is a pirates’ and brigands’ one. (Let’s not even mention the prostitution of Irish neutrality.)

Is it really acceptable that funding can be allowed to be continued? Is there anywhere in the so-called democratic world that would allow this to continue?

Where stand the Independents in the Dáil and Sinn Féin with regard to this issue?

Paul Doran
Dublin

Planes that kill other people’s children

Niall Farrell

LATER THIS month the Bray Air Display—thanks to funding from Wicklow County Council—will announce its line-up for the now annual event in late July. Have no doubt that NATO warplanes will be in evidence on the programme.

Last year the RAF and the Italian air force strutted their stuff across the Dublin skies. But the web site of the RAF Red Arrows makes plain the real aim behind these displays: “to carry out defence diplomacy overseas”—in other words, propaganda—and “to aid

recruitment into the Armed Forces.”

These air displays are a means of sanitising and therefore glorifying war.

For the punter in Bray the air show is meant to be an exhilarating experience as these machines of death scream overhead. But in the war zones of the Middle East the sound of these warplanes generates terror, not titillation, for the people below.

They are weapons of mass destruction: they indiscriminately kill, maim, and terrorise. To have these on show as a form of light entertainment

not only glorifies war but also presents the Irish people as supporters of the horrendous acts of violence carried out by these warplanes.

That is why we urge the organisers to remove this weaponry at the event. We believe that with a little imagination the air show could continue with the same level of success as before, but without these unwelcome weapons of mass destruction.

Let’s face it: should planes that kill other people’s children be fun for our children?

