



SOCIAL JUSTICE

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CONSOLIDATING THE PEACE: A JOURNAL

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INTRODUCTION

Mel Corry
Trademark



The recent murder of a young PSNI constable shows clearly that the argument for peaceful transition has not been accepted by all in our society and the trade union demonstration at Belfast City Hall following the murder is another example of the leadership required to bring these attacks to an end.

Throughout the darkest days of the Northern Ireland conflict the Trade Union Movement campaigned for peace and an end to all violence both state and paramilitary. It identified at an early stage that sectarianism was the greatest impediment to workers unity and progress. In 1990 The Irish Congress of Trade Unions established Counteract as an anti-intimidation unit designed to intervene in workplace sectarian conflict

often related to the display of flags and emblems. Counteract was staffed by a team of skilled and committed activists who established a strongly anti-sectarian approach from the outset. These steps were taken at great risk to those who were involved and also at the risk of losing large numbers of members for taking such a robust stand on these issues. Many within the trade unions felt that this was territory that unions should avoid, that we should adopt a non-sectarian line and practice a studied neutrality. Others were opposed to the strong campaigning stance taken on fair employment legislation in the 1970s with some members even refusing to accept that discrimination existed at a community and institutional level in Northern Ireland. The story of the role of the trade union movement during the conflict

remains to be told and whilst many acknowledge its role in maintaining safe and harmonious working environments for its members, for others it controversially remained silent on a number of human rights issues relating to the conflict, such as the introduction of internment and the hunger strikes. Even though the ICTU condemned the Ulster Workers Council stoppage and led marches back into work at the time, for many Republicans the unions were seen to be supporting the status quo.

Nevertheless the ICTU pursued a strongly anti-sectarian line and went on to campaign for a 'yes' vote in the referendum on the 'Good Friday' agreement. So twelve years after the agreement, significant demilitarisation and decommissioning of weapons, where are we as a society? Do we live in peace with our

neighbours? Have we buried the past and learned the lessons from the conflict? Have we consigned political violence to the history books? Of course the answer is no, we still live in separate communities, we educate our children separately, we play different sports, we socialise separately, we read different newspapers and our communities still bear the scars of conflict and neglect. So for all of the brave work of countless trade unionists over the years much work needs to be done to deal with the legacy of our recent conflict and decades of sectarianism.

We have long argued for a double transition from war to peace and from individualism and consumerism to social solidarity.

The Trademark project 'Consolidating the Peace' recognises the historic role of the trade union movement and continues that strongly anti-sectarian approach. It endeavours to help the trade union movement put its own house in order by mainstreaming anti-sectarianism and anti-racism at the heart of trade union education and training. The movement itself does not stand isolated from sectarianism, racism and discrimination, it cannot be allowed to think that this is an issue we have dealt with and that somehow the absence of violence means the end of sectarianism. It exists among its members, in its committees and structures and it affects our ability to serve members

and give the political and civic lead that is required. Our training programmes has also attempted to target the relative absence of overtly political and economic analyses in a largely skills-based approach offered by the core trade union education programme.

We also recognises that a proper process of peace and reconciliation can only take place alongside economic security and prosperity. All those involved in peace and reconciliation are aware that their work is being shaped and modified by the social and economic conditions

that we find ourselves in. The project has struggled to deal with all of these issues against the backdrop of the worst economic crisis since the 1930's, it could be argued that high levels of personal debt make this crisis much deeper than the 'Great Depression' ever was and that more people will yet feel the effects across the globe.

What is clear to us is that none of those involved in promoting peace should fall in behind the neo-Liberal call for massive cuts under a shabby disguise of promoting sharing.

We have long argued that the peace process must contain a double transition from war to peace and from

individualism and consumerism to social solidarity. Of course a sustainable and peaceful future cannot be achieved if there is no investigation of how currently polarised communities might live and work together so that we do not accept 'benign apartheid' as the full and final settlement of the Irish conflict.

Against this backdrop we have asked a number of commentators to speak on broader political concerns affecting our communities in Northern Ireland. We hope it will help put our difficulties into a wider context of peace *and* social justice.



EDUCATIONAL UNDERACHIEVEMENT IN THE PROTESTANT WORKING CLASS

Dawn Purvis

EDUCATIONAL UNDERACHIEVEMENT IN THE PROTESTANT WORKING CLASS



Dawn Purvis

Sixteen years after the ceasefires, twelve years after the Good Friday Agreement, and three years into our longest period of stable democracy since 1972, and everything should be looking rosy for our wee country. Well, it is politically speaking. The DUP and Sinn Fein seem to have worked out a relationship of sorts, the Executive is functioning to a degree and the Assembly is growing into its role of legislature and policy scrutiniser. I do not underestimate how difficult a journey it has been to get where we are today with the (almost) absence of structured paramilitary violence and political foes sitting around the Executive table deciding on the Programme for Government and the Budget for the next four years. If anyone had said that same sentence sixteen years ago they would have been laughed at, but it's true.

The same is true of our grassroots peace process. Former prisoners and combatants and others from all sides of the conflict now work together on the interfaces around the issue of contentious

parades, and on inter-community and intra-community levels to deal with the legacies of the conflict including how we, as a society, deal with our past in order to build a better future.

This is ground-breaking work in many respects and that is what building peace is all about: developing new relationships,

This is ground-breaking work in many respects and that is what building peace is all about.

exploring past relationships, and identifying new ways to address emerging needs that are both empowering and inclusive. I have often thought that the work going on at grassroots is far in advance (in terms of the type of the type of society we want to live in) of the work and attitude of some of our political leaders. I understand a little more now about how fear, ideology and others' need to preserve political power are used at the expense of logical decision-making in government. That said, I acknowledge how far we have come.

However, there is an awful lot more to be done. If you live in a Protestant working class area, (I hate to use the term but I like 'PUL' even less), the chances of you being empowered by or included in the future of your country seem to be growing less and less with every year that passes. If you were just born in 1994 and happen to live in

Inner East Belfast, chances are you are one of four out of five young people who left school this year with no qualifications; one of the 25% increase in the last six months of 16-24 year olds who are claiming Job Seekers Allowance; one of the over 50,000 young people classed as NEETS, i.e., not in education, employment or training; and one of a growing 252,000 adults unable to read or write.

Educational underachievement didn't start in 1994; it has been here for a long time. One of the factors adding to educational

underachievement in working class areas is, of course, the wrongly named practice of 'academic selection,' which operated in Northern Ireland as social selection. This has been proven by those elitist grammar schools whose intake include all grades from selection tests (even Ds) but few or no students from deprived wards, as their FSME (Free School Meal Entitlement) statistics make clear.

I, along with other interested individuals, established a Working Group, with support from Assembly Library and Research Services to examine educational underachievement among the Protestant working class and in particular young males. To quote from our consultation document,

"The issue of Protestant underachievement is not here understood as simply a comparison between Catholic and Protestant pupils, nor the assertion of competition between them. The main divide in terms of gaining schools' based qualifications is determined primarily by social class and factors external to schools, as well as between the grammar and non grammar sectors. Those at Controlled non-grammar schools tend to, at a general level, do less well than any of their counterparts in any post-primary sector. In particular, socially disadvantaged Catholics perform better than their Protestant counterparts, whereas grammar schools pupils have, in terms of religious background, more similar educational profiles. In studying, the data on underachievement it is vital to note that solutions, at a general level (we are aware of qualification diversity among

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Controlled non-grammar schools) have not been found with regard to reversing this type and form of underachievement and that we are keen to develop ideas on how gaps can be closed between pupils, how alternative modes of learning will help the disadvantaged and also how the debate on it can be brought to the heart of problem-solving solutions."

