

Socialist Voice

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Over your face a web of lies is woven,
Laws that are falsehoods pin you to the
ground;
Labour is mocked, its just reward is stolen,
On its bent back sits Idleness encrowned ...
Edward Carpenter (1896)

Radical or redundant

The chief executive officer of Amazon, Jeff Bezos, has been declared the richest person in modern history, with a personal fortune of €152 billion. This massive accumulation of wealth did not just appear in his bank account or property portfolio: it was created by the labour of others, coupled with the natural resources of this planet. **Jimmy Doran** reports

It is ironic that at the same time that Bezos is being declared the richest person in the world his workers are on strike for better pay and safer working conditions in several countries round the world, including Spain, Poland, Germany, and the United States. In the USA the National Council for Occupational Safety and Health has named Amazon as one of the most dangerous places to work. His wealth has been created by poverty wages, with little concern for the health or safety of the workers. **CONTINUED OVERLEAF**

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EXPLOITATION

CONTINUED FROM COVER The British clothing company Burberry is also in the news at the moment, because it has burnt €32 million worth of clothes and cosmetics, because of overproduction. It says this is to stop its products reaching the “wrong people,” who want to make illegal copies of their products and sell them at reduced prices.

Over the past five years Burberry has destroyed more than €100 million worth of clothes. This is done at a time when one in eight children in Ireland lives in consistent poverty, most probably as a result of struggling on the poverty wages paid by transnational corporations such as this.

So, those are a couple of stories from the world of our corporate masters. What about the rest of us? Average rent in Dublin is at a record €1,875 a month. This is more than the average repayments of a mortgage on a three-bedroomed house in Dublin; so it would actually be cheaper to buy a house than to rent one—that is, if you are not on poverty wages and precarious contracts, which exclude workers from qualifying for a mortgage. This reserves property ownership for an elite, and so the rest of us are forced to rent from this landlord class.

Rents have increased by 12.4 per cent annually, while the only thing the so-called left, the yes men and reformists can offer is the “cost-rental model,” which comes in at between €1,400 and €1,500 a month in rent.

Meanwhile wages have been stagnant for over a decade. Average income is €35,600 per year; but half of all workers earn less than €28,500 per year.

The “living wage” has been increased by 20c per hour and is now at €11.90; this is less than €22,000 a year. The minimum wage, at €9.55 per hour, comes to is just under €18,000 a year. Wage rates like these put cost-rental rents well beyond the means of most workers.

A permanent, pensionable job is very much a thing of the past, while short-term and minimum-hour contracts are the order of the day. This leads to not only low pay and poor working conditions but also total uncertainty about what one will earn at the end of each week.

But workers are fighting back, with a noticeable increase in industrial action. Ryanair has been unionised for the first time in its history. Pharmacists and pharmacy assistants are on strike in Lloyd’s for better pay and conditions. Industrial resistance is spreading to areas where we have not witnessed activity before. During the current Lloyd’s dispute local communities have come out in support of the striking workers and joined them on the picket lines, coupled with thousands of posters in support and solidarity with the workers throughout Dublin. This is a change and shows a new-found confidence in the way workers, communities and the population at large are reacting to the inequality dished out by the system.

For the first time in many years, union membership is on the increase. Though the increasing numbers are small, it is significant.

The decline has stopped; the tide may be turning. People are waking up to the fact that “austerity” worked, and worked very well, for those who it was designed by and for: the ruling class.

Though there are signs of change, with the increase in industrial action and union membership, make no mistake: workers and communities have a huge struggle ahead. A class war has been waged against workers for decades, and the ruling class are winning. Workers and unions must become radical or redundant.

So what rights do workers have in Ireland? They have the right to be a member of a trade union, but they do not have a right to collective bargaining. Employers, on the other hand, are under no obligation to recognise the union, or to allow access to the workers by the union. Employers do not have to take part in the industrial relations mechanisms of the state, the Workplace Relations Commission and the Labour Court. Under EU laws, workers have a right not to be a member of a union; so the day of the closed shop is gone.

“Social partnership” led to the lessening of demands by the trade union movement. Union officials became very cosy with the Department of Labour and were happy to be wined and dined there while concluding one overall agreement for all workers nationally, rather than having multiple agreements for a multitude of employees.

Workers wondered what the point was in being a member of the union, as the national pay agreement would be agreed, and they would get the benefit of it whether they were in the union or not. This led to a fall in union membership and a complacency among union officials.

It was also during this period that the Industrial Relations Act (1990) was brought into being, leading to a plethora of new work practices in the work-place.

The battle ahead is huge, largely because of to many of these new practices. Today workers are often on various types of contracts, with different pay and conditions, within the one company, so making it very difficult to have effective strike action. A prime example of this would be in Ryanair, where a hundred pilots are employees of Ryanair but the rest are in bogus self-employment or are agency staff. This has the effect that on a given day of strike action by pilots it affects only about a tenth of flights.

Under the 1990 act workers must give Ryanair at least seven days’ notice of strike action, which gives the employer time to prepare and to minimise the effect of the action. Once again this demonstrates how the 1990 act is tying the hands of workers. It makes it very difficult to have effective industrial action that would force the employer to negotiate and to compromise with the workers.

The increase in trade union and workers’ activity will bring added class-consciousness to those involved. But it needs to be built on if it is to reinvigorate the solidarity and brotherhood of the trade union movement, which has not been evident for many years. ★



Bus Connect =

With our ever-expanding capital city, public transport needs to be continually improved to meet the ever changing requirements of a modern city. Typical of our gombeen political class instead of improving and expanding the bus service continuously, the system is neglected, under funded and allowed to become overloaded and stretched to its limits before anything is done.

Jimmy Doran reports





= Bus Bisect

When crisis point is reached, consultants are flown in to sort the mess out.

“Bus Connect” is a new public transport plan designed by American based “transport expert” Jarrett Walker. Dublin bus management, staff and trade unions have built up the expertise and a huge range of knowledge on what is required for the people and transport in Dublin — being at the coal face of public transport for decades. As Mark Twain said “an expert is just a guy from out of town” it’s quite ironic that the man with the plan is called Walker, as the changes will involve a lot of walking for many of our citizens.

The proposed new bus system is a total change from the way public transport operates in Dublin at the moment. The new plan is centred around seven very high frequency bus spines named A to G running across the city. The main spines are very high frequency of three to four minutes which start approximately five miles from the city centre. For example, spine A runs between Whitehall on the north side to Rathgar on the south. The spines are continued on in both directions by less frequent branches every 10 to 15 minutes and will be numbered A1, A2, A3 and A4 etc. feeding the main spines from Swords and the airport on the north side to Tallaght and Dundrum on the south side, in the case of spine A.

The branches in turn will be fed by new local routes and orbital routes will link the spines to each other — these will vary in frequency from 10 to 40 minutes. For people living on the main spine, close to the city centre, this new

system will offer improvements. However, there are huge discrepancies in the frequency of the branches, for example, Main Street Swords is served by the A4 spine — which between 7:00 and 8:00, morning rush hour, has a frequency of one bus every 10 minutes direct to the city. Previously Swords Main Street was served by the 41, 41b, 41c, 43 and the 33 between these times; a total of 19 buses went down the main street on their way to the city. If we use the Bus Connect method of frequency (that is departures from Terminus) this would be a frequency of one bus every three minutes directly into the city centre. This system is supposed to be much easier and simpler to understand but it appears quite complicated and unclear as to the real frequency or improvements, if any, to the service — even if you live close to a branch.

For the people further out in estates and areas not served by a branch the service is even worse. Once you are away from a branch you are faced with either up to three bus changes per journey and or a long walk to a branch. Many people living in housing estates or outlying suburbs such as Balbriggan, Skerries etc. the new system will be a massive reduction to the existing services with an end to all direct routes into the city centre. The trip to the city centre will be more complicated, will take longer with numerous bus changes and/or long walks to get to your destination.

This is a two-tier public transport system where some citizens in more affluent areas will have an excellent service but others who have been forced to live further out from the city by unaffordable accommodation costs will be abandoned in their housing estates with long walks or an infrequent local bus service.

This plan has privatisation written all over it — numerous new orbital routes have been created. These are the very type of routes that have been privatised and taken from the Dublin bus operations. This sets a dangerous precedent for orbital routes. The very high frequency spines will be very lucrative and, as in the case of Bus Éireann, the most lucrative direct express routes are cherry picked by the private operators. In all likelihood Dublin bus will be left operating infrequent routes in and out of housing estates and far flung suburbs around the City. It is also very strange that the A spine is not extended out to at least Swords via the airport tunnel as this is the quickest route into the city at peak times but the existing private route “Swords express” seems to have a monopoly on this tunnel — apart from a couple of early morning buses to UCD.

