

# thesocialist

PAPER OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY

ISSUE 137

APRIL 2021



# MAY DAY 2021

# WORKERS MAKE THE WORLD RUN!

JOIN THE SOCIALIST PARTY!

[www.socialistparty.ie](http://www.socialistparty.ie) / [www.socialistpartyni.org](http://www.socialistpartyni.org)

## The pandemic of inequality

### New reports, same story

Another year, another wealth report letting us know how obscenely richer the obscenely rich (in every sense of the term) have gotten. The world's billionaires have now amassed \$13.13 trillion for themselves. To put this in context, China, the second largest economy in the world, has a GDP (Gross Domestic Product) of \$14.34 trillion.

They have added a staggering \$5.12 trillion to their fortunes in this pandemic year. Meanwhile, the numbers living on less than \$2 a day have swelled by 131 million. Like Covid, this "inequality virus" has its roots in a system driven by the ruthless pursuit of private profit.

### Worse than official stats suggest

Almost a quarter of all household wealth in the UK is held by the richest 1% of the population, according to the *Sunday Times Rich List*. The study found that the top 1% had almost £800bn more wealth than suggested by official statistics, meaning that inequality has been far higher than previously thought.

#### How come?

How have they grown so rich? Firstly, there is of course the labour of the working class. Think of Jeff Bezos and his global Amazon workforce,



## Johnson praises role of "capitalism and greed" in Covid response

By Daniel Waldron

**O**N THE anniversary of the first lockdown in the UK, Boris Johnson proclaimed to Tory backbenchers, "The reason we have the vaccine success is because of capitalism, because of greed, my friends." The real result of the Tories' callous, pro-capitalist policies during the Covid pandemic has been almost 130,000 lost lives, one of the highest per capita death rates in the world. They were reluctant to lock down and rushed to re-open the economy, all because they wanted to minimise disruption to profit.

#### Ideological delusions

Clinging to dogmatic belief in the superiority of the 'free' market and the private sector, they outsourced PPE provision and creation of test-track-and-trace systems, often to Tory cronies with no expertise in these fields. These proved to be unmitigated disasters, leading to thousands of unnecessary deaths while costing the public billions.

The vaccine programme has undoubtedly been a success, but this is despite – not because of – capitalism

and greed. The vaccines themselves – including that developed in partnership between Oxford University and AstraZeneca – are the product of huge public sector intervention and subsidies, which allowed rapid research and production. The profits, however, will be the property of the private pharmaceutical giants, who will put the world's poor to the back of the queue.

The efficient rollout of the vaccine has only been possible because of the existence of the NHS and the self-sacrifice and dedication of tens of thousands of health workers. While the Tories hypocritically joined in the applause for NHS staff, they now intend to thank them for their efforts with a 1% 'pay-rise' – while the hoarded wealth of the billionaires and pandemic-profits remains sacrosanct.

#### The socialist alternative

What is true of the Tories is true of the Dublin government and every pro-capitalist government around the world, to a greater or lesser degree. It is solidarity, co-operation and the efforts of working-class people in every essential industry, in every community and workplace which have kept society functioning throughout this pandemic, in spite

of the parasitic capitalist system and its never-ending drive for profit above all else.

This gives a glimpse of what we could achieve, what kind of society

we could build, if our wealth and resources were used in a planned and democratic way to provide for the needs of people and planet, not for the profit-margins of billionaires. It

also gives a glimpse of the collective power which the working class has to consign both Covid and capitalism to the history books, and fight for a socialist future.



### Britain's racial inequality

Black and Asian people are up to 50% more likely to die from COVID-19, according to official data. Minority groups have also been hit harder by job losses. The unemployment rate for Black people was 13.8% compared to 4.5% for white people from October to December 2020, up from 8.7% and 3.4% for the same period in 2019.

### Ireland's billionaires

Yes, Ireland's billionaires are doing very well you will be less than glad to know. Owning meat factories that

ignore the safety of your low paid (largely migrant) workers, profiting from our privatised healthcare system and not having to pay tax will more help to balloon your coffers. Denis O'Brien has seen his wealth rise from \$2.9 billion to \$4.6 billion.

### Institutional racism alive and well

Two days after the death of Prince Philip, a racist royal whose record has been heavily whitewashed by the racist media, it was revealed that a government commissioned report which denied the existence of insti-

tutional racism in the UK was in fact rewritten by that same racist government.

### The lost decade

RTE's new series of *Reeling in The Years* took us back to 2010. We were reminded of the organised theft that was the bank bailout of €64 billion and the austerity that went with it, administered by the EU, IMF and Irish government. Over a decade on the Central Bank has issued a report telling us that living standards in the South of Ireland are below the EU average. All the inflated growth figures can't hide the reality of austerity's legacy.

## Capitalist "vaccine nationalism" hinders fight against virus

By Chris Stewart

**T**HE SECOND year of the coronavirus pandemic is underway and it continues to expose the limitations of the capitalist system. Demand for the vaccine is far outstripping what private pharmaceutical companies are able to supply.

While the vaccination process is underway in many advanced capitalist countries, production and distribution problems have plagued the rollout. Big-pharma giants – backed by the US, UK and EU – will make billions off the publicly funded vaccines through price-gouging poor countries and refusing to drop their patents.

#### Poor countries being left behind

At the same time, the advanced capitalist countries have hoarded enough vaccine orders to immunise their populations many times over. The result is that many countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America are at the back of the queue. 90% of those in the poorest countries won't get a single jab this year and it is estimated it could be up to 6 years before the world reaches 75% immunity.



