

thesocialist

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IRELAND 2019: PRECARITY & LIVING COSTS MEAN WE CAN'T MAKE ENDS MEET...



WE NEED A €15 MIN WAGE NOW!

INSIDE



Student accommodation crisis
p3



US-China trade war:
Imperialist tensions mount
p7



'Extinction Rebellion' & the
fight against climate chaos
p9

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Capitalism: Burning the planet for profit

By Keishia Taylor

Who causes the climate crisis?

Twenty five companies are responsible for more than half of the entire world's greenhouse gas emissions since 1988! In a greenwashing frenzy, companies are falling over themselves to create an image of sustainability and tackling climate change, while acting in the interests of profit, not our planet. We need to take the power to avert climate catastrophe away from the profiteers and into democratic control of the working class!

Big Oil

Of the top 90 companies destroying our environment, 83 are fossil fuel giants like Chevron, Shell and Gazprom. Many are posturing over their investment in renewable energy, but in reality, they have plans to spend \$4.9 trillion on fuel exploration.

Adding fuel to the flames

Big tech companies might cultivate a progressive, eco-friendly image, but behind the mask they are hastening the climate crisis by using automation, AI and big data to make the fossil fuel industry even more profitable and efficient. Amazon, Google and Microsoft have billion dollar deals with oil companies, including BP, Saudi Aramco, and Schlumberger. The expertise and creativity of our engineers and scientists should be focused on renewable energy and sustainable alternatives for the future of hu-



manity, not lining the pockets of the privileged few.

US Carbon Footprint

The US military is the single largest institutional consumer of fossil fuels in the world, rapaciously consuming hydrocarbons to supply the US war machine in 70 countries as it pursues access to oil, power and profit.

Home Improvement

Cement manufacture is the source of 8% of the world's CO2 emissions – more than aviation fuel (2.5%) and not far behind the agriculture (12%). We desperately need quality, affordable homes built at net zero emissions. The only way to do this is to take the construction industry into democratic public ownership, and develop the sustainable technologies we really need.

Reinventing the wheel

While the likes of Tesla, BMW and Nissan are flaunting their green, electric models, there are serious questions about the real benefits of an electric car. Over its lifetime, including manufacture of the car and battery, an electric car still produces 75% of the emissions of a petrol car. While innovation is necessary, profit-seeking brands should not be setting the agenda. We could immediately slash emissions from transportation by providing free public transport and reducing the need for private vehicles.

Playing with fire

The end of June saw record-breaking temperatures across Europe (45.9°C in France) threatening tens of thousands of lives. Extreme temperatures are increasing demand for heating and air conditioning, contributing to much of the 2% rise

in CO2 emissions in 2018. This vicious cycle means that electricity use from air conditioning is projected to increase by 140% by 2050 – equivalent to the electricity consumption of the EU. We must organise to fight for the development and implementation of renewable energy before it is too late!

Fashion victims

The \$2.5 trillion fashion industry contributes to around 10% of global greenhouse gas emissions and 20% of global waste water. The UN Fashion Industry Charter for Climate Action aims to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. But the fashion industry relies on wastefulness to make a profit, with 52 micro-seasons a year and consumers encouraged to be “on trend” at all times. Eighty five of all textiles end up in landfills or are incinerated. What's more, these ruthless profiteers exploit their workers,

often in the neo-colonial world, for poverty wages working in factories prone to fire and collapse.

Take the bull by the horns

The meat and dairy industries are responsible for 16.5% of global emissions and a third of Ireland's emissions come from agriculture. Western countries need to reduce beef consumption by 90% - in Ireland this represents consuming 1.9kg per person per year, down from a whopping 19kg! But instead, Ireland is seeking to expand its beef and dairy sectors, even though many livestock farmers are almost entirely dependent on EU subsidies. Rather than ploughing funds into a failing sector that is destroying the environment, we need to transition to sustainable agriculture that provides a future for workers and the planet.



Democratic right to protest under attack

By Cathal Curran

THE IRISH Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL) has released a report outlining “serious and urgent concerns” regarding the state's attitude towards the democratic right to protest.

After consultations with protest groups from across the country, the ICCL reports “severe misuse” of the Public Order Act by Gardai, in the form of arrests without charge, harassment of protesters and imposing limits on where people can protest, seemingly in order to punish and discourage such action.

Attacking the vulnerable

Gardai adopt a “much more heavy handed” approach to protesters “living on the margins of society or protesting out of the media spotlight.” The ICCL details some alarming examples of such behaviour, including “activists living in Direct Provision (having to) deal with retribution...including the withholding of food and benefits

for holding protests”.

They also mention housing activists being “subject to degrading treatment, such as strip-searching”. Authorities at the heart of the state deciding which protests are acceptable and which are not is extremely problematic and threatens to make the idea of protest redundant.

These moves to repress dissent seem to be part of a concerted effort by the state to prevent mass-mobilisation. Many recent advances for the working class, like the Repeal movement and the water charges battle, were won by working-class and young people organising from below. These developments highlighted the true power we have when we are organised. Predictably, this has led to a backlash from an establishment desperate to maintain societal control.

Siding with landlords

Gardai have been willing and eager participants in this anti-democratic response. This became especially notable in September when they “teamed up” with masked private security to forcibly remove housing

activists from peacefully occupying a vacant property in Dublin City. The image of balaclava-clad Gardai using overt force against young activists, sending some to hospital, shocked many and appalled others.

Socialists shared this outrage, but recognised such actions were not surprising. Socialist Party members, Paul Murphy TD, Mick Murphy and Kieran Mahon were the victims of political policing during the Jobstown Trial.

Police choosing the side of landlords and the bosses over working-class people is to be entirely expected. The Gardai and the apparatus of the state generally exist to protect and serve capitalism. Created to defend a system based on exploitation and oppression from any threat, it's utterly predictable that they find themselves immersed in corruption and malpractice, with the disgusting smearing of whistleblower Maurice McCabe a particularly stark example of this.

The police force we need

The Gardai serve as the forceful arm



Garda & private security used physical force to evict housing protesters in Dublin, Sept '18

of the state and, as such, represent the interests of the ruling class. This is why we call for a democratically controlled police force, based on elected committees and accountable to the working class. These committees would appoint and dismiss officers and be responsible for day-to-day police policy, while en-

suring a genuinely independent complaints procedure. We also stand for the disbandment of the Special Branch, whose sole purpose is to engage in political policing.

This system is incapable of delivering real justice and upholding our rights. That's why we must build a socialist alternative to its rule.

Oppose water charges through the back door

By Conor Burke

FROM 1 July, Irish Water is seeking to implement excessive-use water charges of up to €500 per year. This will come as no great surprise to those of us who highlighted the programme for government agreed between Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael back in 2016.

The Socialist Party opposed and warned about this element of the legislation at the time, as we knew that it could be used as a back door to the re-introduction of full water charges in the future. The legislation allows the government to lower the amount of water that is considered normal usage over time. Just like with tuition fees and bin charges, the amounts will be increased incrementally until the idea of direct payment for water becomes normalised, or at least this is their hope.

Establishment humiliated

2014-2015 saw a campaign of direct action and civil disobedience that saw tens of thousands of households across the country join protests, block the installation of



The mass movement that stopped water charges must be reignited to prevent their reintroduction

meters and, perhaps most significantly, refuse to pay the bills, forcing the political establishment to back down.