The privatisation of the orbital bus routes now operated by Go Ahead Bus has been used as a vehicle to introduce lower pay and poorer working conditions for the staff on these routes. This new plan will be used as a further means to introduce poverty wages and poor working conditions in the guise of improving transport services. This cannot and will not be allowed to happen by transport workers who have successfully led the way in fighting back against austerity cuts and pay stagnation in recent times.

A sectoral employment agreement must be put in place for all transport workers to protect terms and conditions and remove wages from the equation when new routes are tendered for.

The increase in frequency on some routes is to be welcomed — as is the expansion of destinations linked to each other. The one fare per journey idea is the way to go, but it needs to be much cheaper than fares at present, which are not encouraging people out of their cars. Priority for buses over cars is essential to get people to encourage people onto public transport.

It is unacceptable for services to be cut, stopped or have frequency reduced even if others are improved. There is no room for a two tier transport system for the citizens of Dublin. It is the people that live furthest out from the city centre that have to be encouraged out of their cars and onto public transport if congestion is to be dealt with in any meaningful way. This will be done by increasing frequency, reducing journey times and fares. Many people living close to the city have abandoned their cars long ago as it is often quicker to walk or cycle into town.

If the NTA had utilised the expertise that already existed in Dublin bus to design network changes, this type of situation would be well known — because there is nobody who knows the customers requirements better than those that have been fulfilling the transport needs of the citizens of Dublin for generations. That is Dublin bus management, staff and trade unions. Dublin Bus must be congratulated for the service that they provide despite the gross underfunding of the system. State subvention to public transport has been cut by 41 per cent since 2008, this funding needs to be returned to its peak levels along with increases allowing for inflation. During the austerity years huge debts were run up by the CIE companies due to cuts and underfunding, this burden is unsustainable — a one-off payment is required to deal with this situation. Decent public transport requires sufficient public funding in order for it to operate properly.

There is an urgent need to set up a forum between the NTA, Dublin bus, the trade unions and the Department of Transport where a plan worthy of the citizens of our capital city can be designed — to the benefit of everyone not just those who happen to be living on a spine.

The “bus connect” plan does quite the opposite, it disconnects communities and passengers into a two tier system instead of providing regular, rapid, efficient, comfortable, environmentally friendly and cheap transport to all the destinations necessary for our city to function.

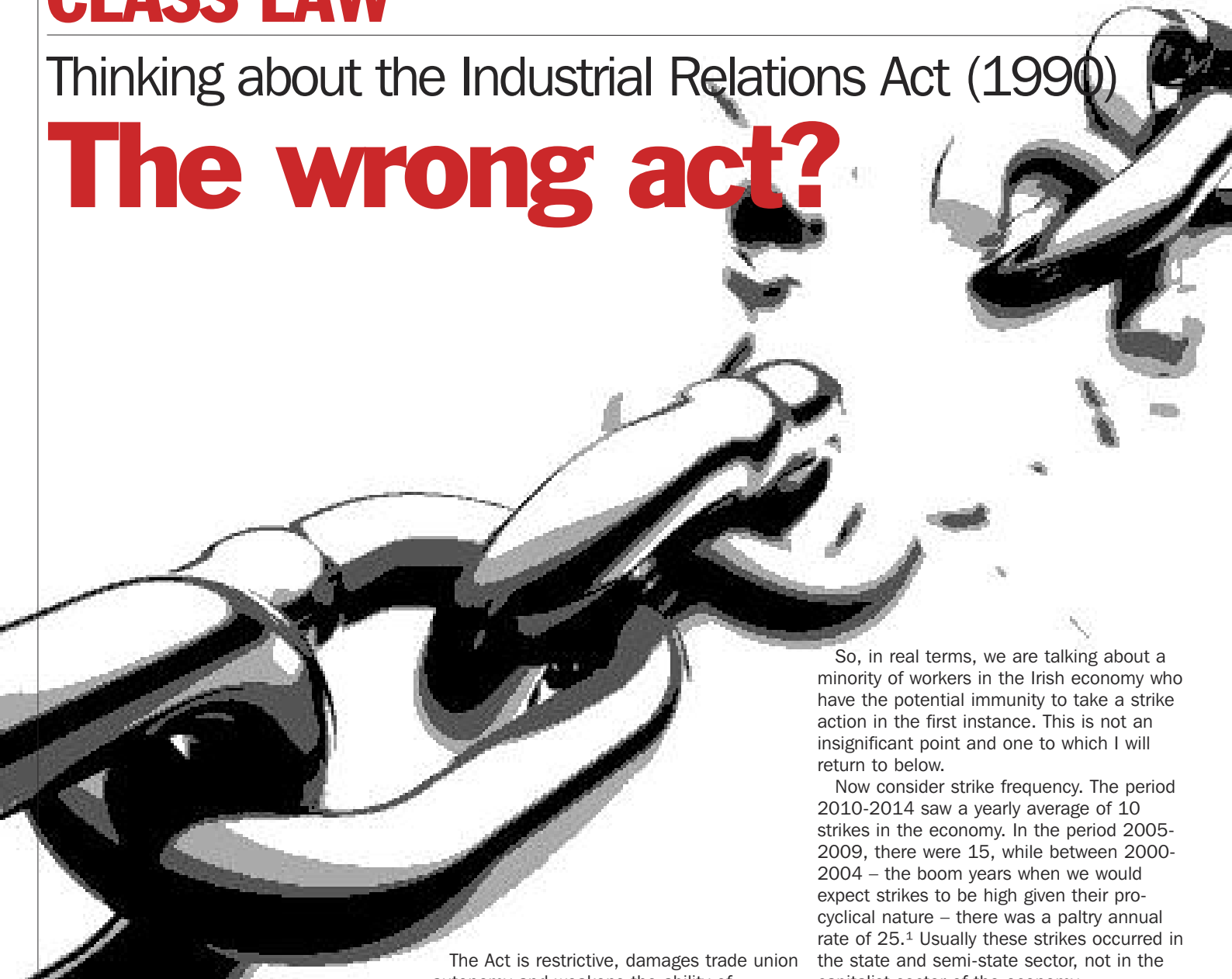
The plan is up for a public consultation over the summer it is essential that citizens have their say about this plan to disconnect and bisect the public transport system. ★

Details are available along with an on-line survey on the web site: busconnect.ie.



Thinking about the Industrial Relations Act (1990)

The wrong act?



A recent article in *Socialist Voice* made a powerful case for addressing the inequities of the Industrial Relations Act 1990. As the article identifies, the Act is an anti-union measure. Indeed, it might be said that Bertie Ahern achieved in one act what it took Thatcher and Major to do in several.

Niall Cullinane reports

The Act is restrictive, damages trade union autonomy and weakens the ability of workers to disrupt employers. Although not intended to contradict the view outlined in the original article that a repeal campaign is necessary, this author would propose that the benefits to such a campaign would be meagre and that we should probably look elsewhere on the question of union rights.

To consider this, take trade union density in the Irish economy. In 1994, union density stood at 45.8% but by 2003 this rate had fallen to less than 38% and continued to decline to under 28% in 2014. At the beginning of the recent recession in 2007 the figure was 32%. The recession prompted a recovery in union density and by 2010 it was at 33% (likely driven by collapsing numbers of employed). Since 2011, density has fallen from 33% to less than 28% in 2014. In the capitalist sector of the economy, union density declined at a steady pace from 27.1% to 16.6% between 2004 and 2014. Conversely, the share of public sector workers rose from 40% to 55% of all union members between 2004 and 2014, itself driven by falling employment numbers in that sector.

So, in real terms, we are talking about a minority of workers in the Irish economy who have the potential immunity to take a strike action in the first instance. This is not an insignificant point and one to which I will return to below.

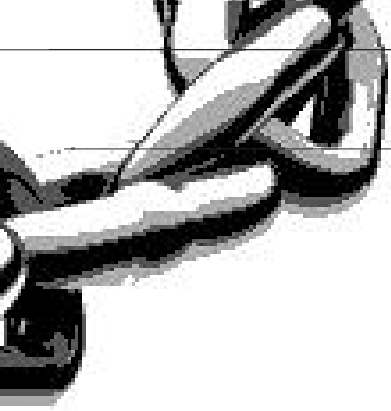
Now consider strike frequency. The period 2010-2014 saw a yearly average of 10 strikes in the economy. In the period 2005-2009, there were 15, while between 2000-2004 – the boom years when we would expect strikes to be high given their pro-cyclical nature – there was a paltry annual rate of 25.¹ Usually these strikes occurred in the state and semi-state sector, not in the capitalist sector of the economy.