#### Socialist planning

Capitalism, with its short-term focus on profits, has no real plan for dealing with this crisis, and is completely incapable of taking the coordinated, international action needed to end this pandemic. What is needed is a plan for the mass production of vaccines, the retooling of factories and

the re-training of workers to this end, with the aim of fully vaccinating the entire world as soon as possible. This means immediately waiving all patent and "intellectual property" protections on the Covid vaccines and bringing Pfizer, Moderna, AstraZeneca, and all of big pharma into democratic public ownership.

In a socialist society, the massive supply chains of companies like Amazon would also be brought into democratic control, allowing them to be used for public good, not profit. This would enable us to combine their vast resources and technology and rapidly scale up producing and distributing the vaccines around the world.

## Big pharma's patents The rule of private profit must end

By Jonathan Diebold

**T**HE RAPID development of the Covid-19 vaccine has given us a glimpse of what humanity can achieve given enough drive and resources. However, it has also demonstrated the shortcomings of capitalism, and of patent laws and the reliance of a small number of massive, highly profitable companies in the production of our medicinal needs.

#### Global inequalities

While many highly developed countries have been overstocking vaccines, the African Union has not been able to secure nearly enough. Despite calls by several countries for the World Trade Organization (WTO) to waive patent restrictions and allow countries access to vaccine blueprints, this has been vetoed by western countries, to protect the profits of these companies. This even though vast sums of public money were used in the creation of these vaccines.

Not only does this allow these companies to extract huge profits from public funds during a pandemic, but it also reduces the efficiency of medical research. Over 200 vaccines, in many cases largely similar, are in production around the world. Time and resources were wasted while companies redundantly worked in competition with



Profit should have no place in the efforts to combat the virus

one another, rather than sharing resources and knowledge.

This will cost huge numbers of lives around the world, particularly in poorer countries, but it also has the potential to reignite the pandemic by giving the virus fertile ground to mutate and produce vaccine-resistant strains.

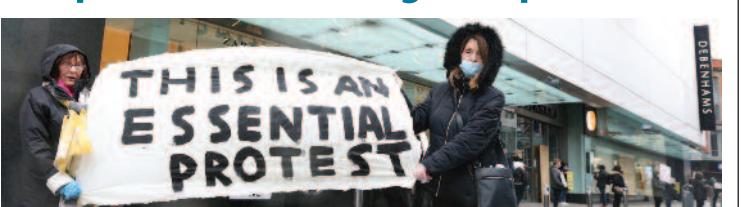
#### Waste of the system

Between 1999 and 2017, the top 11 pharmaceutical companies received over a trillion euro in profit, of which 925 billion, or 90.8%, was returned to investors. This is illustra-

tive of the obscene parasitic waste that is part and part of capitalism. If these companies were in public hands, under the democratic control of workers – and they already receive huge public funds anyway – these resources could be poured into research or increasing accessibility or improving working conditions, instead of allowing the wealthy to profit off our sickness.

Democratic public ownership would be a boon to healthcare as a whole, and is the only way to ensure rapid production and fair distribution of vaccines to the whole world.

## The pandemic & the right to protest



**I**N A world in the throes of a pandemic, actively organising resistance to the inequalities and oppressions that are not only still present, but significantly worsened, is a more complicated issue. However, while health and safety must be a far greater consideration than ever before, the right to protest remains essential.

Too much focus in the media and social media over the last year has been given over to coverage of relatively small anti-lockdown and anti-vaccine demos, usually organised by fringe, far-right elements. These protests are disgraceful and dangerous, and should be opposed by all.

#### Workers forced to act

The fight remains, however, that the vast majority of the protest actions organised internationally during the pandemic have been legitimate and responsibly organised. It was frontline workers – nurses and doctors in the US campaigning for PPE – that staged the first protests during the pandemic. They set the example for safe and effective socially-distanced actions.

It wasn't long before workers in Italy joined in to protest and strike for a shut down until it was safe to return to work. Since then, countless workers have been forced to put their health at

risk in order to fight for their rights. The Debenhams workers in the south of Ireland are an obvious example, having been on strike for over a year now.

#### The essential right to protest

The Socialist Party has supported all of these workers in their struggles. We've also opposed the extra powers being handed to state forces to police such actions, because these powers will ultimately be used against the left and workers' movement and in the interests of the bosses and their system. Unfortunately we've witnessed many examples of precisely this.

The sight of Debenhams strikers and supporters in Blanchardstown being physically removed from their picket by the Gardai, while scabs were let on their way (despite breaking level 5 restrictions to move stock in the early hours), was a shameful one. Likewise the fines issued to protesters against gender-violence in Dublin and Belfast. These actions were carefully and safely organised by ROSA to protect health, while highlighting a vitally important epidemic of violence, which is also being exacerbated by Covid restrictions.

These repressive measures represent an infringement on the basic right to protest and set a dangerous precedent. They must be opposed.

# Beacon Hospital vaccine controversy — how the super-rich can ignore the rules

**VACCINES BEING doled out as if they were tickets for a corporate box in the Aviva Stadium.** This in essence sums up the scandal surrounding Michael Cullen, CEO of the for-profit Beacon hospital, and the vaccinations he arranged for 20 teachers from the exclusive fee-paying school that his children attend. No doubt many others received vaccines at the Beacon in breach of the guidelines, such as the CEO of the VHI, the state's largest private health insurance company.

This scandal has naturally provoked outrage on the part of working-class people suffering under this year-long pandemic and frustrated by the slow pace of the Government's vaccination programme. It echoes the events surrounding "Golfgate" in August last year, when representatives of the banking world, the judiciary, and political establishment, flagrantly breached the guidelines surrounding Covid. Both incidents illustrate the naked sense of entitlement on the part of the super-rich, golden circle that dominates Irish society.