In 2001, a report by the University of Ulster for the Office of First and deputy First Minister found, "the educational non-progressor was most likely to be a Protestant working class male". Factors which may also impact on a child's ability to learn include: a perceived lack of value placed on education; a shortage of positive role models; the impact of 'The Troubles'; and, a decline in readiness for schooling at primary level. Almost a decade after that report was produced the situation remains the same. Although children from working class areas do less well than those from better-off backgrounds, there is a gap between those who attend Maintained schools and those who attend Controlled schools. For example, a socially disadvantaged pupil in a Catholic (Maintained) school will have a 1 in 5 chance of going to University, compared to a similar pupil in a Protestant (Controlled) school, who has a 1 in 10 chance (Equality Commission 2008).

The individual impact of educational underachievement among Protestant working class males is evident now with increasing unemployment. Their lifetime opportunities are restricted by their lack of access to the labour market and therefore their capacity for financial independence is also limited. The impact on families and the wider community is also evident: growing domestic violence particularly among young couples; increasing anti-social and criminal activity; increasing mental ill-health and drug and alcohol misuse. How can we expect our young people to contribute to the creation of a peaceful and better future when they are isolated and excluded from participating in our economy in a way most of us take for granted?

I hope the outcome of our Working Group will be a number of practical recommendations that begin to close the gap in educational underachievement allowing all our young people an opportunity to contribute to our future.

The Working Group's consultation document is available at www.dawnpurvis.com



REPUBLICANISM AND THE LABOUR MOVEMENT IN IRELAND



Tommy McKearney

‘From 1973 until 1977, the Fine Gael party – of which O’Duffy was elected leader in 1933 – was the dominant party in a coalition government with the Irish Labour Party... The unnatural political and governmental alliance of the Irish Labour Party with Fine Gael brought out, once again, some of the traits that characterised the weakness of the Irish Labour Party...’

Michael O’Riordan (1979) *The Connolly Column*

As the Republic of Ireland’s Fianna Fail and Green Party coalition government was pawning the people’s future in order to pay the gambling debts of criminal bankers at home and abroad, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) supported by the Labour Party, organised a protest rally in Dublin. The event was arranged for a Saturday when most people were off work. After shepherding a large

crowd into O’Connell Street, the organisers asked respectfully for a change of government. If Czech satirical novelist Jaroslav Hašek, who dreamt up ‘The Party of Moderate Progress Within the Bounds Of the Law’ hadn’t died in 1923, one might think he had drawn his inspiration from the timid leadership of today’s Irish working class.

The weakness of the Irish Labour Party (and this applies also to the ICTU) identified by Michael O’Riordan in his book ‘The Connolly Column’ is also the weakness of the working class movement in Ireland over the past century. Ireland’s Labour Party, in a long-term relationship with the deeply conservative Fine Gael, has for decades been embedded in an abnormal misalliance. Simultaneously, ICTU led trade unions, having spent two decades in a corporatist partnership with employers and the state, have grown far too comfortable with the Irish establishment. Taken together, this has created and maintained not just an unhealthy link between what

in normal circumstances are class opponents but has caused an unnatural division between important sections of the working class constituency on one hand and Irish republicanism on the other hand. Two of the potentially most militant and progressive forces on the island have been acrimoniously divorced since the Civil War with working people having suffered as a consequence.

Republicanism is not an intrinsically left wing philosophy, either in Ireland or abroad. It can and does provide a political home for people such as Nicolas Sarkozy, George Bush and a plethora of dyed in the wool reactionaries closer to home. There are no Pulitzers to be won for revealing the many flaws of republicanism in Ireland. It is all too easy to find examples of where its adherents have been reactionary, sectarian and even xenophobic over the past two centuries and that is without mentioning the enduring fetishisation of physical force.

Yet that is not the whole story. Militant, insurrectionary republicanism has also been the option of last resort for the disenfranchised, discriminated against and desperate in Ireland on many occasions during the same period. When the ruling order has resisted reform, the defiance of militant republicans has often been crucial in progressing the cause of the marginalised and dispossessed. This section of the republican constituency, almost by definition, does not spend much time agonising over finer points of political philosophy. They have identified a need and sought a resolution. Moreover, as people who are agenda driven rather than ideologically led, they sometimes settle for less than the full republican package. Sinn Fein's acceptance of the restricted terms of the recent settlement in Northern Ireland is the latest example of this phenomenon. Consequently, one of the principal (and better known) features of radical republicanism in Ireland is the diversity of opinion it can often accommodate. Of course this is only ever possible on a temporary basis and has led inevitably to the endless round of splits and disputes that are so well known to observers and practitioners of the philosophy.

The mainstream labour movement has, on the other hand, often avoided splits

by its constant willingness to avoid issues of principle and always to find a lower common denominator rather than face confrontation or challenge. With ICTU currently aiming little higher than maintaining the Croke Park Agreement and the prospect looming of yet another Blueshirt led coalition propped up by the Labour Party, there appears little hope that a radical social and economic alternative to what we are suffering from at present might emerge from the staid and conservative leaders of either wing of mainstream labour.

Let us be clear too that the free market, neo-liberal model that has failed so abysmally cannot simply be dusted down and put back on its feet. The so-called 'entrepreneurial class' that oversaw the calamity cannot be entrusted with creating a new round of prosperity. And the daft notion that confidence can be

Republicanism is not an intrinsically left wing philosophy, either in Ireland or abroad.

restored in the banking system by forcing the population, that they have so cruelly abused, to re-capitalise them is farcical. With the economic crisis enveloping Ireland at present (and don't think that it's only in the South) there is urgent need for a fundamental transformation of society and the economy and clearly there

exists urgent demand to create a vehicle capable of enacting this type of transformation. It is time, therefore, to examine the elements that might be drawn together to build such a vehicle. Republicans, with their tradition of challenging the status quo, must be considered as one of the key elements in any such movement. With the entrenchment of the ceasefires through the Good Friday Agreement there is now space and an appetite for a re-evaluation within the world of radical republicanism. Some are content to confine their efforts to populist parliamentary politics, some will remain wedded to militarism. Others, however, are re-defining their position as socialist republican while a number, while not specifically socialist are not hostile to left-wing politics. In short, there is a contest for their hearts and minds.