So not only are we talking about a sectorally-specific minority of workers who tend to dominate strike statistics, but even here the appetite of these workers to engage in strike action appears to be limited and declining.

Given such figures, it is debatable how much priority we should give to a campaign to reform the law around strikes when such action is infrequent and confined to minority groups of workers in specific sectors.

Of course, it could be maintained that the 1990 Act contributed to such a decline, but it is impossible to isolate the precise weighting of the law relative to other institutional, structural and ideological factors. It is likely that the law has played a minor role. In countries where industrial action is, in relative terms, weakly regulated by the law (e.g France), a decline in strike trends has also occurred in recent decades. Indeed, strikes are down everywhere in advanced capitalism. The primary driver is probably structural change in capitalist labour markets a consequence of the changing accumulation strategies of capitalists.





This restructuring of capitalist accumulation has seen a decline in or hollowing out of traditional strike-prone, highly unionised industries e.g. manufacturing. Technological change has also played a role (think containerisation in the docking industry). The law is likely performing, at best, secondary effects on strike trends. This is further in evidence by looking at those sectors of the economy sheltered from the direct effects of changing accumulation strategies e.g. the public or semi-state sector. Such sheltering has upheld, in relative terms, a greater capacity to take strike action and so naturally enough this is where we find strikes.

Furthermore, the dangers of the 1990 Act, while real, can be overstated. Take for example the issue of secret ballots. Secret ballots have been a long part of the internal affairs of unions, but where workplace union organisation is relatively strong, the obligation to hold a ballot before taking industrial action can work to a union's advantage. A large vote in favour can be used to exert pressure on employers to grant concessions in situations where the union is confident they have the support of the workforce. Shrewd union officials can use ballots to strengthen their bargaining power in negotiations, meaning that workers do not run the risk of going on strike action and losing pay.

Securing bargaining outcomes without recourse to strike action could be read as a gain for workers, although Marxists might want to calculate whether the loss of pay is made up for possible gains in class consciousness that the strike action might possibly engender (although admittedly the latter is more intangible and likely to be an indefensible position when presented as such to the mass of union members themselves). The problem may not be so much secret ballots, but the form they take i.e. postal rather than digital. A good turnout on a secret ballot is probably a more reliable indicator that members have the willpower to strike, then in circumstances of an 'old school' mass show of hands, where the force of peer pressure induces the appearance of support but perhaps not the internal commitment.

While the Act offers employers ample opportunities to frustrate action and, through Court orders, impose severe financial penalties on unions where its statutes are not observed, this is not very common employer practice. Sure, there are individual cases among a minority of hard-

nut employers, but most are generally reluctant to involve the law because it inflames the dispute further, making it more difficult to resolve, damages the necessary goodwill when the return to production occurs and probably also damages their public image. Take for example the issue of sit-ins as raised in the original article. Of the number that did occur in post-crisis Ireland many played out without employers relying on the law (Vita Cortex, Waterford Crystal, Four Homes, Carnmore Airport for example; although Thomas Cook versus TSSA was a notable exception). Public support for the just cause of the workers in many instances, if not all, tended to weaken employer resolve to turn to the courts.

The right to organise, the right to access workplaces and the right to recognition for collective bargaining is a more viable platform for the left to campaign upon.

One real issue raised by the Act and indicated in the article is that workers in precarious work (if-and-when contracts for example) would struggle to take industrial action given their contractual position. Yet this is a non-problem for insignificant numbers of workers. Although the measures are imperfect, one estimate puts the number of workers on variable hour type contracts at about 5% of the working population.² Arguably if we are concerned with precarious workers, the right to strike is not one of their overriding priorities. In fact, the likelihood is that these workers are not even members of unions in the first place so the question of strike action is a non-starter. The more important question is how will these workers be organised? To talk about taking strike action in this context or to rely on unrepresentative single cases is to jump the gun on the matter.

We might also consider the prevailing level of class consciousness among the Irish working class in assessing the merits of a repeal campaign. Consider the relative ease at which elite groups have been able to divide Irish workers between public and private during the economic crisis. Consider then how a campaign to repeal the Act would play out in this context. One suspects divisive consequences because hostile forces will claim that in real terms such a campaign is simply a charter for already well-organised, 'cossetted' public or semi-state workers to cause further disruption to public services. While the ultra-left may make a fetish of strike action, going on strike is not palatable to most workers given the costs it engenders. It is questionable whether a campaign to make strikes easier is really going to appeal to significant sections of what is really a poorly organised

working class with weak levels of class consciousness.

In conclusion, I would suggest that what left forces should first seek to achieve in the field of industrial relations is the building up of workplace organisation and trade union consciousness in the capitalist sector of the economy (while maintaining the relatively strong levels that exist in the public and semi-state sector). Rather than the issue of strikes and the 1990 Act being the campaigning issue we need to consider, the barriers to effective workplace organisation as presented by the Industrial Relations Amendment Acts of 2001-2015 should be seen as of greater contemporary concern. As such we need to tackle the issue of union density decline and collective organisation at the point of production rather than the issue of strike action. Of course, studies show that increases in strike action do increase membership and organisation,³ but given most strike action in Ireland occurs in the public sector, this effect is likely to have marginal effects in the private sector, the sector where the build-up of organisation is urgent.

The right to organise, the right to access workplaces and the right to recognition for collective bargaining is a more viable platform for the left to campaign upon. Given the trajectory of the current Industrial Relations Amendment Acts 2001-2015, which some sections of the union movement appear to have lost fate in as a means to organise non-union firms, the issue of workplace union recognition is likely to become an increasingly pressing one in the next few years (particularly if Sinn Fein join government and a constitutional campaign to give recognition rights is pursued, as would seem likely). A campaign around rights to organise, access or recognition on an ideological level would also be attractive as it can be marketed as giving workers positive rights of workplace empowerment presently denied in practice. With the correct marketing and public positioning (which unions could improve upon), this might present a real opportunity. The left then should begin to think about challenging the terrain on which the current Industrial Relations Act 2001-2015 functions. Let us worry about the 1990 Act when we have the industrial organisation and muscle to do so, but first let us build up membership through securing greater recognition of unions in the workplace.★

- 1 Source: Central Statistics Office.
- 2 O'Sullivan et al. (2015) *A Study on the Prevalence of Zero Hour Contract among Irish Employers and their Impact on Irish Employees*.
- 3 Hodder, A. et al. (2017) Does strike action stimulate trade union membership growth? *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 55(1).



WORKERS IN STRUGGLE

Paddy Power workers awarded €750-€1,000 each for denial of rest breaks

Fourteen Mandate members employed by Paddy Power Betfair Plc have been awarded between €750 and €1000 each by the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) for the denial of rest breaks.

The workers, through their Union, successfully took the cases under the Organisation of Working Time Act, 1997.

Mandate say the WRC adjudication officer found the company to be in breach of the Act and urged more Paddy Power workers to come forward to prosecute claims where merited.

Mandate has written to the company seeking a meeting to discuss the implications of the WRC's decision.

John Douglas, Mandate General Secretary, said: "These decisions vindicate our members in their claims and I congratulate them on their successful cases. There are tens of thousands of workers in Ireland currently being

denied their rights at work because their employer believes the law shouldn't apply to them. We're here to tell them that it does." Mr Douglas warned Paddy Power workers of requests from management to "single-man" shops.

"Workers should not put themselves at risk by working alone for prolonged periods and should take precautions at all times, including shutting the store if necessary. Paddy Power is a highly profitable business and can afford to sufficiently staff their premises so that workers are safe and can avail of their legal right to rest periods."

Mandate intends to serve a comprehensive claim on Paddy Power Betfair regarding pay scales, step up duty pay and premium payments, among other issues in the coming days.

Since the decisions, the company have now notified all staff of rest break entitlements as follows:

A 15 minute break when you have worked for 4 ½ hours.

If you work more than 6 hours you are entitled to 30 minute break, which can include the first 15-minute break.

If you work more than 6 hours and the hours of work include the

period 11.30am-2.30pm you are entitled to a one-hour consecutive break which must occur between 11.30am-2.30pm. ★

SIPTU confirm Section 39 workers strike action after pay talks collapse

Talks to avert strike action across Section 39 organisations have collapsed following negotiations in the Workplace Relations Commission.

SIPTU Health Division Organiser, Paul Bell, said: "Our members deferred strike action in February in good faith following an agreement between the parties that pay restoration would begin by the end of 2018. This has not happened and our members patience has worn thin."