**Private hospitals**  
The private Beacon Hospital is owned by billionaire Denis O'Brien, who has amongst other things amassed his vast fortunes through his status as a tax exile and securing lucrative state contracts in the past.

He is not the only tax-avoiding

billionaire to make a tidy sum from our privatised health system. The notorious beef baron, Larry Goodman, whose industry's callous disregard for its workforce has repeatedly fuelled the Covid crisis in the South, has invested his fortunes in the Blackrock Clinic, the Hermitage and the Galway Clinic.

The Beacon is the 444th largest company in the state. In 2019, its operating profit came to €7.2 million, more than double that of 2018. The total revenue of the hospital is €142 million. It is emblematic of everything that is grotesque about our two-tier health system. One part of this system is its public side, made up of dedicated and committed health staff, but the victim of decades of cuts and underfunding.

Fee-paying schools are bastions of class privilege, which provide opportunities for the privileged and wealthy, both parents and in later-life students,

to "network" — as this case shows. On top of the myriad of tax breaks they are gifted, this section of society benefits from the fact that the state subsidises such schools to the tune of €100 million per annum, largely by paying the salaries of its staff.

This whole elitist system is a disgrace, and the subsidisation of private education must end. Its staff and resources should become integrated into a fully-funded, secular, public school system.

## Private schools

The private Beacon Hospital is owned by billionaire Denis O'Brien, who has amongst other things amassed his vast fortunes through his status as a tax exile and securing lucrative state contracts in the past.



Beacon Hospital CEO Michael Cullen's position is untenable and he should be removed

## A rigged system

Many working-class people, if they have the means to do so, feel compelled to take out private health insurance and in turn, have access to the services provided by private hospitals. What is truly disgusting is that side by side with austerity-hit and cash-starved health services, the likes of O'Brien and Goodman, and the super-rich generally, can avail of so many tax breaks and perks. They can then exploit the fact that many are forced to go private because of the public

healthcare crisis, and amass further profits for themselves through investments in a growing private healthcare sector. It exemplifies everything that is rigged about capitalism.

All private hospitals must be brought into permanent public ownership, with no compensation for its shareholders. They must be integrated into a top-quality, one-tier, public health service that is free at the point of use and democratically controlled by its staff and the wider working class. Such democratic control must start by ensuring that the

vaccine programme is put under scrutiny to ensure that it is administered in a fair and equitable manner.

The wealth is there to fund the vital services we need, but this will not happen as long as we live under a system designed to work for a tiny, privileged few, not the majority. The fortunes, profits, and resources that the capitalist class has made at our expense must be seized and taken into democratic public ownership, from which we can then democratically plan the economy to cater to all our needs.

## Families of children with autism subject to state spying operation What is behind this outrage?

**I**N MARCH a whistle-blower in the Department of Health revealed that the Department has been secretly compiling dossiers on the families of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) who had taken legal actions against the state. These cases were seeking access to basic rights such as seeking access to a place in a school, an assessment of needs, or a place on a school bus.

## No consent or knowledge

The information was compiled by the Department without the consent or knowledge of the children or their families. The information included highly sensitive information about the children's conditions and treatment, as well as information about the well-being and dynamics within families. On the Prime Time Investigates programme which broke the story, the whistle-blower recounted that among these files were disturbing video recordings of a child having a breakdown.

Included in the files were template letters that would seek information from medical professionals where it was explicitly stated that they should



Dept of Health must be investigated

not inform the children or their parents of the request for the information. The Department clearly were trying to keep this practice out of the knowledge of those affected. A breach of doctor-patient confidentiality.

The purpose for this database was

## "If is legal, it is ethical"

These dossiers point to a wider culture in that Department and in the Irish state. Rather than engaging with children and families with ASD diagnoses, the reflex is to take highly aggressive legal action akin to the tactics of Wall Street bankers taking on corporate rivals.

So far, the government has attempted to brush off the issues raised, claiming that these dossiers were legal and that there are no ethical issues. The Department of Health quickly stated that the dossiers were "entirely lawful, proper and appropriate". Its approach has been to circle the wagons and to essentially repeat the mantra that if it is legal, it is ethical".

After the revelations, the Taoiseach announced a review, and the Secretary General of the Department of Health will also carry out a review. However, incredibly the government has not committed to ensuring this practice is stopped!

Such a healthcare system should be democratically controlled and managed by healthcare workers and the wider working class, to ensure real accountability. This will ensure that children and their families never again have to take legal action to access the basic services that they need.

disability rights campaigners and the wider working class. The children and families effected need to have immediate access to the information that was collected about them.

## The health service we need

This scandal exposes the outrageous way the capitalist establishment in Ireland views the most vulnerable sections of society. We also need a break with the logic of their system that sees vital resources rationed out and denied to people, and then attacks those who demand their rights and those of their children.

There needs to be massive investment in a one-tier top quality, public health system, free at the point of use and where all our needs are fully catered for with care and dignity, something the top civil servants and the government are demonstrably incapable of providing.

There needs to be a genuinely independent inquiry into these practices. Instead of senior civil servants overseeing it, it needs to be overseen by representatives of parents of children with disabilities, children's rights and

# Draft budget a "slap in the face" for frontline workers

By Thomas Carmichael

**A**GAINST THE backdrop of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and the consequent social and economic hardships that have been inflicted on ordinary people as a result, the draft Northern Ireland budget comes as a slap in the face, particularly to the frontline workers who have kept society functioning over the last year.

Described by University of Ulster economists as "very challenging", the budget contains "only a marginal cash increase in core funding for day-to-day spending" according to the BBC, while some departments will see their budget fall below their pre-Covid budget in real terms. Health spending is due to increase by 5.7% but experts say this won't be enough to address existing shortfalls or to tackle post-pandemic waiting lists. The extension of furlough is



The wealth and resources are there to fully fund all our public services, combat the pandemic and ensure no loss of earnings for workers

welcome news to workers but doesn't go far enough. 80% of a wage that wasn't enough to begin with is not an acceptable living situation.