While there is little evidence that any similar debate is taking place within the mainstream labour movement, circumstances are changing almost daily and opportunities are opening for the creation of a new political departure. It would be foolish, obviously, to advocate a

WORKERS RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS

mechanical 'bolting together' of the current political entities in either camp as established political parties and entrenched sections of the labour movement are unlikely to dissolve of their own volition. There is, nevertheless, an objective need for a radical left wing politico/economic alternative and this requires a vehicle to drive it forward. As the economic crisis deepens, there is every possibility that more and more people will come to recognise this. The consistent and genuine Irish Left, albeit divided, has a well-developed position but is all too

often geographically restricted while republicans have access to areas and strata of Irish society that sometimes eludes other left leaning organisations. Common sense tells us that such a large

Let us be clear too that the free market, neo-liberal model that has failed so abysmally cannot simply be dusted down and put back on its feet.

and energetic constituency as radical, anti-establishment republicanism, must be engaged in building a socialised and democratic economy and society. It is important then, that

the divide between radical republicans and organised labour is bridged – a more natural and productive alliance than what is currently being proposed in some quarters.



WOMEN'S OPPRESSION IT'S THE ECONOMY STUPID

Kellie O'Dowd
Trademark

It is right to celebrate 100 years of International Women's Day this year, but we also need a clear analysis of the economic basis of women's oppression. International Women's Day which is celebrated on 8th March (originally called International Working Women's Day) is an occasion marked by women and women's groups around the world and this year will be it's 100th anniversary. This date is also commemorated at the United Nations and is designated in many countries as a national holiday. When women on all continents, often divided by national boundaries and by ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic and political differences, come together to celebrate, they can look back to a tradition that represents ten decades of struggle for equality, justice, peace and development.

The idea of an International Women's Day first arose at the turn of the century, which in the industrialized world was a period of expansion and turbulence, booming population growth and radical ideologies. In 1910 at the Socialist International meeting in Copenhagen, Clara Zetkin proposed a 'working women's day', international in character, to honour the movement for women's rights and to assist in achieving universal suffrage for women. The proposal was greeted with unanimous approval by the conference of over 100 women from 17 countries. As a result of the decision taken at Copenhagen

the previous year, International Women's Day was marked for the first time (19 March) in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland, where more than one million women and men attended rallies. In addition to the right to vote and to hold public office, they demanded the right to work, to vocational training and to an end to discrimination in employment.

Born at a time of great social turbulence and crisis, IWD was the project of The Socialist International and inherited a tradition of protest and left political activism; as the neo-liberal project stumbles and falters it is time to remind ourselves of those socialist roots. Feminism is about economics before it is about identity, it is about recognising the economic roots of our oppression and only a movement that understands this can effect positive change and defend the hard won progress that women have made. Neo-liberalism is built on the very bodies of women – as unpaid carers and low status workers performing 66% of the world's work; as consumers, making over 75% of spending decisions while controlling only a small proportion of global wealth; as victims of domestic and sexual violence and aggression; and as reproductive labourers whose physical and sexual autonomy is relentlessly policed.

Since second wave feminism demanded that women be free from the economic imperative to marry, be paid equally for their labour, be protected from individual and state abuse, and be in control of their reproduction (which in Northern Ireland we still have not achieved), patriarchal resistance to the feminist revolution has been sewn into the very fabric of the economic system. The backlash against feminism may be worded in reactionary moral terms but it's rationale is also economic.

In this time of 'economic austerity' wouldn't it make more economic sense for women to just shut up, stay at home, do the housework and mind the children? Well the British Conservative party seem to think so. In his recent book 'The Pinch' Conservative ideologue David Willets makes a sweeping case for how feminism – by encouraging women to enter the workplace and divorce their husbands, has upset the balance of society based on private property and small, atomised economic family units. The Tories plan to reward married women for staying at home.

Feminism was never supposed to be about settling for low paid, low skilled work and as much chocolate, shopping, and celebrity worship as we could stomach. It is about the ten decades of struggle in which

As feminists we really don't have time for an identity crisis, we have a bigger fight on our hands; it's the economy stupid.



millions of women have sought to revolutionise society's rules on work, family, sex, money and power. A struggle witnessed in marches, sacrifices, protests and by fighting and dying for what they believed in.

Faced with overwhelming resistance to equal work at home, equal pay at work, dignity and safety in the streets, reproductive freedom and protection from abuse, we have settled for the crumbs from the table. We have settled for being allowed into the workplace, but only if we get paid less and look pretty. We have settled for being able to divorce our husbands but only if we continue to do the bulk of all the housework and look after the children, the sick and the elderly for free. We have settled for sex outside of marriage and contraception, as long as we don't complain about ruthless corporate objectification and limits on our reproductive rights.

As we bicker about whose feminism is the best, the neo-liberal global right stand ready to erode every single right that we have won. In the UK The Con-Dem government plan the most savage spending cuts since the 1930s, which will wreck the lives of millions through increased unemployment, cuts in pay and pensions, the privatisation of the NHS and attacks on workers

rights. The £11bn welfare cuts, a rise in VAT and 25% reductions across government departments. In the Republic the ECB-IMF bail out deal targets the most vulnerable – disabled people, single parents, those on housing benefit, black and other ethnic minority communities, students, migrant workers, LGBT people and pensioners. The poorest will be hit six times harder than the richest. Internal Treasury documents estimate 1.3 million job losses in public and private sectors. And across these groups women are expected to bear 75% of the burden. Proof, if any was needed, that feminism is about the economics.

THE RISE OF THE RIGHT AND THE EUROPEAN PROJECT

Dr Stephen Nolan
Trademark

With global capitalism in crisis and Europe in the midst of its worst economic depression for 70 years, you might be led to think that the left would be on the march across the continent; instead aside from one or two minor exceptions, it is the parties of the centre and far right who are benefiting. Given the severity of the economic crisis and the fact the blame lies clearly at the feet of the architects of neo-liberalism, what's gone wrong with politics?

One answer lies in the so called 'end of history', the purported victory of capitalism above all other economic systems which has seen the parties of the centre-left, particularly in these islands, dump their core values

and enthusiastically embrace the ideology of neo-liberalism, which alongside hyper-globalisation, free markets, privatisation and de-regulation of the money markets promotes an insidious form of consumer individualism and attacks at every turn the very notion of community, sovereignty, collectivism and solidarity.

In leading the way, often as the poster boys for neo-liberalism, it appears that many social democratic and labour parties may well have taken their traditional voters for granted. Perhaps they actually believed that the results of the neo-liberal project such as atypical forms of employment, wage repression, economic insecurity and rampant and growing inequality would go unnoticed and that their traditional electorate would be thankful? The new Labour project in Britain has relied in particular on the assumption that its traditional support had nowhere else to go. But this assumption is changing and parties of the far right, the Tories and regional nationalisms have emerged as

the beneficiaries. Across Europe the left, in jettisoning not only socialism but indeed social democracy, has lost touch with its working-class voters.

At the same time the 'war on terror' has infected mainstream politics and public discourse with a hysteria over Islam, immigration, asylum and terrorism, phrases which can now be used interchangeably with little analysis or critique. From the far right to the centre-left, most political parties now march to the beat of the anti-immigrant drum.