After months of intense campaigning our members feel that what is being offered is too little, too late and will be striking on Tuesday 18th September. Our members will do everything possible to protect service users throughout the periods of strike."

Unfortunately, the Department of Health and Health Service Executive (HSE) refused to sanction a confidence building payment of the €1.5 million 1% of pay restoration in October 2018."

"It is deeply regrettable that the departments took the decision to face down our members instead of doing the decent thing and paying them what they are owed."★

Unions & SIPTU warn contractors on Blacklisting

Trade unions Unite and Siptu have issued a joint statement condemning the practice of blacklisting in the construction sector and warning those who engage in what the unions term this "obnoxious behaviour" that they will face a united action against them. The practice is especially widespread in the construction sector, both in Ireland and internationally.

Commenting, Unite Regional Officer for Construction Tom Fitzgerald said: "Blacklisting is especially prevalent in the context

Retirement age: The new stealth tax

DAN TARAGHAN

A BILL IS at present going through Dáil Éireann that would allow the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform to increase the retirement age for public servants to 70 years of age. The bill will allow a future minister the option of increasing the compulsory retirement age to 75.

This is a totally regressive move but it is passing through the Dáil with little or no resistance from trade unions or anyone else. For over a decade the neo-liberals have been attacking public pensions and by constant repetition of phrases like "the pension time bomb" and claims that public pension

provision is unsustainable they have dominated the debate in this area and peddled myths about pensions in order to pursue the agenda of individual pensions and the enrichment of the private pension industry. Previous editions of Socialist Voice have exposed the myth of the 'Pension Time-Bomb'. This article will look specifically at the retirement age.

Pensions were first organised in the eighteenth century in the Royal Navy. They were subsequently extended in the nineteenth century to the working class. In the late nineteenth century firms offered pension schemes to employees, especially skilled workers, in order to retain them. In the early twentieth century David Lloyd George introduced old age pensions in 1908. If you were

70 on the 1st January 1909 you could claim an old age pension. In Ireland because of the non-registration of Catholic births before 1865 you were deemed to be 70 years or older if you could remember The Great Wind (6th January 1839). An unexpectedly high number of Irish people showed how good their memories were and remembered the storm. In effect Lloyd George's scheme and private pension schemes introduced two important concepts: a retirement age of 70 and the idea of retirement where you could live for a few years with an income but not working. Pensions are deferred wages and the state pension was designed to relieve poverty. In 1911 life expectancy for a male was around the mid 50's.

Over the next century due to

pressure from unions among other factors the pension age was brought down from 70 to 65. At the same time the average life expectancy increased to 78 by 2014. There was also a fall in infant mortality in the same period. Private occupational pension schemes tended to mirror the retirement age of the state pension. So 65 became the normal retirement age. You could retire earlier if you had the money or continue working after 65 if you could find a job and wanted to stay working. During the financial crisis the state retirement pension was moved out to 66 and from 2021 it will go to 67, 68 from 2028. Although the current bill claims working to 70 will be voluntary it is clear there is an intention to push the pension age to 70 and possibly



of disputes, such as the recent crane operators' dispute between Unite and members of the CIF, and involves employers exchanging information to prevent known union activists being employed in the sector.

"When employers join together to victimise workers, unions must join together to defend them – and that is precisely what both unions are doing in the face of the current scourge of blacklisting.

"In the words of the statement issued to all major construction companies, contractors and agencies by the two unions' General Secretaries: 'We are putting on notice any employer who we believe to be engaged in this obnoxious behaviour will face a united action against them'.★

IAC admits to poverty pay as archaeologists in Unite #Dig4Decency

Experienced archaeologists paid just €12.50 per hour to defend our heritage

Trade union Unite, which is

currently engaged in a dispute with the Irish Archaeological Consultancy over the company's refusal to engage with the union on a pay claim, said today that the company had admitted to a history of paying poverty wages. The union was commenting on IAC's claim that it had increased wages by 65% over the past four years – effectively stating that in 2014 it was paying archaeologists below the Minimum Wage.

Commenting, Unite Regional Coordinating Officer Richie Browne said: "Since this dispute started, IAC has been issuing statements to the effect that they have increased wages by 65% over the past four years. Given that our members' contracts stipulate an hourly wage of €12.50 – just slightly above the 2018 Living Wage rate – this means that the company is claiming to have paid archaeologists around €7.60 at the start of that period. This would have been below the National Minimum Wage of €8.65 applicable at the time, and would have meant that IAC was breaking the law and subject to a referral to the National Employment Rights Agency or its successor, the WRC.

"In fact, our records show that

members were paid the €9.50 per hour – which means that, according to IAC's own statement, had they increased wages by 65%, they should now be paying approximately €15.67 per hour. Yet experienced archaeologists are only being paid €12.50 per hour to defend our heritage – and to help swell IAC's healthy revenue. ★

Lloyds Pharmacy Head Office

At the end of July the Lloyds Pharmacy stage a demonstration outside the companies head offices to reassert their demands:

- 1 The right to trade union representation.
- 2 The end of zero hour contracts
- 3 A decent sick pay scheme
- 4 A fair days pay for a fair days work

On the 25th July Lloyds parent company, McKesson Corporation, announced that they had achieved revenues in excess of \$52 BILLION for the first quarter of the year. That's \$52,000,000,000.00 in 3 months. And yet their Irish workers have to put up with pay of €10.60 per hour after 12-15

years of service. Management say the company is not profitable, yet unsurprisingly, they refuse to open their accounts to the workers' representatives. Maybe if the CEO wasn't earning €14 million per year, they could afford to pay their staff a decent wage though?

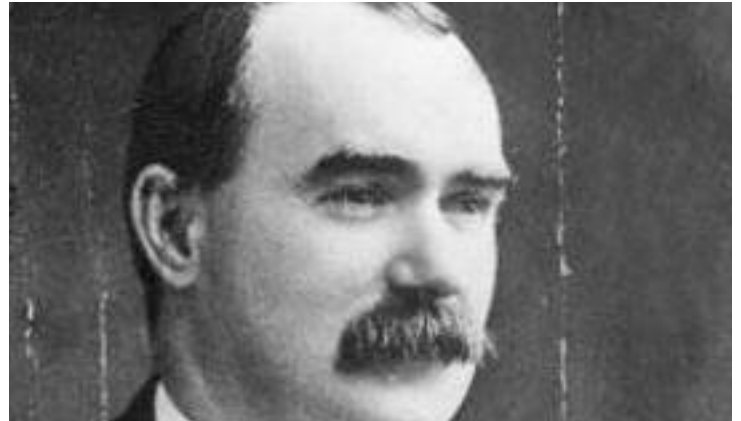
The company are in the media pretending to care about patients? These are the same management who took away their own workers' sick pay scheme a few years ago. Forcing their workers to come to work with illnesses such as swine flu, bronchitis and pneumonia because they cannot afford to take the time off. Not one patient who has been in vital need of medication during these strikes has been turned away.

The resolve of so many workers remains unbroken. We will end with one simple call to every Lloyds Pharmacy worker, whether you are full time, part time, a pharmacist, a technician, a driver, OTC or any other grade. We are fighting for you, join us. We want better terms and conditions for everyone and this company can easily afford them. But the old saying still rings true... "the longer the picket line, the shorter the strike."★

75. John Martin, who was involved in an OECD report on pensions in Ireland wants the pension age linked to life expectancy. In other words, regardless of how much and over what period of time you pay PRSI if you are healthy you just have to keep working as long as these 21st century slave bosses determine. At 66 Ireland has the highest retirement age in Europe. All the former Soviet block countries (except Poland) have retirement ages lower than 65.

The public service defined benefit scheme has been effectively closed off for new entrants. Defined contribution schemes are the only option for workers. These are expensive and deliver vast profits to the pension companies. Effectively, paying into a private sector scheme is not a very good investment with your wages and is highly risky. By pushing the qualifying age higher the

government is both forcing workers to use private schemes and is extending the period of taxation. If you started work at 20 and worked continuously until 66 that would be 46 years. Pushing the qualifying age higher will extend that contribution period. Due to reforms made by Joan Burton in 2012 it will be more difficult for more people to qualify for a full state pension. Regina Doherty in the Irish Times (Saturday 21st July) revealed Government thinking in this area: she wants to encourage older people to stay in work as it would be easier than trying to "source workers in a period of full employment". She is quoted as saying: "Rather than look to immigration, [we should] look at the potential work force. we have here". She also said "we're not looking for people to come to Ireland where we don't necessarily have the housing or the road infrastructure for more people travelling to work".★



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Trump is just the vulgar face of an increasingly violent neoliberalism



TOMMY McKEARNEY

LET'S HEAR it for the Donald. A round of applause for the great educator. In the face of criticism, ridicule and condemnation, the US president crossed the Atlantic and delivered a virtuoso performance. No other occupant of the Oval Office has visited Europe and provided such a clear and unambiguous demonstration of ruthless imperialism laying down its dictates. Not for Trump the hyperbole of a Kennedy claiming to be a Berliner. Not for him the realpolitik-concealing bonhomie of a Clinton, Bush or Obama. Instead, he publicly reminded NATO who is the boss and soon after stripped Britain of its pretensions to be an equal partner. The Emperor may have no manners but boy, can he teach his satraps and their subjects a lesson.