Fianna Fáil's support for "excessive use" charges was no surprise, as they had previously supported water charges, but were forced to

oppose them in the 2016 election as the charge had become politically toxic. The excessive usage charge was always seen as a back door for

the reintroduction of full charges by the mainstream political parties.

Since the abolition of water charges, the Government and Irish Water along with sections of the mainstream media have been operating a not-so-subtle propaganda campaign to win people over to the logic of water charges, using environmental concerns and threats of water shortages as a means to try and convince people. The facts show, however, that commodifying water does little to address these concerns and in reality this exposes their real agenda which is to create the conditions for private companies to get their hands on our public water services.

Mass non-payment

Currently about 40% of households throughout the country have no water meters installed due to the massive campaign of resistance that succeeded in defeating the Fine Gael/Labour government's water charge plan, so it remains to be seen how the Government or Irish Water would be able to justify charging some people and not others. Any attempt to implement excessive use charges should be met with the same mass resistance and non-payment of bills.

From bad to worse: The student accommodation crisis

By Andrew Butler

EVERY SEPTEMBER students throw themselves back into another year of study and stress, particularly as demand for accommodation is high, while supply is at a record low. Students will increasingly have to choose their college preference not solely based on CAO offers but on the availability and affordability of accommodation.

Many students are forced to work two jobs and take out loans to pay their fees and rent. The average rent in Cork, Limerick and Galway City is €427 for a single room, and €700 per month in Dublin.

Private student accommodation

Given the unaffordable rates of Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA), students often fall prey to traditional exploitative landlords in the private rental sector. PBSA also happens to be one of the most profitable forms of tenure: 80% of those surveyed in student accommodation in Dublin city were international students from wealthy backgrounds. The decision to build transient tourist accommodation and 3,752 proposed student beds in the Liberties will not address the impending crisis coming this August.

All students, many of whom are also young workers, need to collectively organise. We need to revive a vibrant student movement and inject radical politics into our student unions. They can and should take the lead on fighting against sky-rocket-



Landlords and developers are exploiting students desperate for accommodation

ing rents and demanding the introduction of real rent controls that cut across the profiteering of landlords.

Students should not have to be reliant on these landlords to provide them with accommodation. Student Unions should demand that the state build on-campus accommodation to be rented out to students at affordable levels while they are studying.

Mobilising on the streets

In October of last year, USI played a

key role in mobilising 10,000 on to the streets, successfully putting pressure on the government to include student accommodation under RPZs and enabling students in PBSA to take disputes to the RTB. But that's not enough!

They must now mobilise to demand an end to the housing crisis. They must fight for policies that are based on the needs of students and young workers, not those of the capitalist market.

"We want to live not just exist"



Non-medical hospital workers went on strike for pay in June

By James McCabe

THE LIVING Wage Technical Group is now arguing that due to rising housing costs, the official living wage in Ireland should be raised to €12.30 an hour.

The average rent in Dublin is now over €2,000 and close to half a million young adults across the country are now living with their parents as they are not earning enough to leave home and pay rent.

No doubt that these conditions are compounding the mental health crisis amongst young people. A new study from Eurofound discovered that 12% of young people in Ireland suffer from chronic depression, the highest rate in Europe.

Paltry minimum wage

While the national minimum wage for those aged 20 and over is a paltry €9.80, for those under 18 years of age, it's €6.86. This super-exploitation of

young workers undermines the wages of all workers, making life more difficult and precarious. More jobs are being created but an increasing proportion of them are precarious as hundreds of thousands of workers have no permanent contracts.

Women workers are disproportionately likely to be in precarious or low paid work and childcare costs rank amongst the highest in Europe. Therefore, a minimum wage of €12.30 an hour would barely allow most people to keep their head above water in reality.

The recent strikes by various sections of workers in the healthcare sector illustrate the power that workers have when it is mobilised.

The trade union leaders should be putting on the agenda the fight for nothing less than a €15 an hour minimum wage. We need to get organised to tackle this rampant precarity and exploitation. Is a decent life for all too much to ask for?

Capitalist crisis means...

Living standards are in the crosshairs

By Joe Higgins

THE IRISH Fiscal Council is the capitalist establishment's neoliberal watchdog over the general issue of Government income and expenditure in the domestic economy. One of its roles is to press for cuts in government spending if it feels the right-wing political parties in power come under strong pressure to spend extra funds in areas like the health and social spending.

In June, the Council said loudly that the Government is 'overspending' in several areas and warns of the possibility of sharp reductions in the amounts of corporate tax being collected in future years, with severe effects on public spending. It also says that a hard Brexit would pose 'profound risks' for the public finances.

"Hard Brexit budget"

The Government is now preparing for a "hard Brexit budget" that will see cuts to public services and attacks on living standards. The message is clear. The majority in society – working class people on low and middle incomes – will have to see their incomes and services hit yet again to bail out the system from its various crises. And this will have to begin with Budget 2020 due to be announced in the Dáil on 9 October.

The reality is that working-class people in Ireland are still at the mercy of the same international and domestic economic capitalist system that disastrously crashed the economy in 2008. The financial markets then dictated to cowardly Irish governments that the working class had to have the burden of their crisis placed on their shoulders.

Dictatorship of the markets

In 2018 the National Debt – the total amount of money owed by the State to domestic and international financiers – reached a staggering €206 billion. A substantial part of this was built up due to the crash and the bailout of banks and speculators.

The Government paid €5 billion in interest alone to service that debt in 2018 and will pay a further €4.5 billion in 2019. In the last ten years Ireland has €60 billion in the interest on its debt. This is a massive drain of resources that could be used, for example, to resolve the housing crisis that sees not just homelessness but an entire generation of young people locked out of affordable accommodation.

Solidarity and Socialist Party Councillors campaigning for public homes on public land in Dublin and Cork have calculated that good-quality three-bedroom homes could be built for €175,000 each.

State- and Local Authority-owned



Finance Minister, Paschal Donohue, is preparing a budget that will protect corporations at the expense of working-class people

home building construction projects could build 28,000 social and affordable homes with the amount spent on interest in 2018 and a further 25,000 with the 2019 interest. Instead these huge resources are going to fatten the vultures in the European and global financial markets.

A system in crisis

Viewed against the possibility of Britain crashing out of the EU in the next twelve months and threats to the global capitalist economies, Irish capitalism and its political representatives find themselves in a very vulnerable position. On 3 July, Conor O'Kelly of the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA) said

at a Dáil committee that "the chances of a recession in Ireland are 100%."

The Fiscal Council warned of the huge reliance on corporation tax income generated by the multinationals. It points out that €3 to €6 billion of the €10.4 billion collected in 2018 is 'unexplained, and not accounted for by the domestic economy and can therefore dry up very quickly in changed circumstances.'

In reality there is a bubble as far as corporation tax revenue is concerned. This shows the unsustainable nature of the economic model of Ireland being a tax haven for profit-hungry multinationals. The globalised nature of the Irish economy also means it can also be very vulnerable to the fall-out of a global trade war.

Working-class resistance

Working-class people are being conditioned for a Budget that could massively curb public spending on crucial services with uncertainty over Brexit and the global economy as the rationale. This should be vehemently resisted by public sector and all other trade unions. Increasing numbers of workers are in precarious, low-paid jobs and already under severe economic pressures.

It is essential that they begin to mobilise their power in defence of their position. This should be combined with the building of new party for working-class people that stands for a break with this crisis-ridden capitalist system.