The U.S.-led 'war on terror' has also permitted entry into a private members club of nation states who by declaring war on 'terrorism' can declare a war on anything and anybody within their own borders. It has created a new paradigm of nation statehood which legitimises authoritarianism, torture and oppression as normative responses to maintaining security. The 'war on terror' has made the world a more dangerous place for minorities and stateless workers because





governments can stigmatize whole communities as 'terrorist' or as threats to national security and target sections of the civilian population accordingly. Simply pledging support for the 'war on terror' opens the door for

performance since World War II. In the Netherlands Geert Wilders and his far-Right anti-Islamic immigrant party shot to second place behind the ruling Christian Democrats taking 17 per cent of the vote. Sweden has witnessed

workers now voting for the right rather than the left. According to the Danish Election Project:

'Workers' support for socialist parties has fallen away ... There is a class-defined demobilisation ... and an almost total loss of support for the workers' parties among the younger part of the working class.'

The east has also witnessed an upsurge of rabid nationalism and an indisputable surge in neo-Nazism accompanied by a pattern of escalating violence directed largely at immigrants, people of colour, synagogues and mosques. Huge anti-Semitic demonstrations take place in towns where there are no Jews, in fact where Jews have been absent since they were slaughtered sixty years ago in the Holocaust. All this points to a neo-fascist revival and the emergence of far-Right political parties with the potential for even greater electoral clout.

In Russia alone since 2004 extreme elements of the far right have murdered more than 350 people in racist attacks.

In the European elections, Jobbik 'The Movement for a Better Hungary', has become the country's third largest party and alongside unsurprising anti-immigrant rhetoric it has attacked the 'unpatriotic' pro-globalist elite, in a way which clearly resonates with ordinary people. In Slovakia a low turnout

of just 19.4 per cent propelled an anti-gipsy extremist ultra-nationalist into the European parliament.

In Poland mainstream centre right parties ally themselves closely with extremist far right groups as it suits them and in Europe the British Conservatives form alliances with far right partners within the European Conservatives and Reform group and in doing so exhibit an intellectual and moral laziness at being associated with a party that associates itself with Hitler's SS.

Gone are the days however when support for the radical right comes only from neo-Nazis; they now come from ordinary citizens, business people, teachers, clergy and trade unionists. Capitalism's

From the far right to the centre-left, most political parties now march to the beat of the anti-immigrant drum.

low paid service workers, in particular, vote for the far right, as do the self-employed, temps and

employees in small companies with no union organisation. With few prospects and less hope, young men especially turn to the far right.

It is clear that radical, populist, right-wing forces are gaining ground and forming cross class allegiances. Their message is a simple and cynical cocktail of quasi left-wing anti-Capitalist rhetoric mixed with populist cries against a shadowy global elite that smacks of the fascist fantasies of the 1930's. But in the small print they also stand against the welfare state, a progressive tax system, equality of outcome and of course promote an unequivocal opposition to immigration and multi-culturalism. At other times it is laced with an uncompromising stance on law

and order, violent homophobia and calls to exclusive ethnic nationalisms.

It is clear that radical, populist, right-wing forces are gaining ground and forming cross class allegiances. Unemployment, insecurity and concerns about immigration have been the vote-winning themes for the extreme right.

repression of trade unionists, progressives and minorities and when those persecuted minorities arrive here as seekers of asylum for example, the cycle of oppression and discrimination begins again.

For all these reasons and more, significant numbers of working-class voters across Europe are voting for populist parties of the centre and far-Right, the question is whether these are simply protest votes or signal a fundamental shift to the right.

In 2009 Austria, far-right parties polled an unprecedented 30 % of the vote, their best

the rise of racist and fascist discourse, whilst the second largest party in Norway runs on a strongly anti-immigrant platform.

In Italy, the fingerprinting of all Roma in the country, including children under 14 should have caused a shudder of revulsion but barely raised a flicker of protest from European political elites. This only two generations after the Nazi's introduced similar administrative measures as a prelude to mass deportation, imprisonment, torture and death.

In Denmark, a progressive social democratic state, with strong trade unions we see many more

The right wing anti-immigrant Danish People's Party is in effect the new Labour party. No other Danish party has such strong support from the working class. Two thirds of its voters are workers, nearly three times as many as vote for the Social Democrats.

In the east the collapse of the wall was to usher in a new world order of consumer capitalism and liberal democracy but such puerile predictions have been rudely rebuked by the emergence of quasi-democratic oligarchies in which laws are frequently ignored or suspended and political assassinations part of doing business.





But if the European Left is to claw back working-class votes from the far-Right, it not only needs to oppose the neo-liberal model of globalisation, it needs to question the purpose and vision of the European project itself, because they increasingly seem to be one and the same thing.

In 2009 the European Court of Justice delivered a crushing blow to Trade Unions and visions of a social Europe in the Viking case when it held that the right of businesses to freedom of establishment must take priority over the right of trade unions to take industrial action to safeguard the interests of their members; this was closely followed by similar decisions on Laval, Ruffert and Luxembourg; for some it is clear that the thirty year old question of how the economic and social dimensions of Europe might be reconciled has been answered, the ECJ has come down firmly on the side of the free movement of goods, capital, services and labour, the four guaranteed market freedoms of the EU.

The vision of a Social Europe as represented by The European Social Charter, the Community Charter of the Fundamental Rights of Workers, Charter of the Fundamental Rights of the EU, the Posted Workers Directive are now subordinate to the economic freedoms of business and capital. So where is the vision of an integrated, prosperous and social democratic Europe now?

The 2009 European elections

make it clear that the Left needs to seriously rethink its position on the free movement of labour - not on narrow nationalist or anti-immigrant grounds, but because it is not in the interests of ordinary working people anywhere. The emergent European vision is now of semi-stateless workers traversing the open borders of a new Europe in search of the next boom and next job, in which worker is pitted against worker in a race to the bottom, in which communities are ripped apart and local democracy destroyed; and waiting in the wings the populist right ready to exploit working class communities with easy answers to complex questions.

The left needs to re-focus on the basic problems which most concern ordinary people, economic insecurity, poverty, inequality and the privatisation of our public resources. We also need to talk about immigration and the movement of labour within Europe, not from the perspective of closed borders and exclusive nations but on the very real challenges of integration, pluralism and changes to notions of national and civic identity.

Many of the people now turning to the right have clearly not shared in the so-called 'boom' years and are being made to suffer most in the 'bust'. Swaths of these voters not only feel ignored but have been persuaded that the far right articulates their interests the best. Third way neo-liberal rhetoric of "aspiration" and "meritocracy"

fails to address the real problems facing voters. Equality of opportunity does not provide any equality of outcome under this system but rather oversees an increasingly unequal society that blames the poor for failing to succeed. In turn it relegates whole sections of the working class to the margins of society.

The mission of emancipatory economic and social change has lost its way as the centre-left continues to place it hopes in neo-liberalism and their ability to ride the next 'boom'. However, this economic crisis is no blip in upward progressive growth bit a signal of the continued accumulation by dispossession of the very richest across the globe and the collapse of any real participatory democracy; attacks on the poorest through savage public sector privatization and cuts will only increase material insecurities and drive voters into apathy or worse the arms of the far right.

Unemployment, insecurity and concerns about immigration have been the vote-winning themes for the extreme right, but the vote is also a vote against neo-liberalism and free markets and an elitist politics long perceived to be out of touch with the concerns of everyday workers. If the lurch to the right is a desperate call for nation-building, leadership, and security....ask yourself, who is answering the call?