Don't, however, allow the style to distract from the substance. No matter how amusing it was to hear Trump upbraid Merkel and Macron or watch him use a sleazy tabloid to humiliate Britain's Tory government, there is no cause for satisfaction. The USA is asserting dominance over its allies at a time of profound global change. Nor should there be any misunderstanding around the

president's position and role. Crude and vulgar he may be but he does, nevertheless, accurately represent a powerful current within capitalist driven financial imperialism of the American model that is now readjusting in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis.

Following decades of unsustainable, debt-fuelled expansion, the inevitable happened with a global economic crisis heralded by the collapse of Lehman Brothers. Few journalists writing for the privately owned media have defined the subsequent process as frankly as the *Financial Times*' chief economics commentator Martin Wolf. Writing recently in the pink paper he said, "... conservative politicians in the US, UK and Germany successfully reframed the crisis as the result of out-of-control fiscal policy rather than the product of an out-of-control financial sector ..." ¹

In other words, the capitalist ruling elite has managed to redefine the narrative of the past decade away from where it really lay, i.e. the failure of neo-liberalism, into one where blame has been offloaded onto the working class. We're all too familiar with how the story is spun. Right-wing politicians, free market economists and a compliant media claim that wages are uncompetitively high and welfare systems unaffordably generous. Their answer is euphemistically called



The anti-fascism of Georgi Dimitrov

GRAHAM HARRINGTON

GEORGI DIMITROV led the Communist International from 1934 to 1943. During that time, he contributed to the Communist understanding of fascism, more so than any other Marxist theorist. Dimitrov outlined the origins and purpose of fascism as well as the strategy the Communist movement had to adopt in order to defeat it.

Dimitrov gave a class analysis of fascism, defining it as the open terroristic dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic and most imperialist elements of finance capital. After the crisis of capitalism that began in 1929, capitalism faced the dilemma of a weakened capitalist system coinciding with a Soviet Union, which was then constructing socialism. The rise of Communist Parties across the world, especially in advanced industrial countries, with a fighting workers'

movement, meant that the capitalist way of ruling had to adapt in order to survive. The bourgeoisie substituted their state form – from a bourgeois-democratic to a more open, terroristic dictatorship to protect capital and crush the growing workers' power. Pinochet's Chile, as well as the current Venezuelan opposition, can be said to also fall into this category.

Capitalist dominance could no longer continue to rule using soft power, and so even the virtues of liberal capitalism are dispensed with. Fascism comes to power by appealing to the anti-establishment instincts of the people, although directing their anger into convenient scapegoats. In Germany this was Jews, while modern fascist movements use Muslims as their scapegoat. The bourgeois-democratic state makes a political choice to undermine democracy, and in an attempt to take some of the support away from the fascist movements, adopts some of their positions. The result is in fact not the fascists becoming irrelevant, but

The judges judged
Dimitrovs confronts Goering
John Heartfield montage



austerity or more accurately, economic war on workers.

Unsurprisingly this has created a widespread erosion of confidence in the prevailing capitalist economic model. To date there has been a mixed response from working class communities across the globe, with some being misled into searching for answers from far right parties. Nevertheless, pragmatic capitalist ideologues understand the limitations of attempting to win popular support for an economic system that is even harsher than the one that caused disillusionment in the first place. The impact of Jeremy Corbyn's left social democratic programme in Britain (still among the top 10 wealthiest economies in the world) is evidence that working people are able to distinguish between a pro-working class agenda and that of the grasping elite. In public, the neocons like to proclaim the defeat of communism but in private they are still haunted by its spectre.

In light of this and similar initiatives elsewhere, the global elite is not willing to place all its faith in the power of their media spin-doctors. Invariably they seek to reinforce their position through the deployment of armed might, either directly through open military intervention or indirectly via fifth columnists. In either case the objective is the same, to secure and maintain control in order that their writ runs globally.

In the global arena, the imperialist fulcrum that is the USA seeks to dominate strategic areas by attempting to intimidate some and endorse others. Threats are directed at North Korea, Iran, and Venezuela among

others while support is lavished on brutal regimes such as Israel and Saudi Arabia. Moreover, although the hostility (or alternatively support) appears focused, the message is intended to be universal – do what we tell you or suffer.

There is also evidence of this at ground level in the wealthy states albeit applied to match local conditions. The North American economic model is not only failing but is no longer as seemingly attractive as it once was. What was always ruthless has now become overtly authoritarian, just look at the militarisation of US policing. This phenomenon is also becoming more common across Western Europe.

There are far-right governments in several European countries including key areas such as Italy, Hungary and Austria. Nor is the drift towards authoritarianism confined to those states. French riot police attacked demonstrators during the Tour de France days after Macron reluctantly sacked his security chief advisor for assaulting people attending a May Day rally. The UK government has smuggled through a decision to overturn its long held anti-capital punishment position. And locally we have watched the bizarre spectacle of armed police officers deployed to oversee the eviction of a group of young protestors from a squat in Cork city. All of which is designed to create, first a climate of fear and thereafter an acceptance of authoritarian governance.

Let's look again at the event in Cork, not just because it is in Ireland — but it is also informative. A group of young left-wing activists from the Connolly Youth Movement

occupied a building in order to highlight homelessness. The protest was peaceful and nothing at all suggested they would offer any physical resistance never mind resort to firearms. Why on earth was it deemed necessary to dispatch the Garda armed response unit?

The answer is alarmingly simple. The state views any criticism of its wretched housing policy as a challenge to its role as guarantor of capital acquisition and accumulation as practiced within neoliberal parameters. To maintain this position, the citizenry is being conditioned to view anti-capitalist protest as a dangerous and violent threat to society. What happened in Cork, therefore, was a manifestation of a global policy being implemented locally. Incidentally, the Cork eviction happened almost fifty years to the day since a different, permanently armed response unit was dispatched to supervise an eviction in a small Tyrone village called Caledon. Thankfully though, one couldn't envisage the RUC in today's Cork?

The point now, however, is to put events in perspective. Increasingly authoritarian responses are not localised aberrations but part of a dangerous trend as capital acts viciously to defend its interests. Our response should be to paraphrase Shelley's words that we are many – they are few and make this effective through working class unity and organisation. A final point though: let's not overlook the Trump contribution to our understanding of the phenomenon that is finance imperialism, red in tooth and claw.★

1 Crash Landing ... Martin Wolf, *Financial Times* (21 July 2018).

rather their demands becoming state policy.

Dimitrov showed how in order to defeat Fascism, the Communist Parties must become more connected with the broad masses of workers and the people. Rather than ignoring the peoples' concerns, Communists have to understand them and work with the people towards solving them. If the left does not do that, then the far-right will step into the void. Nowhere is this more evident today than on the European Union. Many sections of the left and workers' movement have made a political choice to ignore the nature of the EU, leaving the far-right to enjoy support from working-class people for their opposition to it. Of course, the far-right do not oppose the EU from the position of national democracy or sovereignty, but rather for narrow nationalist and indeed racist reasons. In order for the Left to combat the growing rise of fascist forces across Europe, the left has to reconnect with its base and provide an alternative deserving of working-class support, not the crude internationalism which leads some in the workers' movement to support entities like the EU, or idealist ultra-left positions such as calling for open borders as a knee-jerk response.

Dimitrov wrote that "national forms of the proletarian class struggle and of the labour movement in the individual countries are in no contradiction to proletarian internationalism; on the contrary, it is precisely in these forms that the international interests of the proletariat can be successfully defended."

The Communist International, under the leadership of Dimitrov, proposed the policy of the united front to combat fascism. This was a policy of uniting all anti-fascist forces into one movement, not just working class forces, but women and youth, as well as sections of the petit-bourgeoisie. This included the radical sections of social democracy, who understood that the policy of class-collaboration or struggling for a better capitalism was no way to defeat fascism. The united front was not, it should be said, intended to struggle for socialism, it's objective was to defeat fascism, even if the working class and other strata were not prepared for the struggle for socialism, they could be convinced to defend their interests in the democratic struggle. It should be pointed out some Communists in the post-war environment, especially in Western Europe, adopted this policy as a means of

struggling for socialism, abandoning revolutionary strategy.