A crucial battle: NASRA workers must not stand alone

By Katia Hancke

ON 19 July, ambulance workers across the country organised in Nasra, a branch of the PNA, are once again going on strike. This is the eighth day of strike action these workers have to engage in – to win the right to be represented by the union of their choice and the right to engage in collective bargaining.

In 2009, the NASRA branch was set up as an alternative to the management-dominated SIPTU representation in the National Ambulance Service. Since then, report after report has exposed the serious issues of bullying and harassment in the service. These workers need effective representation and that is what is at stake here.

Stepping up action

Industrial action has been stepped up from ten-hour strikes to 24 hours, and a further stepping-up of the action may be needed to force the HSE to listen – including rolling



Solidarity TD Ruth Coppinger supporting the ambulance workers' strike

strikes. But as emergency personnel these workers also depend even more on solidarity from the trade union movement and from workers in general.

Nasra activists and Socialist Party members, together with trade union activists, organised public awareness activities in Dublin, Cork, Limerick and Galway. The response was impressive – in just a few hours we collected thousands of signatures calling on the Minister to instruct the HSE to recognise the union.

The issue of trade union recognition struck a chord with hundreds of (often unorganised, young) workers who took leaflets for their workplaces and trade unionists who promised to take the issue into their union. Over the summer, we commit to assist further with such activities so come the Autumn the Minister for Health can be confronted with at least ten thousand signatures in support of Nasra.

Isolation broken

At long last, the isolation of this dispute has now been broken with

Unite the Union coming out in support with the Nasra workers. In the North, the issue is being discussed in NIPSA with the health workers' division coming out in support. Socialist Party members at the recent ICTU biennial conference were the first to raise the issue and others followed in support. Other union branches should follow this example and pass motions of solidarity and practical support.

This is a battle none of us can afford to let be lost. Five hundred workers are standing up for the fundamental right to be represented by the trade union of their choice. If the HSE, a public employer, gets away with ignoring this right, what message does it send to the private sector? In an era of declining trade union membership and activism, with entire sectors of the economy organised with anti-union policies, a battle such as this goes to the heart of what many workers face: the fight for trade union recognition is still ongoing in 2019 and any group of determined workers leading the way should get our full support.

240 jobs on the chopping board Fight the closure of Cork Mail Centre

By Mick Barry TD

AN POST announced plans in late June to shut the Cork Mail Centre (CMC) by March 2020 with the loss of 240 jobs.

The news was announced at a mass meeting of staff at the end of June. Some drove home from their shift crying. Many had taken out mortgages on the strength of CMC pay packets.

An Post argue that there was no alternative - letter delivery services are down 7% year on year. The Government, the media and, unfortunately, the Communications Workers Union (CWU) national leadership, have joined in the chorus.

Management short-sightedness

However, the other side of the equation is that parcel deliveries are going through the roof. Back in 2004, An Post made an extraordinarily short-sighted decision and closed their parcel delivery service SDS just as the parcel boom was taking off. They went back into the parcel business very late, in 2017. Since then An Post's parcel business has increased 60%. Last Christmas, An Post was so swamped with parcels that delivery hubs were literally overflowing and delivery timetables simply could not be kept.

Instead of closing the CMC, An Post should enter into negotiations with workers' representatives about drawing up a plan to transform the company from a letter delivery company which does parcels into a par-



Over 100 postal workers attended a meeting on the issue organised by Mick Barry TD

cel delivery company which does letters. This should be done without job losses in Cork or anywhere else.

Race to the bottom

The closure of the CMC is part of the race to the bottom in workers' pay and conditions. An Post have attempted to give themselves cover by announcing plans for €15m in replacement investment in parcel infrastructure in Cork. This will involve the hiring of new staff and everybody knows that those new staff will be on lower wages and conditions.

Furthermore, the company are clearly eyeing up the sale of the CMC premises. Many workers suspect that a deal has already been done. Is there a possibility that An

Post will sell to a private sector competitor who will hire on lower wages and conditions?

What should be done?

Workers have options if they want to fight this closure.

The first thing that should be done is to demand the convening of a union general meeting of CMC staff. Such a meeting would need to debate whether to fight the closure and save the jobs.

Should a decision be taken to fight, workers at the Dublin, Portlaoise and Athlone mail centres should be contacted and met. A united position against the closure of any centre should be adopted.

A 1-day strike of Cork postal workers against the closure would send a

warning shot across the bows of the company but also to the political establishment.

The Cork North Central by-election and the looming General Election offer the workers real opportunities to increase the heat on Fine Gael who stand over the closure and Fianna Fáil who oppose it only in words while continuing to prop up the Government.

A fight back against this closure would also be a fight for a different kind of postal service. We need a postal service run for people not profit, democratically run with its workforce at the heart of management, which values communities and respects the rank and file postal workers who've turned the company around in the last five years.

Union-busting at Tesco

By Robert Cosgrave

TESCO, ONE of the largest private sector employers in Ireland, is continuing their campaign to undermine Mandate – the trade union organising Tesco workers.

They are refusing to engage with the Labour Court, and attempting to deny their workers union representation. This is another phase in the ongoing campaign by Tesco, over the last few years, to attack workers' pay and conditions, and most importantly, to get Mandate out of Tesco.

"Project Black"

During the strike at Tesco in 2017, information emerged about 'Project Black' - Tesco's plan to strong arm longer-term workers, who were the most likely to be active in Mandate, into accepting "voluntary redundancy packages", through outright hostility and by undermining their old conditions. This is part of a long term plan to turn Tesco into an open shop, for which they have employed the services of union-busting legal firm Eversheds Sutherland since 2015.

In December last year, workers at shops in Carrick-on-Shannon and Sligo went on strike as Tesco attempted to de-recognise the union outright. The recent refusal of Tesco to engage with the state's industrial relations apparatus - which, it should be noted, exists to favour employers over workers - is the latest step in their prolonged anti-union offensive.

A warning to workers

The struggle between Tesco and Mandate should serve as a warning to the trade union movement; employers, even where they recognise a union, will consciously work to undercut their ability to effectively represent workers. If Tesco are successful, it will give the green light to the capitalist class generally to engage in similar attacks.

There is only one way that workers can defend themselves against this. In contrast to relying on the Labour Court - which has proven time and again to facilitate the bosses' anti-union agendas - militant, struggle-based trade unions need to be rebuilt, which will not let themselves be bound by legal confines such as the 1990 Industrial Relations Act. We need a union movement which is prepared to answer any offensive from the bosses with their own fightback.

At the recent ICTU Biennial Delegate Conference in Dublin, Mandate general secretary John Douglas correctly made the point that we have turned out in our thousands for marriage equality, for repeal and that we should now do the same for workers' rights. The union movement as a whole should weigh in behind this call and mobilise our huge power to win a legal right to collective bargaining and union recognition, something that is absent from current legislation.

Dublin Postal Drivers Fighting for right to be in union of choice

By Paul Murphy TD

A BRANCH of around 100 Dublin Postal Drivers is faced with the prospect of effective expulsion from the Independent Workers Union as the IWU seeks to negotiate a merger with Unite. This is an active branch, representing An Post HGV drivers. They were formerly a branch of the Communications Workers Unions (CWU), but their branch was disbanded by the CWU leadership at the behest of the company as part of a process of internal restructuring.