TOWARDS A GREEN NEW DEAL FOR NORTHERN IRELAND



Dr. John Barry
Centre for Progressive Economics



Anyone who thinks that our current economic crisis is a temporary blip until normal service is resumed in a couple of years profoundly misunderstands the severity and significance of what's happening to the global economy and its impacts on and for our regional economy in Northern Ireland. It represents nothing short of a re-structuring of the global economy and the creation of a new dispensation between governments, markets and citizens. As the American commentator Thomas Friedman recently put it;

"What if the crisis of 2008 represents something much more fundamental than a deep recession? What if its telling us that the whole growth model we created over the last 50 years is simply unsustainable economically and ecologically?"

In this context of crisis there is a palpable sense of the need for new thinking, and talk of a 'new deal' has gained considerable

There is also economic potential in the necessary re-skilling and re-training a whole new sector of 'green collar' workers. In short there are no credible alternatives to a GND

ground. This new deal or contract between government, markets and citizens, is one where the market (especially finance) is much more tightly and transparently regulated and there is a significant role for the state in the 'steering' if not 'rowing' the economy. Around the world governments are

putting together billion dollar Keynesian stimulus packages to protect their national economies and kick start the global one, and some, such as South Korea, China, Germany and of course the Obama administration in America, are devoting a significant proportion of this government spending in investments in renewable energy, clean technology and the environmental goods and services sector. These countries seem to have grasped the opportunity of the current downturn to move in the direction of a 'Green New Deal' (GND) at the centre of which is decarbonisation of the economy, the promotion of 'green collar' jobs and investment in the green technology sector and the greening of the economy as a whole. This Green New Deal tackles the 'triple crunch' – the economic recession and job losses, energy insecurity and price/supply instability and tackling climate change.

Least the GND be viewed simply as a unreconstructed Keynesian 'tax, borrow and spend' strategy, it is important to note how the removal of government subsidies and therefore the cutting of state spending is a key and defining element of a GND which seeks to move the economy onto a low-carbon, sustainable path.

For example, removing the market-distorting effects of fossil fuel subsidies – estimated to be in the tens of billions of dollars – would reduce CO2 emissions in the OECD by over 20%. The creation of a level playing field by removing the subsidies to large, centralised, capital intensive carbon energy and transportation investments would provide a re-balancing of the market for more renewable, labour intensive and distributed energy and transportation investments. As the OECD's Ministerial Environment Policy Committee it in 2008: "Removing subsidies to carbon-intensive technologies, pricing pollution and creating a "level playing field" is also important to enable low carbon alternatives to compete fairly in the market, and to find ways of helping these technologies to move quickly into the market-place". Removing these perverse subsidies could provide the necessary funding, along with other options, among them the phasing out of fossil fuel subsidies, taxing 'windfall' oil profits, adopting carbon taxes, and auctioning pollution allowances, to provide the investment for this GND as a strategy towards a low-carbon, green economy.

Given the comparatively large public sector in Northern Ireland it may be that we will be spared the worse excesses of the global economic downturn. While the Executive does not possess some of the policy levers – such as varying or raising taxes – Northern Ireland is extremely

well placed to see the 'triple crunch' as an opportunity to develop a bespoke and regionally specific Green New Deal policies. For example, in the Republic of Ireland, former Minister for Energy Eamon Ryan's announced a 100 million Euro insulation package that will create an estimated 4,000 jobs in the hard-pressed construction sector and benefit over 50,000 homes. Jobs, reducing fuel poverty and reducing CO2 emissions – this is the type of triple win policy that is the hall-mark of a Green New Deal and a decarbonising economy.

In Northern Ireland, given our large energy inefficient social housing stock, high levels of fuel poverty and that housing accounts for roughly 25-30% of CO2 emissions means that

In this context of crisis there is a palpable sense of the need for new thinking, and talk of a 'new deal' has gained considerable ground.

a similar programme here in Northern Ireland would address multiple policy objectives at the same time – reduce our CO2 emissions and make a significant contribution to the Northern Ireland element of the UK Climate Change Bill targets, create thousands of jobs and opportunities for retraining, reduce fuel poverty and unnecessary illness and deaths, and, if given the leadership this would require, overnight create a secure, sustainable market for retrofitting insulation to the publicly owned housing stock. One of the other great

advantages of creating this 'green collar carbon army' is that these jobs are not 'off-shorable', this work cannot be outsourced to India or China and would therefore provide local jobs for local people. The type of jobs that a GND would require include electricians, fitters, plumbers, civil and electrical engineers, project managers, renewable energy installers, machinists, marketing. The fact that the greening of the energy economy is so labour intensive is a boon in these times of growing unemployment. There is also economic potential in the necessary re-skilling and re-training a whole new sector of 'green collar' workers.

What is needed is more detail on the potential for job creation, establishing new industries and the competitive and first

mover advantage for Northern Ireland in what sectors and above all else how much moving Northern Ireland onto a low carbon economy will cost and what will be the benefits. An indication of the potential of the green economy sector is a 2006 Full Circle analysis of the environmental goods and services sector in the Greater Belfast area, overall the sector employs in the region of 2,000 people and has a turnover of approximately £400 million, though only 6% of businesses are in the renewable energy sector. Clearly there is room for

growth here and the transition to a low carbon economy offers great potential both in employment provision, wealth creation and moving away from an unsustainable development path. Here it should be noted that the Programme for Government is, at least implicitly, committed to a 'sustainable development' model given its emphasis on the 'triple bottom line' of sustainable development, namely the PFG's focus on economic, social and environmental dimensions. But much like many a football team in being great on paper and crap on grass, the Programme for Government is not a policy platform upon which to build a new green economy with decent jobs. Despite the recent budget announcement of £4 billion over 4 years to a 'Green New Deal', the NI executive is wedded to an outdated, ideologically bankrupt vision of economic globalisation, foreign direct investment based and a 'race to the bottom' focused international competitiveness driven model of dependent economic development.

According to a DTI/DEFRA report, world markets for the environmental goods and services sector are set to be \$688 billion by 2010 and just under \$800 billion by 2015 and will be a trillion dollar industry by 2020. Just as the Stern report called climate change the greatest market failure in history, likewise combating climate change and decarbonising the economy could be seen as a unique commercial opportunity for wealth and job creation. Prime

Minister Gordon Brown in a speech outlining his view of a Green New Deal in early March, a total of 1.3 million people will be employed in the environmental sector by 2017 - representing an annual growth rate of 5% and representing about 400,000 new jobs. While former Business Secretary John Hutton noted that "By the end of the decade, global green industries will be worth as much as the global aerospace industry - in the order of £350 billion a year - and with the potential to create thousands of new green collar jobs in Britain. So there is a clear business case for maximising the opportunities presented by climate change and making sure that Britain unlocks these business opportunities". Is Northern Ireland ready to unlock those opportunities? Are our local ministers ambitious and innovative enough to set in place the policies and provide the political leadership to move Northern Ireland towards a GND?

If nothing else a GND represents perhaps the best option we have at the moment, since the old business model of fossil fuelled globalised and deregulated capitalism has come off the tracks. In short there are no credible alternatives to a GND, and governments, policy-makers and businesses together with citizens could galvanise around the new and attractive focus of a GND. A GND brings the economy 'back down to earth' reminding us that unlike the economy,

nature does not do bailouts, and there is an urgent need for new thinking and action to re-embed the human economy within the wider ecological system upon which it depends.