During the first three months of the pandemic alone, the collective wealth of the UK's billionaires rose

by £25 billion. This figure, amassed in a time in which the country's economy shrank by more than 20%, puts the paltry Stormont budget in its proper context and shows it, and the obscenely low pay-offers for essential workers, for the disgrace they really are. The wealth and resources

endured by ordinary people as a result.

While it is easy to wave away the problems of the budget as entirely the fault of the Tories, it is ultimately symptomatic of the overall capitalist system, which concentrates the bulk of society's wealth in the smallest number of hands. This system, which is incapable of dealing with a crisis without putting the burden on the working class, is upheld by the Executive parties in Stormont every bit as much as it is upheld by the Tories in Westminster. The only way to secure the funding needed to make a difference to people's lives - and to secure a recovery from the pandemic that works for ordinary people and not just the billionaire class - is through a campaign of mass action against austerity, against tax breaks for the 1% and, ultimately, through a fundamental break from the capitalist system, in favour of a socialist alternative

## Health workers deserve respect - Fight for 15%



### Resist Stormont's assault on abortion rights Access on the NHS in Northern Ireland for all!

By Lucy Marron

**J**UST ONE week after International Women's Day, a bill seeking to restrict abortion access in cases of non-fatal fetal abnormality was backed by a majority of MLAs and passed its second stage. Paul Givan of the DUP put forward this bill, cynically using the guise of defending the rights of disabled people in order to cut across the right to choose. For anti-choice groups, undermining abortion access in these circumstances is the thin end of the wedge, aimed at opening up a broader assault on the right to choose.

Alongside the DUP, the bill was backed by the TUV, a large majority of UUP and SDLP MLAs, and one Alliance representative. Despite vocally opposing the bill, Sinn Féin MLAs abstained and essentially allowed it to pass. This is not shocking, given that Sinn Féin themselves put forward an amendment which supported restricting abortion access in cases of non-fatal fetal abnormality during a debate last year.

The failure of the Stormont Executive to commission abortion services a year after new regulations came into place has led to a postcode lottery. Under threat of legal action, the Westminster government has been forced to compel the Department of Health to draw up plans for abortion services. However, we cannot rely on the Tories, the courts or any of the main parties at Stormont to defend the right to choose - including those who have been forced to adopt a more 'progressive' stand in recent years under pressure from below. Instead, pro-choice groups need to prepare to engage in a new wave of protests and civil disobedience in order to defend abortion rights and demand access on the NHS in Northern Ireland for all

from working-class backgrounds. Rather than restricting the right to choose, we should focus on funding all services necessary to support people with disabilities and their families.

The failure of the Stormont Executive to commission abortion services a year after new regulations came into place has led to a postcode lottery. Under threat of legal action, the Westminster government has been forced to compel the Department of Health to draw up plans for abortion services. However, we cannot rely on the Tories, the courts or any of the main parties at Stormont to defend the right to choose - including those who have been forced to adopt a more 'progressive' stand in recent years under pressure from below. Instead, pro-choice groups need to prepare to engage in a new wave of protests and civil disobedience in order to defend abortion rights and demand access on the NHS in Northern Ireland for all

from working-class backgrounds.

Rather than restricting the right to choose, we should focus on funding all services necessary to support people with disabilities and their families. The failure of the Stormont Executive to commission abortion services a year after new regulations came into place has led to a postcode lottery. Under threat of legal action, the Westminster government has been forced to compel the Department of Health to draw up plans for abortion services. However, we cannot rely on the Tories, the courts or any of the main parties at Stormont to defend the right to choose - including those who have been forced to adopt a more 'progressive' stand in recent years under pressure from below. Instead, pro-choice groups need to prepare to engage in a new wave of protests and civil disobedience in order to defend abortion rights and demand access on the NHS in Northern Ireland for all

from working-class backgrounds. The government are currently praising themselves for the successful rollout of the vaccine programme, but then they deliver a kick in the teeth for the staff who have been working round the clock to make this a reality.

In Northern Ireland, the health strikes in December 2019 and January 2020 proved the mass support which exists for the NHS and its staff

should rally around. This demand also needs to be translated into a plan of action to win. It is positive that the Royal College of Nursing has already put aside a sizable amount of money to support industrial action.

In Northern Ireland, the health strikes in December 2019 and January 2020 proved the mass support which exists for the NHS and its staff. The Tories claim a higher pay increase would be unaffordable at the present moment. However, given that they have squandered £22 billion on an essentially nonexistent track-and-trace service, and spent £12 billion on contracts with the private sector for PPE which never actually materialised, these excuses are unlikely to work on nurses whose wages have dropped an average of 7.4% in the last decade. In the same period, MPs have been awarded a 23.4% increase. It is unsurprising that a recent poll revealed that 97% of NHS staff don't trust the Tories with the NHS. The government are currently praising themselves for the successful rollout of the vaccine programme, but then they deliver a kick in the teeth for the staff who have been working round the clock to make this a reality.

In Northern Ireland, Finance Minister Conor Murphy has indicated that, while most public sector staff will only get 1%, health workers can expect a somewhat larger pay-rise. However, given the nature of the Stormont draft budget, it will likely only be marginally less de-

risory.

Unite has called for a pay-rise of 15% or £3,000 per annum for all health staff, which ever is larger.

This is an entirely reasonable demand which the Socialist Party supports and all trade unions in health

and education sectors like education. If health workers engage in a battle for decent pay, safe staffing and the reversal of cuts and privatisation, and if the wider working class is mobilised behind them, they can win.