After leaving the CWU, the branch joined the IWU because of its possession of a negotiating licence and its promise to organise workers independently of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU). Unfortunately, they are now being sacrificed by the IWU leadership in its eagerness to merge with Unite. The drivers have reported that the Unite official who is discussing with the IWU made clear that in order for the merger to go through, the branch would have to be out of the IWU and

effectively forced to go back to the CWU.

Union rights

As with the paramedics dispute, this relates to the right of workers to join a union of their choice, while the union leaderships seek to prevent alternatives to their leadership emerging. Faced with the attempt to force them out of the IWU and leave them without access to a negotiating licence, the postal drivers felt they had no choice but to go to court to seek an injunction to block this. Their basis for this was that the IWU Conference had previously agreed that any terms of a merger would go before the membership, yet the Executive was implementing their expulsion, without any agreement of the membership. They were awarded an interim injunction until 15 July, when they are back in court.

Unfortunately, the IWU leadership, despite its rhetorical commitment to workers organising independently, is willing to undermine these workers' rights in order to achieve the merger with Unite, which will result in the extinguishing of the IWU's negotiating licence.



Derek Keenan, the Chair of the Dublin Postal Drivers branch said:

"Every dirty trick that's been pulled to deny our members, ordinary workers, their rights, moves this whole sorry saga beyond the realms of satire. It's an incredibly disgusting betrayal of our members and of the entire Union membership, whom I

don't think are aware of or would support what has happened."

The bottom line is that the postal drivers should not be forcibly repatriated back into a union which they chose to leave. Trade union activists should mobilise to defend their right to be organised in a union of their choice.

LAST DECEMBER, inspiring protests emerged in Sudan, uniting young people and workers against the rapid increase of prices, unemployment and precarious jobs, as well as the increasing privatisation of the Sudanese economy, writes MYRIAM POIZAT.

The heart of the revolution

Workers have been self-organising in committees and assemblies to nationally discuss plans of actions and alternatives to the current regime. New trade union structures, like the SPA (Sudanese Professionals Association), emerged from the grassroots movement, playing a central role in organising strike actions and marches gathering millions. Last April, President Omar al-Bashir was overthrown, but protests did not end there. There were calls for the overthrow of the entirety of the regime, as well as for the establishment of a democratic civilian government.

Women have also been at the forefront of the revolution. Alongside young people, workers and poor people they have been demanding a system that would end all forms of inequalities and oppression; calling for education, jobs and healthcare for all, alongside the end of gender-based violence and discrimination.

Fearing revolution

Since 3 June, the brutal repression of the peaceful protests by the Sudanese military has shown that capitalism is an extremely prepared and organised system that will always try and find a way to clamp down on any threat to its rule. Fearing that a successful revolution would spark protests and revolutionary movements in the rest of the Arab World, Saudi Arabia has played a central role in weaponizing the Sudanese military and urging it to brutally repress the masses in Sudan.

Egypt and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have done likewise. Western imperialist powers have also played a central role in arming the repressive capitalist regimes of the Arab World. The European Union has looked to the Sudanese to ensure it prevents refugees from entering Europe, in reality they are helping the EU to enforce the policy of Fortress Europe.

No compromise with the military

The overwhelmingly majority of the Sudanese people refuse any power-sharing deal with the military regime. There should therefore be no compromise made between the leadership of the SPA and the military – the military regime in the form of Transitional Military Council (TMC) must go.

On Sunday, 30 June, despite a month-long internet shutdown, the courageous revolutionary struggle of the Sudanese masses continued with millions taking the streets demanding an end to the rule of the military. The march, called by the SPA, was a success and showed that workers and poor people have not been scratched by the violent repression of 3 June. They are willing to take to the streets to end the rule of the military regardless of the repression they may face.

Flowing from that event, the Sudan masses should keep organising to discuss new general strike actions. By waging a struggle to take ownership and control of the country's economic activity and resources, the working class can lay the ground for the economic and social revolution that is needed to transform the lives of the Sudanese people, and reshape society from the bottom up.

For a socialist Sudan

A fight back against the repressive military, offering self-armament if necessary, should also be discussed. The 'resistance committees' should be enlarged and coordinated on a wider level to give birth to a revolutionary government, with democratically elected representatives of the workers and the revolutionary people. Those parts of the state forces who sided with the revolution and defended the revolutionaries during the first sit-in, the officers and soldiers of low ranks, should be called upon to build similar committees and link up with the revolution.

The liberation of all Sudanese workers and oppressed people can only happen with the establishment of a government of the working class and poor that seizes the wealth of society from the corrupt capitalist class and its allies in the top brass of the army. By putting the key wealth and resources in society into the hands of a workers' government, real democratic public ownership and planning of the economy could be organised as part of a socialist transformation of society.

Such a revolutionary movement would undoubtedly and necessarily light a flame that would spread to countries across the region.

Socialist Alternative Sudan (our Sudanese sister organisation) is calling for the SPA to:

- Prepare for a new general strike, with mass protests and workplace occupations, as part of an agenda of escalating mobilisations until the fall of the junta

- Campaign for a revolutionary government, built through the bottom up by coordinating and structuring all the resistance committees into one national revolutionary council

- Campaign for the main assets and companies belonging to the old guard to be put under public ownership and democratic control of the workers and poor, to start organising the democratic planning of the country's resources, and the building of a socialist Sudan



SOLIDARITY REVOLUTION

Explosive protests rock Hong Kong

By Adam Dudley

ON ONE side stand a sea of peaceful protesters struggling in defence of democratic rights. On the other, the ranks of Hong Kong's repressive state apparatus armed with rubber bullets and tear gas, deployed by Hong Kong's executive and bolstered by the encouragement from the Chinese dictatorship and their media.

That epic face-off and inevitable collision has plunged Hong Kong's ruling capitalist elite and appointed chief executive Carrie Lam into a deep crisis. It also threatens to puncture the illusion of a Chinese "Communist" Party (CCP) regime that cannot be decisively challenged.

Extradition law

The movement has been sparked into existence by proposed changes to the law which would allow extraditions to mainland China - and therefore expose residents of Hong Kong to China's deeply rotten legal system, compete with arbitrary detention, unfair trials, torture and forced confessions. Until now China had no extradition agreement with Hong Kong - where the Chinese state's human rights abuses are well known and widely reported.

Over one million demonstrated call-

ing for the changes to be scrapped and for Lam's resignation on 9 June. The scale of the protests rocked the establishment and as the government attempted to table the bill for a second time, peaceful demonstrations were violently attacked by police. Rubber bullets and bean-bag rounds were fired indiscriminately into the crowds, injuring dozens.

Forced to delay the bills passage through the Legislative Council on four occasions, Carrie Lam announced a pause in the bill on 15 June. Fearing the impact of the movement in mainland China, Han Zheng - China's vice premier - met officials to demand a pause and no more concessions. However, the movement refused to be put on pause. On 16 June, two million people took to the streets demanding the bill to be scrapped permanently and for Lam to step down. One in four of the population took part, making this the largest demonstration in the city's history.

Strike action

Since then protests outside government buildings, police headquarters and 19 foreign consultants show a movement determined to continue to press on. This is whilst the state's strong-arm tactics continue to enrage young people in particular, hundreds of whom

of which occupied the Legislative Council on 1 July until violently evicted hours later.