One of Dimitrov's most astute observations was on how to defeat fascism in countries where the fascists had come into power. He explained that Communists must in fact not boycott the mass organisations of fascist power, such as the state-controlled trade unions, but rather must seek to win influence in these mass organisations and act as a Trojan horse and undermine the fascist system from within.

By and large, the policy of the united front worked. After the Soviet victory over fascism in 1945, Communists had emerged as major political actors in countries where fascism was routed. The emergence of the People's Democracies in the late '40s was a result of Communists building alliances with the radical sections of the democratic movement – helped in no small part by the presence of the Red Army in these countries. Dimitrov reminds us of Lenin calling upon us to focus all our attention on "searching out forms of transition or approach to the proletarian revolution."

Dimitrov would go on to become the first leader of the People's Republic of Bulgaria in 1946, and he died three years later.★



The punitive history of psychology



LAURA DUGGAN

PSYCHOLOGY HAS a complicated relationship with the world at large, often seen as something to be a bit wary of. Like nuclear engineering it has the ring of something easily corrupted and dangerous about it, even when supposedly doing good.

There have been countless works of fiction that focus on how abusive partners, shadowy corporations, sinister state bodies or the unknowable Establishment have used mental illness and the threat of hospitalisation as a way to crush the valiant hero or silence dissenting voices.

“One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest” and “Poppy Shakespeare” are two such examples where the narrative serves as a study of the institutional processes that punish rather than heal. Often these works veer close to reality in surprisingly uncomfortable ways. But why focus on the fictional crushing of one individual when we have historic evidence of psychology being used to exert control and compliance on whole

sections of society.

Psychology’s figures of authority, as in any discipline, are often conservative and traditionally powerful voices – wealthy, white, straight and male. These figures are influenced by the bias and mores of their time but they also have the power to reinforce these biases and justify them through their field. Scientific racism perpetuated the idea of the white man as master of all and psychology was just one tool used to reinforce it.

Dysaesthesia aethiopica was an alleged mental illness of laziness among slaves and Drapetomania caused them to run away. Both fictionalised illnesses that explained why kidnapped black Africans and their descendants could be unwilling to play the part of happy slave to their “owners”. Philosophical and religious texts now had science to back them up, white justification had been obtained and validated.

In the 1930’s schizophrenia was classified as a “white middle-class woman’s disease”, it became a way of punishing women unwilling or unable to fit the rigid gender norms of the day.

Emphasise was placed on the negative impact of “schizophrenogenic styles” on abilities to perform as mothers and wives. These patients were not seen as a threat but a disappointment. Charts read as petty excuses to keep women locked away, occasional for life: /This patient wasn’t able to take care of her family as she should. This patient is not well adjusted and can’t do her housework./ and /She got confused and talked too loudly and embarrassed her husband./

By the mid 1960s schizophrenia had transformed into an “African-American man’s disease”. Hospital charts diagnosed these men because of their symptoms, but also because of their connections to the civil rights movement. Charts stressed how these men were physical threats: /Paranoid against his doctors and the police and Would be a danger to society were he not in an institution./ Daring to the question a system of oppression or to go as far as threatening to smash it entirely was automatically coded as abnormal and something to be fixed. The system itself could not be the problem.

Psychology’s scientific merit is rarely questioned now, we do not think of it being associated in anything quite as nefarious as classifying single women who wear trousers as “unbalanced” any more. A part of mainstream research it is routinely employed in marketing strategies and Human Resource Management classes. Businesses know the right way to phrase a slogan or use a colour to illicit particular emotions and responses to their benefit, both workers and “consumers” fall victim to this. It’s not quite on the nose as locking people away but why would that be needed when people can be made to trap themselves. More terrifyingly, most psychological research is now being done by or is funded by private companies seeking new ways to influence and change human behaviours, their motivations are purely capitalist in nature.

It is rare the other side, the human resources, the workers looks at this field in any real depth. If businesses can use simplified analysis in the search for profit shouldn’t trade unions and workers study it for the opposite, perhaps even emancipatory goals? Psychology was heavily promoted by the Bolsheviks as a way to engineer the “New Man” of socialism.

While that might be a step too far for some, psychology has also been a part of ground breaking expansions of our collective understanding of gender, sexuality and race, though class is conspicuously absent. As well as being a tool of oppression psychology can be and has been revolutionary. The study of human behaviour is far too important to be left to those who would warp that behaviour and use it to shackle us. Insanity may be the only sane reaction to an insane society but we could give driving them mad a shot too.★

Above: The peoples of the world do not want a repetition of the scourge of war.

The Israeli 'nation-state law' is a fascist step towards apartheid Statement by the Communist Party of Israel



The need today is to strengthen the unity of the Palestinian citizens' struggle and, forming the widest Jewish-Arab front to fight Fascism.

The Communist Party of Israel considers the "Basic Law: Israel – the Nation State of the Jewish People", a serious fascist step aimed at undermining the right of self-determination for the Palestinian people, and at the elimination of the rights of the refugees. This law also expels the national and basic rights of the Palestinians citizens of Israel – as the nation-state law establishes a formal Apartheid system in Israel.

This basic law falls within the

framework of the Israeli policy of denying the national and historical rights of the Palestinian people on their homeland, and within the Netanyahu government's policy of antagonizing the Palestinian citizens of Israel and delegitimizing their citizenship. All this points at a new and dangerous level of rightwing deterioration towards fascism that does not only threaten a national minority, but impends the democratic margin as a whole, and grants constitutional legitimacy to the long-practiced policy of discrimination and racism.

The Communist Party confirms its well-known historical position:

that the Palestinian citizens of Israel is the indigenous people of this land, and have no other homeland –and no racist fascist act of any racist government can change that fact. These masses, which now number nearly one and a half million, are committed to their homeland and their rights in it.

This inadmissible racist legislation, in parallel with annexation and displacement plans in the Occupied Territories and in the Negev, reaffirms that the Israeli strategy – supported by the US administration and colluded with the Gulf regimes – is the final elimination of the possibility of an independent Palestinian state within the borders of June 4th, 1967 and East Jerusalem as its capital; including a just solution that will guarantee the refugees' return under UN resolutions, as well as the rights of the Palestinians, citizens of Israel, to full equity in national and civil rights in their homeland. It is not surprising that the fascist right and racist, islamophobic and anti-Semitic forces in Europe and the United States applaud this law and are inspired by the "Israeli national

model," that is, the model of national chauvinism, religious fundamentalism and oppression of minorities.

What is most needed of us today is the unity of the struggle of the Palestinian citizens of Israel in the face of this authoritarian escalation, through their representative bodies. At the same time, what is required today is not only to prevent the isolation of the Palestinian citizens in this battle, but also to attract all those affected by the government's approach and build the largest Jewish-Arab front to resist fascism. The Communist Party also calls on all revolutionary and progressive forces in the region and the world to step up the struggle against this criminal policy, which will only bring disaster to the region and its people.

The Communist Party reaffirms its support for all the steps taken by the Joint List and the Higher Follow-up Committee, and calls upon the Arab and Jewish masses, especially the younger generation, to participate actively in the coming struggles to defeat racism and overthrow this government.★

Congratulations to Palestinian solidarity activists Statement by the Communist Party of Ireland

13 July 2018

The Communist Party of Ireland welcomes the passing by the Seanad of the Control of Economic Activity (Occupied Territories) Bill, introduced by the independent senator Frances Black. The vote of 25 in favour and 20 against is an important and significant first step in what will be a very tough battle to get it through the Dáil and make it the law of this state.

The main opposition to the bill came from the Government party, Fine Gael.

The bill, if it becomes law, will prohibit the importing of goods or services from illegal Zionist

settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, which violate the Geneva Conventions.

The bill was carried despite intense lobbying by the Israeli embassy and its sponsored organisations, and by the US embassy. The reaction of the Zionist apartheid state to the bill shows clearly the central importance of the Palestinian-led boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) movement, and how seriously concerned it is about global people power.

A further reflection of people power has been that so far seven local councils have voted to support the BDS movement,

including Dublin City Council (the first capital city in the EU to take this stand), Derry and Strabane District Council, Galway City Council, Donegal County Council, Monaghan County Council, Mid-Ulster District Council, and Fermanagh and Omagh District Council; and the number is growing. The growing campaign is a result of the efforts of the Ireland-Palestine Solidarity Campaign and the thousands of activists in Ireland who support the Palestinian people's resistance.