**On 3 March 2021, 33 year-old Sarah Everard went missing. It was soon thereafter discovered that she had been kidnapped and murdered, most likely by a member of the Metropolitan police, while walking home at 9pm at night, writes Harper Cleves.**

**THIS EVENT** struck a chord with women and non-binary people across the UK and Ireland, where protests quickly emerged. Many people shared the phrase "text me when you get home" as well as stories of holding keys in their hand a certain way, running home from the bus stop, finding well lit paths etc. to highlight the myriad of ways in which women, trans and non-binary people have to alter their movements in order to remain safe in public spaces.

In fact that same week the European Agency for Fundamental Rights reported that 83% of women between ages 16-39 will change or limit where they go in public to avoid harassment, and the UN demonstrated that in the UK 97% of women between ages 18-24 had been sexually harassed.

**A violent system**  
The anger at the root of these protests goes beyond gender violence committed by strangers; which in actuality accounts for a small minority of deaths and assaults faced by women. The anger is directed at a misogynistic system which shows nothing but disdain for working-class women in every aspect of life; from workplace interactions, to caregiving roles; to medical treatment. In the context of COVID 19, and a recession, where all pre-existing inequalities are being exacerbated, working-class women are more aware than ever that this system doesn't serve them.

Part of the reason violence against women and gender non-conforming people is so prevalent in our society is because violence in general is so normalised under capitalism.

Across the world, 53 countries use the death penalty as legitimate means of punishing criminals. All save 19 countries in the world allow the day-to-day police force to carry



**IN THE past year, the conditions of Covid have exacerbated gender-based violence. EU states reported a 60% rise in emergency domestic violence calls. In Ireland, there was a 25% increase in calls to domestic abuse services in the first six months of the initial lockdown. France reported a 30% increase in calls, while domestic murders doubled in the UK. These increases were not unique to European states. China reported domestic violence numbers tripled from the previous year.**

Capitalism's failure to adequately address the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in a continuation of lockdowns, leaving many women and children in unsafe and abusive homes. Governments all over the world have failed to protect women throughout the pandemic – sparking a new shadow pandemic of gender-based violence.

**Global resistance**  
The recent murder of Sarah Everard by a metropolitan policeman sparked outrage among many in society, motivating feminist actions in the UK and other

Women being ideologically classified as natural caregivers saves governments around the world trillions of euros annually on health, elderly care, and childcare – but what follows from this ideological need of the system is that individual men think it is normal or natural to expect or not even notice that women are responsible for all household tasks.

#### Systemic inequality

In the south of Ireland new studies show that 10% of women have had to leave jobs because of the pressures of homeschooling their children; and that in 65% of households the mother is fully responsible for homeschooling the child as opposed to 5% of fathers. Women being hyper sexualised might turn a profit for the beauty industry, but it has also created a cultural expectation that men are entitled to sex, and that women must walk the tight rope of being both virginal and sex goddesses.

All of these dynamics stem from the needs of the capitalist system, but reflect themselves in the daily interpersonal interactions of individuals and in particular take the form of male entitlement. Gender violence is then an extreme expression of this entitlement.

#### Movements

All of this can sound bleak, and irresolvable, but if the present period shows us anything it is that when working-class women are backed into a corner, they will fight back rather than accept further abuse and exploitation, as recent developments on gender violence in Latin America, Turkey and France demonstrate. A socialist feminist movement led by young women, that consciously builds solidarity amongst all the exploited and oppressed, points a way forward toward not only challenging individual abusers, but the misogyny embedded in the capitalist system itself.

#### Sexist ideology

And yet, this does not account for the gender imbalance of who carries out violence. A major study in the US, UK and Canada demonstrated that between 90-97% of perpetrators of violence in intimate relationships were men. To truly understand this, we have to understand how much class-based societies rely on rigid definitions of gender. Rigid gender definitions emerged with the family as class society developed. The "natural" predilections of women were a cultural justification to confine women to the home, in order to control her sexuality and ensure the passing down of property to future generations.

This ideology has developed and taken on its own character in the time since. Capitalist ideology uses the gender binary as a tool to create all kinds of unrealistic expectations in order to generate and protect profit, but this desire to protect profit has also led to a masculine culture of entitlement that develops its own logic.



# HOW CAPITALISM BREEDS GENDER VIOLENCE

THE SOCIALIST

## The shadow pandemic and global resistance to gender-based violence

By Leah Whelan



**parts of Europe. The past year has exposed the system for its inability to protect, or meet the needs of the women. The recent period has shown that women cannot rely on the state or state bodies to bring about gender equality and an end to gender-based violence.**

We have witnessed working class and young women play a leading role in recent struggles – from Poland's fight for abortion rights, to the Indian farmers protests, to strike action and resistance against the military coup in Myanmar. Women have been to the fore fighting for bodily autonomy, and democratic rights.

#### Instanbul Convention

In Turkey, thousands of protesters – mainly women – took to the street on International Women's Day in an action calling for President Erdogan to reverse his decision to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention, a treaty that aims to prevent and combat gender violence. Protestors chanted, "We are not scared; we are not afraid. We shall not obey".

Like Ireland, the Turkish government do not keep official statistics on gender violence. However, World Health Organisation data has shown 38% of women in

against state repression. It is not lost on protesters that the state can quickly deploy police against the right to protest but cannot appropriately deal with the ever-growing gender violence.

#### What is needed?

What is necessary to combat these issues is for governments to firstly acknowledge the urgency and the extent of misogyny, sexism and violence against women and girls. This needs to be followed by huge investment into social services; from social housing to domestic and sexual abuse services. A comprehensive sex education programme in schools that deals with consent, relationships, and challenges sexist views is also necessary.