The Hong Kong executive and the CCP regime in Beijing are desperate to find a path through for the Bill and Lam's executive - whilst the movement refuses to accept less than for it to be fully scrapped. A deadlock cannot hold. Members of Socialist Action, our sister organisation in Hong Kong, stand shoulder to shoulder with protesters and are calling for a one day political strike as the best weapon in the hands of the movement. Such a strike could bring Hong Kong to a standstill and force Lam from office.

Democracy and socialism

Hong Kong's democracy is a sham, rigged to give the city's super-rich an executive in their - and subsequently, Chinese capitalism's interests. If Lam falls and an election follows, not only will the movement have scored a major victory - but focus could shift to the demand for free elections and the obscene wealth of Hong Kong's China-Friendly capitalists. That is not a scenario the Hong Kong executive or the CCP can accept.

In China itself, a defeat for the regime would reverberate - now in the 30th anniversary of the massacre at Tiananmen

Y WITH THE N IN SUDAN



Square - where the increased rate of arrests and disappearances of workers and students activists broadcast the real fears of Xi Jinping's regime that opposition to its own rule will spread and deepen. A thousand threads tie China's dictatorship to the political and economic elite in Hong Kong - the struggle

for democratic rights means a struggle to cut those threads. a struggle to take the enormous wealth of the super-rich into democratic public ownership, a struggle for socialist change. Capitalism, in Hong Kong, in China and across the region offers only repression and exploitation.

US-China trade war signifies... Growing capitalist rivalry & crisis



By Cillian Gillespie

IN MAY, Donald Trump significantly ratcheted up US capitalism's trade war against China, with the imposition of a 25% rate on \$200 billion worth of tariffs on Chinese imports to the US. This brings to \$250 billion the tariffs placed on such imports by the Trump regime since the dispute began in January last year. The Chinese "Communist" Party (CCP) regime responded in kind by imposing tariffs on \$60 billion worth of goods and services from the US.

In the following weeks, Trump issued an order preventing US companies from trading with the giant Chinese mobile phone company, Huawei. This would mean that consumers of this phone would not be able to access products from US based companies such as Google and Facebook. As we go to print, Trump has rescinded this order and promised to suspend the imposition of tariffs on an additional \$300 billion worth of Chinese imports. While this may point to the possibility of a short term de-escalation of the conflict, the main trend is pointing to further economic and geo-political conflict between the US and China.

Clash of two powers

Fundamentally, this trade war is the by-product of a growing clash between the US, the dominant but declining capitalist super-power, and a rising Chinese economy, which is the second largest on the planet. Both want to assert the power and maximise the profits of their respective capitalist elites.

A sharp focus of this clash is the question of competition in the high tech industry. The representatives of US capitalism, in the form of both Republicans and Democrats, are increasingly worried about the competition from companies such as Huawei to its major companies in this industry. Companies such as Apple and Amazon constitute the most profitable section of the US economy, and they intend to jealously guard their global hegemony.

They are worried by Chinese capitalism's development of new technology such as 5G - the new mobile internet technology - which the Trump Presidency claims is a 'national security risk'. The city of Shenzhen, in South-East China is regarded as being the next Silicon Valley, further indicating the challenge to the US' long term dominance of this sector.

"Made in China"

Since 2015, the capitalist dictatorship of Xi Jinping have pursued a policy entitled "Made in China 2025" with the

aim of becoming a "manufacturing superpower", with Chinese capitalism, closely connected to the CCP regime, dominating aerospace technology, including aircraft engines and airborne equipment, biopharmaceuticals and high-performance medical equipment. All of which is a further threat to the profits and power of US capitalism.

Another example of CCP and Chinese capitalism's growing assertiveness is the development of its "Belt and Road Initiative". This will involve the building of major infrastructure programmes in over 60 countries, from Vietnam to Montenegro, at an estimated cost of \$1 trillion. Given that this money will be given as loans to these respective countries in order to develop seaports, airports and other transport infrastructure, China will be able to exert some control of their economies through what is called "debt trap diplomacy".

This is not dissimilar to how US capitalism and the EU has used debt as a weapon to dominate countries in the neo-colonial world, or southern and eastern Europe. China may also use the building of these ports to increase its military presence in countries such as Pakistan, which has been an ally of US imperialism in the past. This is also combined with the fact that there has been intensifying clashes between the two powers in the Asia Pacific region more generally, and over questions such as Taiwan.

System in crisis

The development of a trade war between the planet's two largest economies comes against the backdrop of slowing economic growth globally, with world trade at its weakest level since 2008, before the outbreak of the "Great Recession". The integration and inter-reliance of different sections of the world economy over the last number of decades through the process of globalisation, will mean that a war such as this can tip the world economy into a full blown recession, devastating the living standards of working-class people in both China and the US, and further afield. This is particularly the case if it is of a long and protracted character.

The trade and tech wars, growing inter-capitalist rivalry more generally, as well as the threat of economic slowdown and recession all point to the deep malaise in global capitalism at this point. This is laying the material basis for further revolutionary explosions, similar to what we've seen in Sudan and Algeria in the last number of months, and a growing embracement of socialist ideas. We need a world economic system based on democratic planning and public ownership of its key resources, not one based on conflict, crises and the destruction of our planet.

US: Standing against Trump's racist border controls

By Linda Schutz

AT THE end of June, the harrowing photo showing a drowned father and daughter lying face down in the water, the girl tucked into her father's t-shirt, went viral. Óscar Alberto Martínez Ramírez and his one-year old daughter Valeria died in the water of the Rio Grande on the US-Mexican border. They were the victims of the US State's racist immigration controls.

Trump has tightened controls, deployed 5,000 troops on the border and forced the Mexican government to deploy their own migration patrols with the threat of trade tariffs. The goal is to stop migrants from crossing over into the US and to limit the number of asylum seekers the US accepts each day. Here is an illustration of how the death of Óscar and Valeria are directly related.

A perilous journey

In April, the family left their home in El Salvador, infamous for deep

poverty and extreme violence. After waiting for an appointment to apply for asylum for two months in Tapachula in Southern Mexico they crossed the country, making their way to the Gateway International Bridge to Texas.

They joined a long list of people waiting for one of only three interview slots per day! Facing another potential wait of several months the family decided to cross the river a few hundred metres away from the bridge. The desperate conditions in much of Central and Latin America mean that the crackdown does not deter migrants but pushes them into more dangerous actions.

Inspiring workers solidarity

Recently workers of the furnishing retailer Wayfairers learned of an order for a new detention centre to imprison 1,600 "unaccompanied minors" and demanded their CEO stop doing business with the company fitting out the centres.

When he refused, they walked out in solidarity, gathering at a rally, with signs reading for example "A



Harrowing scenes are a daily feature on the US-Mexico border

prison with a bed is still a prison". In a letter the workers said that "the US government and its contractors are responsible for the mistreatment of refugees seeking asylum – we want that to end it".

Two more examples of workers solidarity from 2018:

Flight attendants made the distress of groups of Latino children, separated from their families and flying with federal agents, public on social media. This grew into so much public pressure that American Airlines, United, Southwest and Frontier Airlines are refusing to fly migrant children separated from their families.

Migrant detention is a huge industry, and surveillance, which is one aspect, is being made public by activists and workers in the tech industry. This ranges from criticism of Amazon and Microsoft for selling facial recognition software or cloud services powering these technologies to US law enforcement, to Google workers protesting the provision of artificial intelligence technology to the Pentagon.