The Government's attempts to hide behind the European Union in its opposition to the bill, by saying that the EU has competence in

matter of foreign trade, exposes further the dependence and beholden relationship of the Irish state to the EU.

Popular sentiment and support for the Palestinian people among the Irish people helped propel this bill through the Seanad, and can succeed in pushing it through the Dáil.

The continued resistance of the Palestinian people and the growing success of the BDS campaign will force the Zionist state and its international allies to end the occupation and to allow all Palestinian people to return to their homeland.★



Armed Response Unit breaks up political protest in Cork

Report from the Cork Branch, Connolly Youth Movement



MEMBERS OF the Connolly Youth Movement (CYM) had inhabited two buildings, dubbed Kent House and Mellows House, to highlight the ongoing housing crisis. The six residents had been living there for over two months.

However, on July 24, a worker of the maintenance group hired by the asset management company, O'Dwyer Real Estate Management, appeared on the scene demanding that the CYM immediately vacate the premises.

We had never met, nor heard from, this person before this initial contact. He subsequently called the Gardaí who, after 40 minutes, arrived on the scene to begin discussions with us. Back and forth it went and we continued to explain our rights: this is a civil matter between us and the asset management company and we would present our evidence to the judge should they choose to pursue an injunction.

The initial two Gardaí stood aside and began to radio for reinforcements. Within five-to-10 minutes two regular cars arrived, alongside a van and finally the armed response unit. Between eight and 10 Gardaí, including several Gardaí with guns and a battering ram, were now present. They approached us together and informed us that unless we could immediately produce some sort of tenancy agreement we would be considered as trespassing, be placed under arrest and the door would be smashed down. They gave us a few moments to deliberate and stepped away.

We discussed this among all comrades present — to us this seemed a bluff. It was — and is — a civil matter and that is the position we unanimously decided on. When they returned and we told them of our decision, the Garda detective then invoked Section 8 of the Public Order Act and instructed us to leave. Simultaneously members of the Armed Response Unit began assembling the ram to break the door down and ordering us to leave as well. At this moment in time we made a choice to stand back, as the consequences of this action would have been the same: we would lose the building but instead of wasting our time

being arrested and seeing the door smashed in we chose a tactical retreat and opened the door, collected our belongings and left.

What can we see here? We can see that when a prominent asset management company is threatened all stops are pulled to defend its interests. A civil matter is not so civil when there is a gang of armed Gardaí threatening you with arrest. The law doesn't matter so much when state authorities are enforcing their decisions through the gun and the battering ram. We can see that the militarisation of what was once an unarmed police force is an on-going process, wherein any political dissent or resistance to the wishes of super-rich vulture funds is treated as something warrants the deployment of paramilitary Special Forces. A force which was founded on the basis that it would combat terrorism is now being used to evict civilians from their homes to guarantee high profits for the ownership class. We can see as Connolly poignantly said: 'Capitalist governments are but committees of the rich to manage the affairs of the rich' and that the financial interests of the ruling class of Ireland are served and looked after by all arms of the State.

Since the housing crisis reached epidemic proportions, the Connolly Youth Movement has focused on developing a very political, organised and concise programme around the occupation of buildings. We believe that young people in Ireland live in extraordinary times and therefore are given no alternative but to act accordingly. What action must we take if the law oversees an unprecedented transfer of wealth from the many to the few? The only thing we can do in these times is exactly what the powerful smugly demand of us – take our destinies into our own hands and stop waiting for deliverance to come at the hands of others. We must repeal the basic rule of our society that has caused so much destruction of human dignity. We must repeal the right of a landlord to make profit by depriving others of the right to a home for themselves and their families.★

Response to the minister for housing

Statement by the Communist Party of Ireland

24 July 2018

The Communist Party of Ireland notes with interest the comments made by the minister for housing, Eoghan Murphy, when addressing the media.

He admitted that the rent of a two-bedroom apartment in the proposed "cost-rental" development at St Michael's Estate, Inchicore, Dublin, would be €1,400 per month — close to the CPI's costing of €1,500 per month — which it has raised many times in warning that in no way is a rent of €1,400 per month "affordable" for workers.

The chairperson of the Dublin Branch, Jimmy Doran, said: "This cost-rental system will see the lower-paid subsidising the lower-paid, with the working class yet again shouldering the burden of our broken economic system.

"Public housing must be universally accessible to stop it becoming ghettoised or a last resort for the poor.

"As the Communist Party has warned many times, the fixation on 'cost-rental' is a vehicle for ameliorating some of the excesses of the current housing crisis but without grasping the nettle and coming into conflict with landlords or the EU.

"The involvement of the European Investment Bank in the St Michael's project is more evidence that the Communist Party's analysis of this crisis is the only one that holds up to scrutiny. The Government's strategy is to solve the crisis in housing to the benefit of capital, and not workers."★

We have reached the end of history

RHYS BLACK

WE HAVE reached the end of history: at least as far as the junior certificate cycle is concerned. Following the revamp of the Junior Cert model history will no longer be a compulsory subject with only English, Irish and Mathematics remaining mandatory. Though this has been sold as "giving the individual student the choice of their education".

Although this may ring true for subjects such as tech graphics or Art, where the understanding of the subjects is only beneficial to those in the field, history is a necessary subject and we as Marxists should see this as a direct assault on the raising of class consciousness.

With the Junior cycle already being void of political education — the subject CSPE (Civil, Social and Political Education) believes that being able to pick out Merkel from a line up is all the political education the students need — history is the only subject that can provide any kind of political understanding and analysis to the students in the Junior Cert cycle.

It is apparent that the junior cert history cycle is not thorough and only covers the bare minimum in terms of modern history and revolutions, spending more time on Ancient Roman and Greek pottery than the storming of the Bastille, however it does teach how the lower slave classes were able to overthrow slave societies, how the lower classes were able to destroy monarchies and overthrow Feudalism. It teaches the harsh conditions of the 19th century working class and how trade unions won many battles. This implants not only the idea and proof of the power of your class but also subconsciously gives a basic understanding of dialectics.

The most concerning aspect of this is the loss of investment in our own history. I am sure my path to Marxism is a familiar one across the country, being taught basic Irish history, developing an interest in the Irish struggle for independence, developing my interest further into the 1916 rebellion and a particular interest in Connolly then reading his works along with Marx and Lenin. Those original interests were developed during Junior Cert history lessons. Without a lesson on not only what history is but also how to investigate historical events there will be thousands of students across Ireland who will believe that the famine was a famine, that 1916 was a purely nationalist rising and had no further politics and that America is the saviour of Europe. It is particularly apt that this new cycle has come from the Fine Gael government, lest we not forget their "blue" origins.

There can be no denying the obvious, that the Junior Certificate history cycle is riddled with propaganda and middle class hero fetishism. It is not only the subject matter that is important in this cycle though, it is the teaching of how to study historical events and how to try and avoid single source understandings that is important too. An understanding of these processes is necessary in developing a political outlook on the current landscape of the world, without the tools then youth will be drawn to the political centre or even to the right by propaganda. Although it is too late to stop these reforms we must emphasise the importance of history, however basic and corrupted, to the students who will be tasked with the choice.

Not only for the good of their education but for the advancement of our class.★





Tressell's book is a timeless piece of working class literature



JENNY FARRELL

ROBERT TRESSSELL'S book *The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists* is the first important working-class novel in English literature, written between 1906 and 1910 and first published posthumously, and very abridged, in 1914.

The working class has championed this novel about their experience and written from their own point-of-view like no other working-class novel in Britain.

Its author, Robert Noonan, was born in Dublin in 1870. The family moved to London, Robert trained as a sign-writer and decorator. From 1894, Tressell spent some years in South Africa, involved with the Trade Union movement and helping organise an Irish Brigade to fight on the Boers' side against the British. In 1901, Tressell settled in Hastings and joined the then only Marxist group, the Social-Democratic Federation. Frequently unemployed, Tressell wrote the *Philanthropists*. He died of TB in a workhouse hospital in 1911 and was buried in a pauper's grave.

The transition from industrial capitalism to monopoly capitalism at the end of the 19th

century, necessitates a change to the traditional novel plot. Cash Nexus replaces personal "stories" between members of opposed classes. Tressell portrays honestly typical characters in typical circumstances and develops a collective "hero", thereby revolutionising the genre and contributing to socialist realism in the English novel.

The *Philanthropists* presents an epic portrait of working-class existence in the early days of imperialism. For the first time, an impoverished group of workers takes centre-stage in an English novel. They are duped by what they read in *The Daily Obscure* and Tressell castigates them for the 'philanthropic' acceptance of their destitution, their acquiescence that a good life is not "the likes of us" and that their children should inherit this lot.