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BIG SOCIETY AND THE END OF THE WELFARE STATE

Dr Stephen Nolan



The mania for cuts appears to have everyone in its grip, orchestrated, it must be said, by national and regional medias which would have us all believe that there are no alternatives and that to suggest otherwise is a form of heresy. The prevailing orthodoxy tells us that the cuts are necessary, that the public sector is too big and must be squeezed and that the private sector must be grown. The apparent logic is that in squeezing the public sector the private sector will automatically expand, like squeezing one end of a balloon. The problem with this is that the private sector is so parasitic in its relationship with the public sector, due to out-sourcing and PFI, that when you cut public spending you also shrink the private sector; it's not so much squeezing a balloon as simply putting a lit cigarette to one. Furthermore in making redundant hundreds of thousands of workers, both public and private, there is less money in society being spent in the shops, pubs and restaurants that employ everybody else, so they too will begin to lay off workers and we run the risk of disappearing into a long and deep recession.

But of course the thirst for cuts is not simply about cutting a deficit, they provide a convenient cover for something else. When the Tories last left power, new Labour took, cared for, and it could be

But of course the thirst for cuts is not simply about cutting a deficit, they provide a convenient cover for something else.

argued, radicalized Thatcherism in ways that she could only have dreamed. They have since handed back this neo-Liberal revolution to its originators with an excellent opportunity to consolidate class power and begin their real project, the destruction of the welfare state. Because the decisions on cuts aren't fiscal, they're ideological and on the last UK budget day the state shrank by 15% and that is the real long term goal of course. The eye watering 40% reduction in departmental budgets don't just balance the books they shrink the state by targeting the poor and benefitting the wealthy. Let's look at some of these decisions. VAT is an unfair tax because it is a flat tax and inevitably hits the poorest hardest. Income tax on the other hand is fair because its progressive, you pay according to your income; it's no surprise therefore that we have seen a rise in VAT and none in income tax. Corporation tax is already one of the lowest in the western world, capital gains tax rests at 28% for the 250,000 people who will pay it and there is no mention of a Tobin tax on financial transactions. We have also witnessed a swift return to obscene banker's bonuses alongside the continuing loss of tens of billions through tax avoidance and tax evasion annually. David Hartnett permanent secretary to HR customs and Revenue (the taxman) was named as the most wined and dined mandarin in

Whitehall, sitting down for lunch with KPMG, Deloitte, Price Water House and Ernst and Young up to 30 times in an eighteen month period. His department stating that rather than confronting big firms and their accountants he prefers to cajole and persuade them to pay their share of tax!

Another aspect to this media onslaught has been the creation of a dangerous obsession with so called middle class benefits, an attack being led by the Lib Dems, claiming that it ensures that money goes directly to the least well off. Of course means testing child benefit is on the face of it an easy policy goal because it looks like an attack on the rich and on the upper middle classes, it looks like we're saving money and making the rich pay. But don't be suckered in to this one. An attack on child benefit is an attack on the universal welfare state, a system based on the principle that we are all entitled to the same benefit provided as a matter of right to all citizens no matter what our circumstances; and yes it does mean those that have money receive benefits they may not need but it also ties them into a contract of social solidarity with the rest of society. Through a progressive taxation system the wealthy pay a proportion of their income into a central pot, from which others with less or no income receive according to need. The point of universal benefits is that the wealthy also benefit a little, but they give more than they take.

If you remove universal benefits such as child benefit, you break

that social contract, and destroy public support for the welfare state because people who pay more in tax, will turn round, as they do already and say, "why am I paying for them?". When you undermine the principle of universalism you undermine progressive taxation and the very basis of the social democratic state creating in the process a residual welfare state that is just for the poor. Not a welfare state, but a poor house.

The attack on benefits is the thin end of a very thick wedge, if this passes then next is the NHS and free health care for all. In this brave new world it will be possible to means test everything and add additional criteria to refuse free treatment not just to the wealthy because they can afford to pay, but to the poor for being feckless, overweight, unhealthy and unemployed. The wholesale dismantling of the NHS is the ultimate goal, as it is replaced by a system of private commissioning through GP's and the private forms brought in to support them, delivered through hospitals that are no longer publicly owned. Privatisation is not just in prospect, it has already happened. That is the Tories real aim in all this, it's who they are and it's what they represent. Welfare becomes the Victorian poor house funded not by progressive tax but by the 'big society', charities, voluntarism, religious groups and philanthropy. As we in the trade union movement struggle with the enormity of the changes that we as a society face, others in the

The attack on benefits is the thin end of a very thick wedge, if this passes then next is the NHS and free health care for all.

so-called third sector rub their hands in glee at the prospect of delivering the welfare state on the cheap, and in doing so join with the neo-liberal project and facilitate the destruction of our welfare state. Private foundations meanwhile, fuelled by the accumulation of vast amounts of private wealth created by the labour of others, cast their concerned eye around for pet projects amongst the grateful and deserving poor. These profoundly anti-democratic institutions which possess the ability to affect change in society, continue to concentrate wealth and power in the hands of unelected and unaccountable elites, whilst our own democratic institutions hand over our power to the very same people through ongoing privatization and the fire sale of our commonwealth. William Jewett Tucker critiquing Carnegie's Gospel of Wealth in 1891 declared:

"a society could make no greater mistake than asking charity to do the work of social justice"

The 'big society' is neo-liberalism and trickle-down economics under another name. It is a big society that just happens to be small on tax, small on government but big on inequality.

COHESION, SHARING AND INTEGRATION – POLITENESS AVOIDANCE AND DENIAL.



Peter Bunting - Assistant General Secretary ICTU

ICTU represent the interests of 734,842 working people across the island¹ and speaks for the interests of thousands of workers who are denied trade union rights. The Northern Ireland Committee (NIC) of the ICTU is the representative body and political voice for 36 trade unions with 250,948 members across Northern Ireland. In membership terms, it is the largest civil society organisation in Northern Ireland. Congress continues to fulfill its role in ensuring that a fair and inclusive society is available to all our citizens, where we can all share the benefits of prosperity and peace. In Europe and across the globe trade union rights are central to functioning democracies; societies which seek a healthy and well educated population, that seek to deliver high quality public services, that

provide more and better jobs and who share a commitment to use sustainable development to tackle disadvantage, all have strong and modernizing trade unions at their core. Strong trade unions stabilize democracies and create societies in which a commitment to fairness and inclusion is evidenced in practice.

Congress affirms its commitment to tackling sectarianism, racism and all forms of discrimination and prejudice. The labour movement has held a strongly anti-sectarian stance throughout the conflict, alongside a robust and eventually successful campaigning position on discrimination in the workplace. One of the key manifestations of sectarian politics was the proliferation of ethno-nationalist symbolism in the workplace; the trade union movement took

significant political risks, and shop stewards took genuine individual risks, in campaigning for and insisting on, the removal of sectarian 'flags and emblems' from the workplace using fair employment legislation as the vehicle.