Around the world, the women's movement has continued to mobilise and demand its rights throughout the course of the pandemic. With women

the most negatively impacted in the past year, it is hard not to see the potential for future growth of such actions. A mass organised, united working-class socialist feminist movement from below, that seeks to end gender based violence and this oppressive capitalist system now needs to be built.

## #KillTheBill: No more repressive policing powers



By Eleanor Crossey Malone

**WHEN SARAH Everard's body was discovered in a woodland in Kent, a Metropolitan police officer was arrested on suspicion of her kidnapping and murder. A peaceful vigil in Brighton commemorating Sarah was subject to police repression, with images showing police violently pushing women to the ground. Sarah's murder was not an anomaly. The threat of gender-based violence, and its prevalence at epidemic levels, shapes women's day-to-day experience. In the first 21 days of lockdown, intimate partner killings - victims of which are overwhelmingly female - doubled. In the UK, a poll of young women found that 97% have experienced sexual violence or harassment.**

#### Tories terrified of protest movements

Effective protest by its nature is a rupture in the status quo. It is taking a stand to say that life as usual – including the normalisation of violence against women, but also racial oppression and the grinding down of workers' pay and conditions – simply cannot continue. The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill being rushed through parliament – which increases police powers to repress protests – tries to exploit a low level of understanding of how protest results in change. It couches the bill in terms of preventing noise and disruption to the public. But what the Tories find worrying about protest is how it can disrupt their plans. Most alarming is the bill's open-endedness: it allows the Home Secretary to add new reasons for restrictions without agreement in parliament.

Protest movements have weakened the Tory government and forced U-turns on a number of issues, including A-Level results and reopening of schools. Black Lives Matter protests erupted internationally after the murder of George Floyd, and protesters in Bristol consigned a slave trader's statue to the bottom of the canal. It is not coincidental that the bill mentions "memorials" eight times, and includes a sentence of up to ten years for damaging one. Now, the government faces mass anger and the possibility of protests erupting over NHS pay. The facade of national "unity" they were initially able to rouse in response to

Covid is crumbling. The government plans to make working-class people foot the bill for Covid's destabilisation of capitalism by further degrading our living standards, and trembles at the prospect of workers mobilising en masse to reject these attempts.

#### Who is this bill really for?

Police do not intervene in protests indiscriminately. In Northern Ireland, this has been evidenced by how anti-lockdown protests, influenced by far-right ideas, have had no fines issued. The reactionary Precious Life have not been hindered in harassing women seeking abortions outside clinics. At the same time, £1,000 in fines were issued to ROSA activists for organising a protest against gender-based violence. By the same token, this bill is less likely to be used against protests with racist and xenophobic undertones, because these sentiments chime with the nationalistic ideas the Tories depend upon. These ideas help to divert the blame for falling living standards, low pay, overstretched public services and a lack of jobs and housing onto minorities, and to conceal the true beneficiaries of the Tories' time in government – the capitalist elite.

An NHS nurse in Manchester who protested the 1% "pay rise" – an effective pay cut, relative to inflation – was handed a £10,000 fine by police. If medical professionals, or any workers for that matter, were to strike for better pay, this would of course fit the Tories' description of disruptive activity and could be viciously repressed under the bill. All of society, and the very functioning of the system, depends utterly on workers' labour, whether they are saving lives in hospitals, putting food on supermarket shelves, working in distribution centres, maintaining our internet connections or manufacturing things we need. We should be clear: the purpose of this bill is not to prevent annoyance for the public. It is to paralyse workers, their trade unions, and all movements against oppression, to place the capitalist system on life support at our expense.

Starmer's Labour Party was eventually pressured to oppose, rather than abstain on, this abhorrent bill. Reluctant opposition is not enough, however. We must come together in our workplaces, schools, colleges and communities to defend the right to protest, because our lives, and our livelihoods, depend on it.

# Myanmar: Heroic working class challenges military rule

By James Fleming

**O**N 1 February, the Myanmar military – known as the Tatmadaw – led a coup against the government of Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD). Since then, at least 543 people have been killed by the military junta, of which a large number are children. The coup was in response to November elections which the NLD won with 61% of the vote, but which the junta claim was rigged.

The country has been virtually paralysed over the past two months by strikes and protests and the vicious response of the military to these. At the beginning of April, the junta shut down internet services to restrict anti-coup protesters organising or exposing atrocities by the authorities online.

## Working class power in action

The working class has taken the leading role in its massive opposition to the coup. Since the 1 February, there have been general strikes on 22 February and 8 March in which millions of people have participated – this despite Myanmar's lack of strong trade union tradition. These strikes effectively brought the entire country to a standstill. Two months after the coup, the struggle between working people and the military continues.



Many protesters have been shot and tragically killed by the regime in recent months

Women workers have been a leading force, especially healthcare workers, teachers, and textile workers. Those workers are also organized as part of a relatively strong unions as far as unionization in Myanmar goes. They have organized political strikes with students, whom they have reached out to, and they seek international solidarity with ordinary people particularly those in Hong Kong and Thailand who have also had massive anti-establishment protests recently. Another internationalist element includes the use of

the three-finger salute which has been used by protesters in Thailand and now Myanmar too, and has been inspired by The Hunger Games payment of military personnel whom the junta fundamentally depend on. The success of the strikes – even these limited individual ones – emphasize the powerful weapon a strike is for the working class. The working class has also created a civil disobedience movement, which, so far, has pressured a number of employers and international companies to end their cooperation with the government.