Oppose imperialist warmongering against Iran

By Colm McCarthy

THE ORDERING, and subsequent cancellation of military strikes against Iran by the Trump administration is merely the latest in a series of escalations by the United States aimed at that country.

The strikes that were apparently launched followed the shooting down of an unmanned drone in the Strait of Hormuz, but Trump claims he decided to change his mind due to the stated reason that he felt the death toll would have been disproportionate. The United States has also accused Iran of an attack on two oil tankers in the region, but has not provided evidence.

Imperialist sanctions

The backdrop for this is the strategy of maximum pressure taken by the Trump administration towards Iran. This has seen the United States walk away from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action nuclear deal negotiated by Iran and the Obama administration, and implement severe sanctions against the country. In addition to breaking the agreement, the US sanctions have been used to pressure other countries into not buying Iranian Oil, with the stated aim of reducing its oil exports to zero.

This is despite the fact that Iran at no stage had breached the terms of the deal. As a result of the sanctions the GDP of Iran fell by 3.9% in 2018, with inflation hitting 52.4% this year. Iran announced that it would start increasing its uranium enrichment due to the pointlessness of continuing to abide by a deal that is providing none of the promised economic benefits, with those opposed to the US's actions, such as the EU, doing little to mitigate the sanctions.



The dangerous Trump regime is preparing for war with Iran

Trump and his hawks

The Trump administration's demands on Iran are malicious and often absurd, such as a statement released by the White House press secretary stating that "even before the deal's existence, Iran was violating its terms." Trump's policy, while erratic, is most reflective of some of the hawkish figures he has surrounded himself with, most prominently his national security advisor John Bolton.

The Trump administration have ramped up their support for the MEK, a group up until recently on their own list of designated terrorist groups and widely hated in Iran for their role going back as far as supporting Saddam Hussein's forces in the Iran-Iraq War.

The Middle East has been going through a regional Cold War, with conflicts exploited by various governments to project their power in the region, with their bloodiest ex-

pression in recent years being the Civil Wars in Syria and Yemen. The Iranian government have been a prominent participant in this, with their position having been significantly strengthened by the 2003 invasion of Iraq by the United States and its allies.

Need for a workers' movement

It is a reality that the 40 year-long rule by the Iranian theocracy is correctly seen by many as kleptocratic, and opposition to the rule of the supreme leader Ayatollah Khamenei is significant. Large mobilisations, beginning with the mass protests in December 2017 have been an increasingly common feature in Iran. This has seen strike action by a number of groups of workers both for general economic demands, but also seeking the end to Khamenei's rule.

There have also been struggles against women's oppression in Iran,

with numerous protests against the compulsory hijab and the many other restrictions placed on women's freedoms by the ruling theocrats. The nature of this opposition has disorientated the government in Iran, with different factions attempting to exploit a movement outside of their control to their advantage, but ultimately resorting to repression to undermine them.

Socialists oppose those in the White House and its allies looking to make Iranians suffer through sanctions or military strikes. We oppose all imperialist intervention into the Middle East. It is also clear that the Iranian government offers no hope for its population. It is only through building a workers' movement in Iran and throughout the region, based on a revolutionary socialist programme can imperialism and the repressive capitalist regimes that dominate this region be defeated.

Young people in solidarity with Sudan Revolution



On Saturday 22 June, Youth4Sudan organised a protest in solidarity with the Sudanese masses, referencing the incredible actions of workers in France and Italy who, in solidarity with Sudanese workers, have refused to hand weapons to Saudi Arabia.

The vibrant action gathered up to 50 young people and workers in solidarity. Speakers included school students, youth activists as well as Sudanese and Irish trade union activists and workers.

Radical young people have been at the forefront of movements emerging in Ireland, playing a central role during Repeal, and giving the lead to the importance of international struggle for climate justice. Youth4Sudan was initiated by school students and is another example of this radicalisation.

'Extinction Rebellion' & the fight against climate catastrophe

By Conor Payne

THE MASS anger over the developing climate catastrophe is bubbling over. This has been reflected particularly in the major youth protests and school student strikes, which has spread all over the world.

Despite this very important movement, governments continue to largely pay lip service to the issue while the crisis continues unabated. Many young people will be looking for answers for how the movement can go forward and win decisive change. The vast majority of protesters are not affiliated to any organised group. Some groups have emerged however, which point to the different tactics and ideas which can be looked to by those trying to avert environmental crisis.

Organising direct action

Extinction Rebellion (XR) is one such organisation, which distinguished itself by its use of militant tactics, which for many match up with the urgency of the crisis. XR was founded in Britain but actions have taken place and groups have been formed in many countries under the same banner, including in Ireland.

They have included a protest of 400 outside No.10 Downing St where fake blood was poured on the road, and blockades of roads, bridges and the London Stock Exchange. In

November 2018, approximately 6,000 people participated in blockades of London's five main bridges.

Socialists support these forms of militant protest as a tool to draw attention to the climate crisis. This should not be a substitute to building a mass movement of millions, mobilising huge numbers into the streets and building for strike action. It is crucial that this includes action by workers who have the power to bring the system and its environmental destruction to a halt by collectively withdrawing their labour.

XR's programme and strategy

For us, at the root of the climate crisis is the capitalist system with its relentless pursuit of profit. One hundred companies are responsible for 71% of emissions since 1988. These companies are wedded to their short term profits, and will not be convinced to be "allies" in the fight against climate change.

And the issue is not just energy companies - since the Paris Climate Agreement 33 private banks have invested \$1.9 trillion into fossil fuels. For real action on climate, we need a confrontation with these companies, the governments which represent their interests, and an end to the capitalist system which underpins the destruction of our planet.

It is unfortunate that, despite their confrontational tactics, XR is in reality seeking consensus by not taking



Extinction Rebellion have organised a number of radical actions demanding action on climate change

into account the real class interests that prevent this issue being properly tackled. One of its three key demands is: "Government must create and be led by the decisions of a Citizens' Assembly on climate and ecological justice." They say that "Citizens' assemblies are often used to address issues that are deemed too controversial and difficult for politicians to deal with successfully by themselves."

Limits of Citizens' Assembly

They actually point to the example of Ireland as a positive - not just on abortion and marriage equality but on the issue of climate change itself:

"The recommendations of their citizens' assembly on Making Ireland a Leader in Tackling Climate Change is currently being incorporated into the Government's action plan."

But, as Extinction Rebellion Ireland has pointed out, the government's Climate action plan is woefully inadequate to the scale of the crisis. The reality is, that while a Citizens' Assembly may put forward recommendations which cut against the interests of big business and capitalist governments, it is a process which will be set up by those forces to deliver a result they can work with, and manage from their own point of view.

A socialist perspective

It is not a way of overcoming the power of the fossil fuel companies and capitalist interests generally. To do this, the movement needs to be armed with a socialist and class analysis and programme. This means fighting for demands, such as free public transport, which don't accept the logic of the market system and fighting for public ownership of the energy industry and the key industries generally. On the basis of democratic socialist planning, a rapid and planned transition away from fossil fuels will create an environmentally sustainable economy.

Why nuclear power is not the answer to climate change

By Jess Spear

THE NEW HBO docudrama series *Chernobyl* debuted in May and quickly gathered a global following, becoming the top rated TV series of all time. The gripping storyline takes you from the scene of disaster on 26 April, 1985 when an explosion occurred at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in Soviet Ukraine, and follows one Soviet nuclear scientist's quest to uncover and disclose the truth of what happened. The human errors involved in the catastrophe at Chernobyl (both individual and societal) are a stark reminder how dangerous nuclear power can be when disaster strikes.