Through both Counteract and latterly Trademark the unions have continued to challenge sectarianism in the workplace and the community whilst other branches of the movement were involved in the ongoing fledgling peace process with trade unionists involved in significant, if low key, facilitative and mediative processes, particularly in assisting paramilitary organisations make tentative moves towards ceasefires and a broader transition to non-violence.

The cuts will impact everywhere, nowhere more so than here, threats to jobs and services threaten to eat into the quality of life of all communities. Whilst Northern Ireland is accused of 'special pleading' when poverty and joblessness threaten many regions, there is a special case to be made if we recognise that to keep the peace process intact we need to build a secure and sustainable economy. We need investment to secure the peace, to reduce the duplication of services, and create shared space and attract businesses and skilled workers to areas they have never been before. Through investment in innovation, co-operation and social entrepreneurial endeavour to create long term sustainable jobs and growth. The promised peace dividend was fundamental to the peace process, destroying public services and putting thousands on the dole when there are no jobs for them to go to in the private sector undermines the peace. Alongside the damage to communities, property, business, tourism and investment, sectarianism and community segregation has huge costs in terms of waste and inefficiency in separate community provision in education, housing and other public services in order to maintain segregation.

In our response to the CSI document we note with concern the general tone throughout the document which focuses narrowly on individual hate crime, interface violence, youth and indefinite references to shared spaces. Sectarianism and racism are not the sole preserve of the young or indeed of interface communities but is rather a characteristic of this society at all levels and in all institutions. This concentration on individual behaviour or working class communities removes the focus from structural and institutional discrimination and the need to ensure that all organisations and institutions are held to the highest standards of anti-discriminatory practice.

Sectarianism is a dominant (some would say defining) political feature in Northern Ireland. A meaningful strategy challenging the hold of sectarianism therefore requires political leadership, and the adequate prioritisation of legal protections and the deployment of the resources necessary to enforce the law. We note with particular concern the entire absence of any specific and achievable targets, timescales and practical actions for the implementation of CSI without which the document remains vague and ineffectual.

Congress affirms its commitment to tackling sectarianism, racism and all forms of discrimination and prejudice.

Para 1.4 states that "good relations cannot be built on inequality. It is recognised that the promotion of equality of opportunity is an essential element in the building of good relations". The labour movement recognises that tackling discrimination is central to a fair and socially just society. However it also recognises that good relations cannot be left as the poor cousin. Whilst equality measures in terms of numbers in the workplace might indicate changes to levels of inequality in employment, the labour movement also recognises that if organisations remain partisan to majority cultures then workplaces will remain closed, exclusive and discriminatory in ways that don't always show up in statistics. If public institutions are to be free of discriminatory practice and to offer a genuine equality of opportunity then those institutions must address the informal and hidden cultures which cannot be addressed by monitoring and policy reviews alone. Genuine and challenging good relations interventions therefore offer an opportunity to transform discriminatory attitudes and behaviours which prevent the emergence of workplaces in which equality and dignity are accepted as core organisational values and practices, which alongside strong equality measures can lead to genuinely inclusive workplaces. Para 1.9 states "we agree to publish a sexual orientation strategy". Whilst the mention of a

¹ 543,882 in the ROI; 215,478 in NI

COHESION, SHARING AND INTEGRATION – DENIAL, AVOIDANCE AND POLITENESS

strategy is welcome the absence of any timelines suggests that Executive does not take seriously the tackling of homophobia in society. Similarly the vague reference in Para 1.8 to bringing about “complementary policies to promote equality, fairness, rights, respect and responsibility for all of the Section 75(1) groups” does not commit the Executive to any time bound actions and significantly ignores gender as a core aspect of developing a shared and cohesive society.

Para 3.9 states “we already have in place robust anti-discrimination and equality legislation”, but gives no mention of the long

Social and economic development can only succeed with a strong programme to tackle sectarianism and racism.

awaited Single Equality Bill which has been brought into law in GB in 2010. In it, nine major pieces of legislation and around 100 other measures have been replaced by a single act designed to make it easier for individuals and employers to understand their legal rights and obligations. A Single Equality Bill for Northern Ireland would provide a new comprehensive legislative framework of discrimination law to protect individuals from unfair treatment and promote a fair and more equal society.

Para 3.12 states “Private sector employers also have a key role to play in promoting their workplaces as diverse, welcoming and shared environments”. Whilst the range of extant equality legislation

does place significant duties on employers to ensure non-discrimination, supported by a body of case law which suggests others ways to challenge sectarian and racist workplace cultures, a large section of the working population is outside the oversight of the equality commission:

Monitoring covers around 72% of employee jobs in Northern Ireland, and does not include those private sector concerns with less than 11 employees, school teachers, the self-employed, the unemployed, nor those on government training schemes.²

Considering that the majority of private sector employees’ work in SME’s this leaves a significant number of people outside of institutional protection. This situation is further compounded by the fact that trade unions continue to have no legal right to recognition in small companies³ and it is often these workers who are in need of the most protection. Smaller businesses often have lower rates of pay, poorer health and safety records, bigger gender pay gaps than larger unionised companies⁴.

Current research also suggests that minorities working in smaller businesses compared to

² [http://www.equalityni.org/archive/pdf/ResUpMonRep15\(10106\).pdf](http://www.equalityni.org/archive/pdf/ResUpMonRep15(10106).pdf)

³ Employment Relations Act 1999; 2004

⁴ TUC (2009) Law at work, [Online],

Available: <https://www.tuc.org.uk/law/tuc-7395-f0.cfm> [06.03.10]

larger companies continue to be denied adequate protection in the workplace and face ongoing sectarian and racist harassment⁵. Recent research by the TUC in GB⁶ has shown however that many small to medium businesses are in fact signing voluntary agreements which provides strong evidence both of the benefits of union recognition to business and the need to end the exclusion of employees of firms employing fewer than 20 people which disproportionately employ women and people from ethnic minorities.⁷ Recent research has also suggested that union recognition can improve relationships in the workplace, improve personnel procedures, ensure a better trained workforce, and safer and more inclusive work environments⁸. As a result non-partisan workplaces are likely to emerge with the added benefit of employees and employers more likely to resolve potential cases of harassment in the workplace.

Para 3.17 states that “the legacy of our troubled past...can still deter foreign investment” but offers absolutely no concrete actions or ideas to ensure that sectarianism, against which we in the trade union movement have taken a strong stand, does not cost more lives, scare off customers and deter investors.

⁵ Trademark (forthcoming) ‘Sectarian and Racist harassment in the workplace’. Trademark research papers (10).

⁶ TUC Annual Survey Focus on Recognition, (2009) TUC, Annual publication, [Online], Available: www.tuc.org.uk

⁷ In Sweden one employee ensures union recognition; in the Netherlands ten; France eleven; US, there are no limits on union recognition; New Zealand two employees;

⁸ Trademark (2009) ‘Research into Industrial Tribunals and Fair Employment’, Trademark Research Papers (7)

If we are to grow the private sector then we must recognize that a sectarianised Northern Ireland remains an unappealing prospect for growth and investment and that negative international opinion has the potential for disastrous impact on tourism and investment. We need to be an open economy, where people can locate without concern and where people can work and live without concern. Social and economic development can only succeed with a strong programme to tackle sectarianism and racism. This document does not provide that programme.