The boss Rushton (rush-it-on) and his middle-men force the workers to hurry and slobber the work, use inferior materials, while charging high prices, and looting the premises for their own benefit. They threaten the casual labourers with unemployment, effectively the workhouse and destitution. They control the workers politically through the city's council and through the church. Thus, their economic power is copper-fastened by hegemony of the political and religious spheres, as well as domination of the 'private life' domain of the pub.

Working-class life is traced from the cradle to the grave, from Easton's baby, through to Jack Linden, who dies in a workhouse after a life of hard labour. While the working-class characters are individualised, the bosses are types. Working life potentially encompasses all aspects of truly human living, while the ruling class is beyond consideration as a human way of life; its purpose being to thwart the workers' free development. This is a brilliant reversal of the usual pattern of individualised middle-class lives and worker stereotypes, still propagated in contemporary novels.

Never before in the English realist novel, had the actual labour process been central to the depiction of class struggle. Tressell reverses the assumption that life begins where work ends – work is essential to fully lived human life. A character's attitude to labour is a touchstone of his or her humanity.

The book's individual hero is Frank Owen, named after the utopian socialist Robert Owen. His decorative painting of the drawing room in the Moorish style is a supreme example of fulfilment through work. During this work, the socialist Owen achieves his fullest humanity and the bosses lose control of him.

Owen strives to persuade his work-mates of his way of thinking. His dinner break lectures on Marxism comment on the novel's events. A central talk is where Owen explains, "Money is the real cause of poverty" and describes "the Great Money Trick". Using bits and pieces from the dinner baskets, Owen illustrates the creation of surplus value. Although he only reaches some of the workers, the portrayal of the others is not negative. They engage with him and take an active part in these lectures, by helping to dramatise the examples. In these scenes of theatrical enjoyment, their collective reaches its highest development.

An important theme in the novel is the scamping of work. Misery commands the men non-stop to "slobber it on", cover dirt, cracks and structural weaknesses for long enough to pocket the profits. While this is typical capitalist work ethic, it also epitomises the general drive to alienation in imperialist society and furthermore becomes a symbol for the entire imperialist set-up, where putrefaction, corruption, fraud and structural weaknesses are covered with a shoddy façade of illusory luxury and ineffectual half-measures.

Working people today easily recognise the 'slob-it-on' work ethic of ever less resources, fewer people to do jobs, deteriorating wages and conditions, part-time work, unemployment. All who sell their labour are essentially in the same boat.

Over 100 years after its first publication, *The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists* continues to be a revelation for most readers, a novel of the utmost relevance today, as a book that describes the world as it is. ★

Cartoon is taken from the online version of Andy Vine's Great Money Trick – an illustrated chapter from *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*
<http://www.avine.co.uk/great-money-trick/>



POETRY

I Come And Stand At Every Door

ORIGINALLY A poem by the great Turkish poet Nazim Hikmet and translated into English by Jeannette Turner.

Here Gabriel Rosenstock translates Pete Seeger's version of this great antiwar song (<https://tinyurl.com/pnyykae>).

Im' sheasamh ar gach tairseach bím

Im' sheasamh ar gach tairseach bím
Ní chloistear áfach mo choiscéim
An cnag ní chloiseann éinne fós
Mar 'is marbh mé, is marbh mé.

Seacht mbliana ó shin a cailleadh mé
In Hiroshima fad-fadó
Seacht mbliana fós atáim anois
Ní fhásann marbhán níos mó.

Barrdhódh mo ghruaig le lasair bhuí
Is táimse anois gan radharc na súl
Dusta anois mo chnámha bán'
Á scuabadh ag an ngaoth aduaidh

Níl torthaí uaim, ná gráinne rís'
Níl milseán uaim ná fiú arán
Níl rud ar bith ag teastáil uaim
Im' mharbhán, im' mharbhán

Níl uaim anois - sé seo mo ghuí -
Ach síocháin i gcroí gach n-aon,
Is lig do pháistí uil' an domhain
Bheith lánsásta leis an saol.

I Come And Stand At Every Door

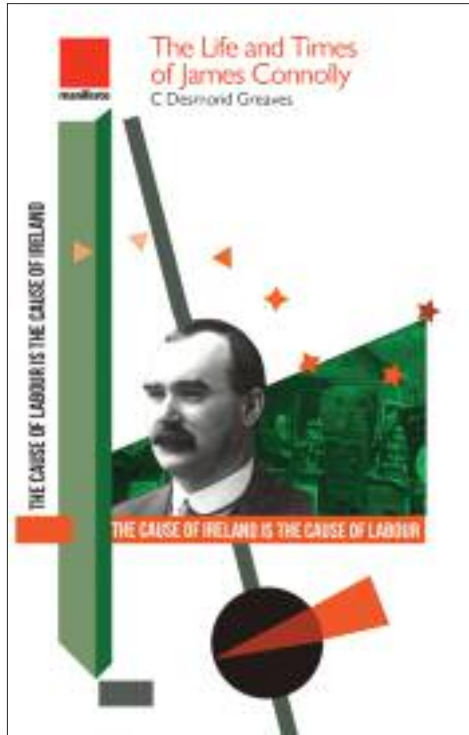
I come and stand at every door
But no one hears my silent tread
I knock and yet remain unseen
For I am dead, for I am dead.

I'm only seven although I died
In Hiroshima long ago
I'm seven now as I was then
When children die they do not grow.

My hair was scorched by swirling flame
My eyes grew dim, my eyes grew blind
Death came and turned my bones to dust
And that was scattered by the wind.

I need no fruit, I need no rice
I need no sweet, nor even bread
I ask for nothing for myself
For I am dead, for I am dead.

All that I ask is that for peace
You fight today, you fight today
So that the children of this world
May live and grow and laugh and play.



Out now!

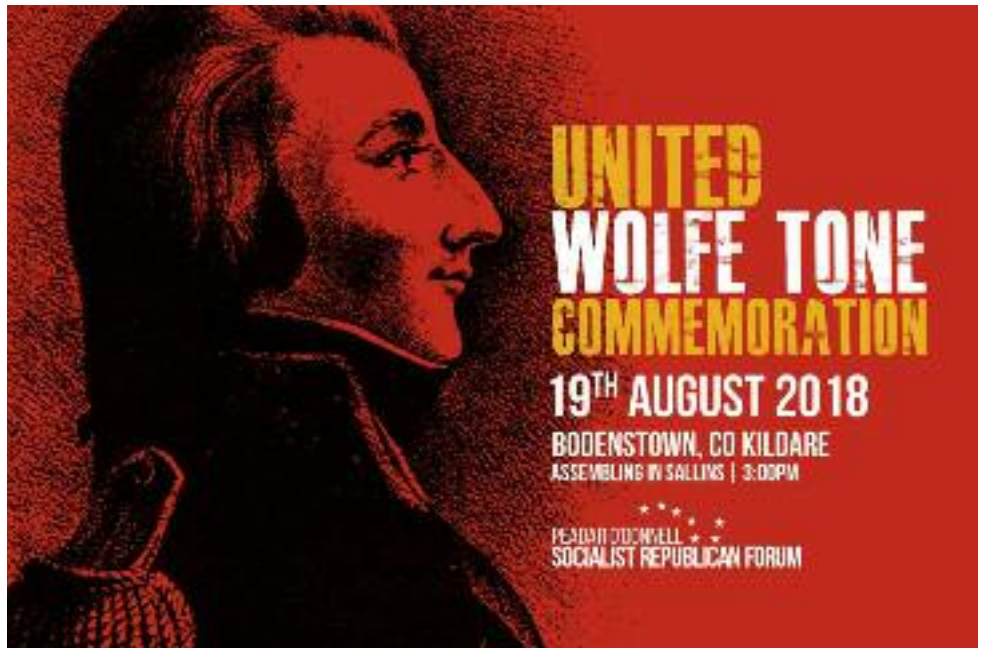
A new edition of *The Life and Times of James Connolly* by C Desmond Greaves was launched on 5 June.

The book is the standard by which other accounts of the Irish revolutionary's days are measured.

This new edition, edited by Greaves' literary executor, Anthony Coughlan, is published in a partnership of the Connolly Association, Connolly Books and Manifesto Press.

A new global readership committed afresh to the cause of Irish national independence will find it a vital tool in understanding the relationship between working class political power and the role of the working class in the struggle for national independence.

James Connolly's life and his writings acquire a new relevance as Britain's exit from the European Union highlights the complex conditions in which Ireland's struggle for national self determination takes new forms in the context of the supranational aspirations of the EU.



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