Nonetheless, with only a little over a decade left to transition to a zero carbon economy to avert climate chaos, some prominent climate scientists are now advocating massive investment in nuclear energy. Unmitigated climate change threatens mass species extinction and to destabilize civilization. Clearly we should consider all low-carbon options available to rapidly reduce our carbon emissions.



The HBO series, *Chernobyl*, is a reminder of the dangers associated with nuclear power

The problems with nuclear power Nuclear energy currently provides 11% of the world's electricity, and unlike solar and wind currently, it can provide 24 hours energy pro-

duction. In over 50 years of energy production, notwithstanding the events at Chernobyl and Fukushima Daiichi, very few disasters have actually happened. So, why not de-

mand more nuclear energy to tackle climate change? Three key reasons include: carbon emissions, cost / time, and radioactive waste.

All non-fossil fuel energy sources produce some carbon emissions. In the main these come from mining rare earth minerals, production, and transporting. However, nuclear energy emits twice as much carbon as solar panels, and six times as much as onshore wind farms.

Unlike solar and wind technology, nuclear energy costs have gone up, not down. Nuclear energy is the most expensive non-fossil fuel energy source, nearly four times that of wind and solar. That's largely because the power plants are designed and built to withstand any and all known risks, from human error to natural disasters. That's a good thing. But, between planning and construction, new plants can take between 10-20 years before any electricity is actually generated. In contrast, large wind farms can be up and running in less than two years. There are new, smaller and cheaper nuclear power plant designs, but none of them have been tested and scaled up to what is needed now.

Lastly, nuclear power generates a considerable amount of radioactive

waste, some of which must be kept sequestered from us and our environment for up to 100,000 years. While the most radioactive waste is only a fraction of the total volume generated it nonetheless presents a serious problem to society - like the 120 double-decker busloads of high level waste France produces every year - that we have yet to solve after 50 years of research.

Solar, wind & wave - not nuclear

Another overriding concern is that capitalism, a system based on short-term profit, cannot be trusted to expand nuclear power use in a safe and responsible way. If the powerful fossil fuel corporations most responsible for climate change decide to turn to nuclear energy instead, will our planet be in safe hands? Of course not!

Time is running out. Every cent invested in nuclear energy takes away from cleaner, cheaper, and significantly less risky renewable sources that can be deployed at a much faster rate. To secure an ecologically sustainable future, we must fight for massive state investment and rapid deployment of publicly owned and democratically controlled solar, wind, and wave energy.

Defend jobs & livelihoods: Nationalise Bombardier

By Chris Stewart,
Unite Irish Executive (Pers. Cap.)

THREE THOUSAND, six hundred highly skilled workers at Bombardier, an aircraft manufacturer in the North, have been dealt another blow by the announcement that the multi-billion euro company is to sell-off its global aero structures division. The news came unexpectedly just days after the workers and their union Unite celebrated a significant victory in fighting off compulsory redundancies.

The threat of workers balloting for industrial action to defend jobs and skills not only halted the redundancies, but also resulted in those who were targeted in the last round being offered their jobs back! The sale to Mitsubishi for €487 million has been talked up by industry bosses as “hugely beneficial to the global aerospace market” but no assurances have been provided regarding the maintaining of jobs and skills in Northern Ireland.

Devastating consequences

Any job losses in Bombardier would be hugely significant – devastating the livelihoods of workers and their families not just employed by the company but many thousands indirectly, as well as the criminal loss of skills. The company accounts for almost 5% of the entire labour force of the North and over 10% of manufac-



Unite members in Bombardier Belfast are fighting to save thousands of jobs

turing GDP.

This is in the context of a decline of the manufacturing sector and a stepping up of the race to the bottom making the North a low-wage economy. Despite the company maintaining an operating profit of over €4 million, the workforce has been slashed drastically over recent years, less than half of what it was in 1990. It is clear corporate greed and the appeasement of shareholders has been plunging the company towards death by a thousand cuts.

The sectarian political parties in

the North alongside the Tories in Westminster have done little to ensure that jobs are maintained. They are, of course, under pressure to defend jobs – as demonstrated by previous campaigns by the union – however they remain ideologically wed to appeasing the markets and as a result are incapable of intervening.

UNITE demand re-nationalisation

Union shop stewards at Bombardier have responded robustly to this uncertainty – moving a motion, which passed unanimously at Unite’s Irish

Policy Conference. The motion calls on the union to “do whatever it takes to defend jobs and skills at Bombardier” and “fight for the renationalisation of [the] company if that’s the only way to protect our members and defend local communities.”

Unite Regional Co-Ordinating Officer and Socialist Party member Susan Fitzgerald: “The idea of somebody coming in and picking what they want and scrapping the rest is just a recipe for job losses...Shorts was nationalised in the past. If that’s what it takes to secure jobs in communities,

we don’t have a problem putting that out there and standing over it.”

Support for the demand of nationalisation, has been growing and has been well received by Bombardier workers and the wider community. Bombardier has benefited massively from public investment, yet can sell-off and slash jobs as it pleases. Working-class people are increasingly seeing the contradictions of the ‘free’ market which puts profit before not only the needs of workers and their families but also the planet. Nationalisation is quickly being seen as an alternative to the continuous cycle of job cuts and erosion of hard-won conditions.

Bold & militant campaign needed

Socialists call for Unite to mount a serious campaign for nationalisation of Bombardier as part of a real strategy to defend highly skilled manufacturing jobs. Stemming from any potential industrial action to defend jobs and conditions, tactics that have worked successfully in the past, like the occupation of the plant should be considered.

A key demand could be for workers’ control and management of a nationalised aerospace industry that would prioritise jobs and maintain skills for the benefit of society. This would receive support from across the trade union movement and the working class as a whole - linking struggles from every industry against what is likely to be further attacks on jobs, pay and conditions.

Opposing austerity & wage restraint: Civil servants vote for industrial action

By Daniel Waldron

Up to 20,000 civil servants across the North are set to strike on Friday 26 July in what will be the largest industrial action that side of the border since March 2015, when the entire public sector was shut down in opposition to austerity measures agreed by the Tories, the DUP and Sinn Féin.

The strike has been provoked by the refusal of civil service management to engage with the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA) – the union representing staff – and instead to impose a below-inflation pay deal for 2018/19. This comes after seven years of pay restraint already. Other public sector workers have been granted larger increases, including teachers who have been engaged in ongoing industrial action.

Conditions & living standards undermined

Pay is not the only issue. Management have torn up the handbook by externally advertising posts which would normally be filled through in-

ternal promotion, a slap in the face for long-standing and low-paid civil servants. There have been attacks on other terms and conditions, all imposed without any reference to staff’s union representatives.

This arrogant approach has rightly provoked an angry reaction. In the ballot for industrial action, 68.5% of NIPSA members voted to strike. At the consultative meetings hosted by the union, workers spoke about the impact austerity has had on their lives, the struggle to make ends meet, with many forced to accumulate debt or work second jobs. This adds to the stress they’re already under in the workplace, with staff numbers slashed by the Stormont politicians and remaining workers forced to pick up the slack.