SECTARIANISM KILLS WORKERS

Para 7.13 Migrant workers play more than an “essential role in our economy” and this should be recognised. Whilst migrant workers are primarily here because of the labour power they bring, they are also people. As people they have a range of rights and expectations well beyond the recognition of their contribution to the economy of Northern Ireland. CSI must explicitly recognise and make provision for this new population which has specific rights and needs that are not currently being addressed. There is also significant evidence of unlawful discriminatory practice by some employers and by companies in the recruitment agency sector

and it is imperative that these be explicitly addressed. Research confirms that migrant workers face a series of challenges in Northern Ireland. It confirms the routine nature of inequality and exploitation experienced by many migrant workers in Northern Ireland. The trade union movement has a key role to play in supporting and organising and assisting their integration, a process made that much more effective by the introduction of automatic trade union recognition.

Para 10.1 onwards; ICTU notes with alarm the suggestion that the shared future priority 3.2.4

for an independent agency to drive the good relations agenda might be replaced by a range of executive appointed panels and groups with the option for contracting our community relations ‘services’. We believe that in a consociational democracy there is a need for an independent and critical voice which can hold the democratic structures to account and ensure that sectarianism and racism are genuinely challenged. Advisory panels and government appointed civil servants will not adopt the kinds of innovative and challenging approaches that community relations demands, this work can only be carried out by a strong independent body.

It is crucial that independent voices are protected and allowed to hold the government to account. The trade union movement argues strongly for the maintenance of that independent voice, in whatever guise, and to make sure that there is an acceptance within government that only in tackling sectarianism at individual, community and institutional levels can we develop a viable, sustainable and just society.

PROFILES

Dawn Purvis is a former Independent member of the Northern Ireland Assembly who represented East Belfast. Dawn was born 1966, growing up in the Donegall Pass area of South Belfast, she is divorced with two sons. Dawn became actively involved in community development with a passion for community empowerment and working with children and young people. This period laid the foundation for Dawn's future career in front line politics. Joining the Progressive Unionist Party in 1994 after the Loyalist and Republican ceasefires, Dawn became actively involved in conflict transformation. She held various offices throughout her time with the party including Equality Officer, Party Chair, Talks Coordinator (1996-1998), Assembly Coordinator (1998-2004). Dawn returned to education and to Queens University Belfast gaining BA First Class Honours in Sociology and Social Policy. She was selected as an Independent member of the Northern Ireland Policing Board. After the death of PUP Leader David Ervine in January 2007, Dawn was appointed as his successor, following this, she was elected Party Leader and Assembly Member in her own right in March 2007. During her time as PUP Party Leader, Dawn continued to increase her reputation as a compassionate politician raising the profile of the PUP and the party's activism in peace-building. During this time loyalist paramilitaries declared an end to their armed activities and decommissioned their weapons. In the aftermath of the murder of Bobby Moffett in May 2010, Dawn resigned her position as Party Leader as well as her membership of the PUP.

Kellie O'Dowd graduated from Queen's University Belfast in 1996 with a degree in politics and information management. After getting involved in student union politics and the women's rights office in Queen's Student's Union she was elected to the position of National Women's Rights officer for the Union of Students in Ireland based in Dublin with the remit of increasing female representation within students union structures.

In 1997 she came to Belfast to take up the post in the Women into Politics project. The project took politics out into the Protestant Unionist Loyalist, and Catholic Republican Nationalist working class communities of Belfast and Derry to encourage women to educate and organise around the current political issues of the day. In 1999 she took up the post of project co-ordinator with Ardoyne Women's centre. In 2000 she went to work in the private sector and was responsible for the design, development and delivery of accredited leadership development, management development and personal development programmes for the private, public and community sectors. After a year of freelance work Kellie joined Trademark where she now works on the Transforming Learning Communities Project in partnership with Southern Regional College as Migrant Support Worker funded through the Big Lottery Fund. She is an active trade unionist and women's rights activist.

Dr John Barry is a lecturer in the School of Politics at Queens University. He has been instrumental in partnership with other academics and trade unionists in establishing 'The Centre for Progressive Economics' as a think tank which challenges the current neo-liberal consensus that exists within the media and other aspects of Northern Ireland society. His main interest is in the relationship between moral/political theory and the environment, with particular focus on ecofeminism, the implications of green theory for thinking about justice, and theories of political economy in relation to the environment. A subsidiary interest is in the relationship between science, technology and the environment - particularly views of risk and developments in biotechnology and other technological developments such as wind energy. I also have an interest in Q Methodology as a research approach to the study of complex moral/political issues such as citizenship, sustainability and national identity. A more recent interest is in the political and ethical aspects of reconciliation in Northern Ireland.

Dr Stephen Nolan has worked for Trademark for the last nine years. He previously worked for Counteract, the anti - intimidation unit of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. He previously worked in the former Yugoslavia during the conflict as the co-ordinator of Sava - The Service Civil International working group on Ex-Yugoslavia. Stephen's PhD is on the theme of Republican and Loyalist political discourse and he holds a Masters in International Human Rights Law (UU) focusing on the role of trade unions in post conflict societies. He sits on the board of Iontaobhas na Gaelscolaíochta (The Trust for Irish medium Education). Stephen is an active trade unionist and member of the 3/83 branch of UNITE and represented the ICTU on the Bill of rights Working group on Social and Economic rights. Stephen was recently involved in the establishment of a left thinktank 'The Centre for Progressive Economics'.

Peter Bunting is the Assistant General Secretary for the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. Peter has the responsibility of co-ordinating and developing the Trade Union Movement in Northern Ireland. The Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) is the single umbrella organisation for trade unions on the island of Ireland. The Northern Ireland Committee (NIC) of the ICTU is the representative body for approximately 36 trade unions with 231,000 members across Northern Ireland. Peter also co-ordinates the work of NIC.ICTU Belfast office which includes ten staff members who support a variety of trade union initiatives.

Mel Corry is a former textile worker from Lurgan, Co. Armagh and now works as the Co-ordinator of the Trademark project 'Consolidating the Peace'. He has been a project worker for Trademark since 2007 designing and delivering a range of training programmes on anti sectarianism/racism, history and identity and equality and human rights. He previously worked as a trade union official in Mid Ulster and is still an active trade unionist serving in every role from shop steward to representing the Northern Ireland Trades Councils on the Northern Ireland Committee of the ICTU. He is currently the Secretary of Craigavon and District Council of Trade Unions.

Tommy McKearney is a native of Co Tyrone now living in Monaghan was a senior member of the Provisional IRA from the early 1970s until his arrest in 1977. Sentenced to life imprisonment, he served 16 years during which time he participated in the 1980 hunger strike in the Maze. He is now project manager of the Conflicts of Interest project delivered by Expac Ltd and throughout that period has overseen the delivery of a number of innovative projects. The cross community and cross border magazine 'The Other View', ground breaking research into the impact of long term imprisonment and now the Conflicts of Interest project. Tommy McKearney is also an active trade unionist and a member of the national executive of the Independent Workers Union. He has written extensively on matters relating to the Northern Ireland political situation over many years. He also has an MSc in Future Technology from the University of Ulster.





SOCIAL JUSTICE REVIEW

'Working For Social Justice'


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