What might have started off as demonstrations and strikes against military dictatorship inevitably leads

to discussions about wider social issues and questions about the whole system. Although Aung San Suu Kyi's NLD created limited room for unionization and other democratic rights, they did not bring about lasting or significant change for working people. It failed to challenge the role the military clique enjoyed in Myanmar politics; the junta are now reversing any democratic gains achieved in recent years.

The NLD and Aung San Suu Kyi herself have discredited themselves by their conciliatory attitude towards the military. Shamefully, they defended and supported the brutal repression, massacres and ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya people by the military while in power.

## Revolutionary movement

The entire system in Myanmar is challenged by the current revolutionary movement of the masses. The establishments of neighbouring China and Thailand are also threatened by it. Only revolutionary economic and social change, which overthrows the oppressive capitalist order, can permanently improve the lives of people in the region, as well defending the democratic rights of all ethnic minorities – a socialist transformation. Such a movement for change would have a wider international impact, particularly given the recent protests in places such as Thailand and Hong Kong.

## Right-wing recall in Seattle: Billionaires attack socialist city councilmember

**O**n Thursday, 1 April, the Washington State Supreme Court gave the green light to the billionaire-backed, recall campaign against Kshama Sawant, member of Socialist Alternative (our sister organisation in the US) and Seattle city councilmember. Below are extracts from the speech Kshama gave responding to the attack.

"This ruling is completely unjust, but we are not surprised. Working people and oppressed communities know that we cannot rely on the capitalist courts for justice anymore than we can on the police."

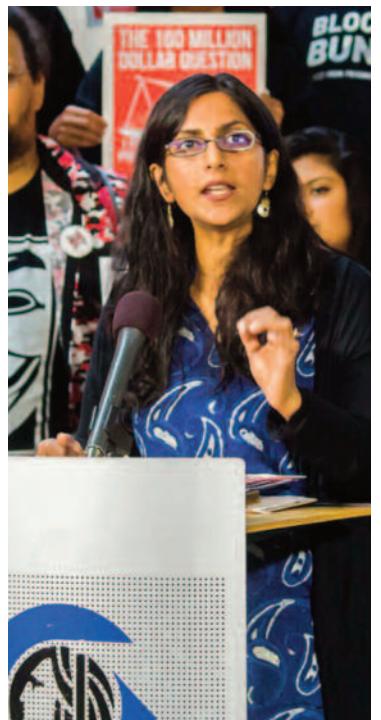
Many working people saw this – first-hand – last summer, in Seattle and across the country, as peaceful

protests against racist police brutality were themselves met with brutal police violence. The police and the political establishment have yet to be held accountable, while in stark contrast, more than 14,000 protesters were arrested.

I was one of the protesters, of course, and it is no accident that two of the three charges upheld by the Supreme Court are about my participation in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter Movement.

The Supreme Court has unanimously approved the recall against Seattle's only elected socialist, because we held a masked, one-hour Black Lives Matter rally in an empty City Hall. The Supreme Court's real reason for siding with the recall is highly political: it is an attack on our office for unambiguously standing with the Black Lives Matter movement. The stunning irony is that I was one of the thousands who were tear gassed by Durkan's [Mayor of Seattle] police."

"Today in Seattle, big business and the right wing are furious about the impact of socialist politics and social movements. They especially hate the inspiring example we have set for working people around the nation. After having fails at their attempt to steal the Seattle City Council election in 2019, billionaires want a do-over, and want to reverse the historic victories spearheaded by our office: the Amazon Tax to fund housing and a Green New Deal, the \$15 minimum wage, the first-in-nation ban on



Amazon Tax to fund housing and a Green New Deal, the \$15 minimum wage, the first-in-nation ban on

weapons against peaceful protests, and landmark renters rights laws like the ban on winter evictions and our victory just on Monday this week, for all tenants facing eviction to have the right to a lawyer."

"We have been elected three times despite the corporate cash and the corporate lies. So now they have launched one of the most serious attacks on the US left in decades. But this is the capitalist system, and it's precisely because the ruling class so determinedly wants me off the City Council that I know our office has fought for working people, whose interests are opposed to the greed of the rich. The recall is a sign that the ruling class is deeply fearful of the growth of peaceful protest and workplace actions that are coming as the crisis of capitalism escalates."

"The great Irish socialist, James Connolly, once said, "The role of a socialist in elected office is to be a disturber of the political peace." This is not because as socialists, we personally love conflict, it is because the whole machinery of capitalism is designed to crush workers – and there is no way to stand against that while being a part of the club."

## Debenhams – year long, still strong!



April 9 is the first anniversary of the Debenhams struggle, yet the demands of the workers remain fundamentally unresolved

**A**PRIL 9 marked the first anniversary of the Debenhams struggle. On a number of occasions, as various milestones were passed, the shop stewards said that they did not set out to break records. However, to sustain a struggle for a year in the freakish circumstances of a pandemic and a lockdown is

remarkable and further seals the place of the Debenhams workers in Irish labour history.

## Issues unresolved

The demands of the workers remain fundamentally unresolved, that is a just redundancy settlement. Instead, Solas, the state training agency, is now in the process of providing the workers with additional information

as to how each of them might benefit from the €3 million training fund offer, the offer that was decisively rejected in January.

There is a possibility of the offer going to ballot again and the workers weighing up whether anything better can be obtained by maintaining the struggle. The strikers will rightly feel that all workers will need to be able to financially benefit from the pack-

age for it to even go to ballot.

Remarkably at present the stock still remains in seven out of the eleven stores. Where it was removed in Blanchardstown, it was done so with the active participation of the Gardai under level five. While the picketers had their names taken and were moved out of the way the scabs were let on. People have rightly likened this to Gofgate and the Beacon vaccine scandal as an equally graphic example of one law for the rich and powerful and another for the rest of us during the pandemic.