Determined action

Another message which came through loud and clear was that workers want a serious campaign to win on these issues. They remember the times they have been let down by trade union leaderships. The UK-wide public sector strike in November 2011 against the Tories’ pension cuts and the March 2015 strike against



NIPSA members across the North will take strike action on 26 July

Stormont austerity both showed the huge potential power of the organised working class, but both struggles were summarily ended by conservative trade union leaders with next to nothing to show for it.

NIPSA has a fighting track record, due in no small part to the influence of the Broad Left within the union, in

which Socialist Party members participate. The union’s Civil Service Executive has already committed to a programme of rolling action following on from 26 July, including work-to-rule, sectional action and further civil service-wide strikes. Local strike committees should be established and regular meetings of members

held to ensure maximum participation in democratically deciding the way forward for the struggle.

This is a crucial battle. A victory for civil servants would act as example for workers across both the public and private sectors and boost confidence that it is possible to fight back against poverty pay and austerity.

When the North exploded 50 years since the 'Battle of the Bogside'

By Kevin Henry

FOR MANY, August 1969 was the month that saw the real beginning of the Troubles in the North. British troops were sent into Northern Ireland supposedly as a "stop gap", but one that would remain for decades.

Ten months earlier, the repression of a civil rights protest on the streets of Derry saw the situation erupt with Catholic workers and youth onto streets revolting against half a century of discrimination and poverty. Not only was Unionism discredited, but so too were the ideas of right-wing nationalism – socialist ideas gained a massive echo.

Potential for unity

Importantly these ideas could reach out to Protestant workers who also suffered poverty conditions, particularly in housing. The paramilitary organisations that would come forward as "the defenders" of communities at this point had little support. Loyalist paramilitaries had little success at reorganising, and the IRA had still not recovered from the failure of the "border campaign" of the 1950s.

However, a backlash to the civil rights movement was gaining ground, and in the months leading up to August there was serious rioting in Derry, Armagh and other areas. Tensions were high in the run up to the annual Derry Appren-

tice Boys march. It started off peacefully, in large part due to the efforts of Derry Labour Party and Young Socialist members trying to stop young people from the Bogside from attacking the marchers. When stones were thrown at the parade the RUC responded with a full scale assault on the Bogside.

Heroic defence

The response of the people of the Bogside, including the Young Socialists and Derry Labour Party activists attempting to stop violence, was to erect barricades and fight to defend the area. The "Battle of the Bogside" raged for two days. Adding flames to the fire was the southern Irish government, with then Taoiseach Jack Lynch saying that they "would not stand idly by" as these events in the North developed. In reality this was bluster, as the government did precisely that, however it was seen by Protestants in the North as a serious threat.

The RUC forces had been depleted due to rioting, 600 of the 3,600 RUC officers were injured. The Unionist government response was to call up the reserves – the 8,500 all-Protestant notorious "B-specials." Had such a violent sectarian militia been deployed against the people of the Bogside, there would have been a bloodbath that would have precipitated a sectarian civil war across the North.



Clashes between Catholic workers and youth and the RUC in Derry, 1969

British troops

The entry of British troops was therefore welcomed by locals – with famous pictures of troops being offered tea, as the situation calmed in Derry. It erupted in Belfast with sectarian violence in West Belfast. In this situation many civil rights leaders, including those on the left, wel-

comed the entry of troops into Northern Ireland arguing that it offered a "breathing space."

Many of these same groups would later support the Provisional IRA campaign. The small forces of Militant, the forerunner of the Socialist Party, argued that "the call made for the entry of British troops will turn

to vinegar in the mouths of some of the civil rights leaders. The troops have been sent to impose a solution in the interests of British and Ulster big business."

The role of the working class

Militant argued for the labour movement to take the lead and organise a "trade union defence force" against sectarianism. This wasn't an abstract position. As Peter Hadden outlines in detail in *Common History, Common Struggle*, the fact that the Troubles did not spread to other areas or the workplaces was mainly down to initiatives taken by trade union and working-class activists on the ground. In many areas peace was maintained by committees set up by working-class residents, uniting both Catholic and Protestant workers.

When Loyalist bigots issued "get out or be burnt out" threats against Catholic families living in the largely Protestant working-class areas of East Belfast, local peace committee activists responded with leaflets put through Catholic doors saying "stay put, we will protect you."

The untold story of this period is the heroic role played by trade union activist and others in resisting sectarianism. This could have provided the basis to push back against sectarianism rather than the growth of paramilitary violence. Socialists have a responsibility to bring out this hidden history.

Review: Diego Maradona directed by Asif Kapadia

Reviewed by Kieran Mahon

DIEGO MARADONA, now 58, is the subject of Asif Kapadia's latest film examining fame. Using access to hundreds of hours of unseen private footage, new interviews with Maradona, narration from his personal trainer and his ex-wife, and contemporary footage he has constructed an enthralling two hours and ten minutes of film.

It opens with a frantic, edge of the seat car trip through Naples that sets the scene for events to come. We also get some sense of Maradona's background. At just 15 he, through football, took his family out of the poverty of a Buenos Aires shanty town. He was subsequently sold, twice in three years, for world record fees as capitalism and money from corporate interests took a firmer grip on the game.

The film focuses to two events that defined Maradona. In both cases Kapadia puts them in their social and economic context. The 1986 World Cup quarter final against England is placed in the context of the Falklands War and the humiliating defeat inflicted on Argentina by Thatcher.

The Naples that embraced Maradona is also brought out using footage from Italian league matches. The racist abuse engaged in by sections of Ultras from the big northern



Italian clubs is particularly striking today given the presence of Salvini's La Liga in the current Italian government. Maradona led Napoli from relegation fancied minnows to two league titles, two Italian Cups and a UEFA Cup in his seven seasons there. His links with the Camorra, and his introduction to cocaine are all revealed through intimate footage and stills.

In dealing with the 1990 World Cup in Italy, where in the semi-final Italy were pitted against Argentina in Naples the film explores divided loyalties in Naples, which Maradona played into, and the efforts of the Italian press to try and win over a city that has been economically neglected. Maradona led Argentina to victory, scoring, celebrating joyously and in effect sealing his departure from Italian football.

The director explores the backlash heaped on Maradona by the Italian

establishment, and state. Maradona was rapidly under the eye of revenue, received regular drug tests and a ban, was dragged across the media and was associated with the buying of sex from sex workers linked to the Camorra gangs. When he fled to Argentina, he was arrested in a drugs bust, all under a barrage of cameras and mass attention. The film ends with Maradona admitting to his biggest deception and finally accepting the paternity of his estranged partner's son.

The sense from the film is of a football genius at a time when rampant commercialisation, individualism and celebrity were pushed over the collective experience. In a system unable to meet the aspirations of the vast majority, Maradona was embraced and elevated by those he inspired and ultimately taken down, directly or indirectly, by those who sought to profit from him.

Trans Pride Dublin 2019



The 6th of July saw Dublin's second annual Trans Pride take place, consisting of a short rally, a march and the final rally. Between 1500-2000 people turned out, doubling last year's turnout, to participate in a grassroots community-led event that had a strong anti-capitalist thread throughout. Speakers covered a large host of topics with some particularly powerful contributions from Trans activists in Direct Provision and from the Traveller community. Trans Pride received great support from members of the public as well as a number of trade unions, political and campaigning organisations. After an energetic and optimistic event the struggle for equality and liberation continues.