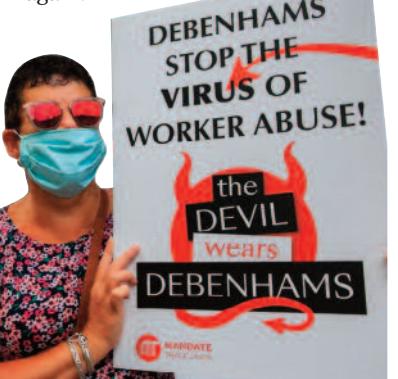
## Shameful actions of Gardai

Significantly KPMG returned to court to seek the renewal of their injunction but sought with it an enforcement order which meant that the Gardai could be deployed in this fashion so as to avoid the spectacle of workers being brought to the High Court on contempt charges for a breach of injunction. This would have caused enormous outrage among working class people in general given the sympathy and support the workers have garnered.

Even if the training fund is accepted, the second time around it does not spell the end of the fight. Many of the workers have said that they

place a great value on the idea that their struggle makes it more likely that legislation will be introduced to improve the status of workers in liquidation situations, even if such legislation will not directly benefit them.

Socialist Party member and Solidarity Party member and Solida



## BT Group workers ballot for industrial action



Over 45,000 BT group workers in BT, Openreach and EE will be balloted for industrial action

By Paddy Meehan, communications worker

**O**VER 45,000 BT group workers in BT, Openreach and EE will be balloted for industrial action over compulsory redundancies, and attacks on redundancy terms and job security. These workers were recognised as essential to keeping people connected during the lockdowns, but are now under attack from a management who deem them surplus to requirements.

The company (BT Group) recently dressed up a one-off £1,000 payment and £500 share option as a "reward" for the essential work carried out by workers, and it was quickly leaked to the media. In reality, this is management renegeing on a pay increase and leaving workers worse off. The company's services are in more

demand than ever before and they've been offered preferential treatment by the regulator to roll out full-fibre broadband services. It's no surprise they've reported projected profits of £1.3 billion this year.

BT Group management are following other significant attacks in both the private and public sector to cut costs and profit. What's needed is the largest possible 'Yes' vote in the Communication Workers' Union industrial ballot. This could go further, linking up with action by health workers for a real pay rise, workers facing "fire and rehire" attacks, and so on. The whole trade union movement should be mobilised to ensure that the working class no longer pays the price for this pandemic crisis, either through government policy or opportunistic attacks from bosses.



The UCU at every Further Education college in Northern Ireland staged a one-day strike on the 24th March

## Shrewsbury

## 24 cleared – after 47 years!

By Luke Holmes

**FOLLOWING A 47-year fight, the Shrewsbury 24 Campaign secured the overturning of convictions against construction workers involved in industrial action in 1972, six of whom were jailed, including actor Ricky Tomlinson. This is a victory which the Socialist Party welcomes.**

Thousands of students in Northern Ireland are reliant on these Further Education colleges. Staff being overworked and underpaid will have an impact on these young people. Staff and students should come together to fight for the investment and change which they both require.

The 1972 peaceful nationwide strike, a first for the British building industry, saw demands for better wages and conditions. Following its success, however, unsubstantiated arrests were made in 1973, with some participants like Ricky receiving 2–3-year sentences. The fight to overturn these unjust convictions was mired by judicial miscarriages, concealment and destruction of documents, and fierce propaganda campaigns by successive Tory governments and the media to undermine unions.

Despite the recent success, the convictions remain a flagrant anti-union attack by police and government, and it remains a farce that it took this long to resolve. Des Warren – who received a 3-year sentence – passed away in 2004, without seeing his name cleared. Considering this case, the proposed Policing Bill, and recent actions against protests, there's no question the British establishment retains some of the most antagonistic laws and attitudes in Europe against trade union activity and protesting.

# Climate Action Bill: Weak response to urgent crisis

By Padraig O'Flynn

**T**O MUTED fanfare and coverage the government recently published their Climate Action Bill. The document might appear ambitious on the surface, but, on closer inspection, specific measures for achieving these targets are largely absent.

#### Weak proposals

Indeed, the most interesting thing about the document is what's missing from it. For example, it contains no free public transport proposal or ban on the importation of fracked gas. The American company behind the proposed LNG (liquefied natural gas) terminal in North Kerry on the Shannon estuary is about to submit a new planning application, this time for a floating terminal with the same purpose – to receive American fracked gas.

Given the nature of the extraction process in fracking, the pumping of chemicals and water at high pressure to fracture rock and release methane deposits, the amount of methane leakage into the atmosphere is enormous. Methane (natural gas) is far, far more potent a greenhouse gas than CO<sub>2</sub> (84 times

more so over a 20-year period and 25 times more over a 100-year period)

#### Agri-business

Still on the subject of methane; the major source in Ireland is cattle farming. Its disproportionate impact has only grown in recent years as governments have encouraged dairy farmers to massively increase production in preparation for the ending of EU milk quotas in 2015. Between 2010 and 2018, there was a 38% increase in cow numbers and a 54% increase in milk production. Regardless of how relatively efficient Ireland's beef and dairy production systems are compared to corn-fed cattle, there needs to be a shift away from beef & dairy production in Ireland and globally. Instead, we have this rapid increase in production and, furthermore, Bord Bia (effectively the state PR agency of the Irish agri-food industry) spending millions in advertising to grow a market that barely existed before and promote dairy products in China.

The Climate Change Advisory Council (CCAC), along with an Oireachtas committee, is the body whose role it is to hold relevant government ministers to account when



Mural on Dublin's Chancery Street

it comes to meeting the targets and sticking to the parameters of their so-called five-year carbon budgets. Under this bill, that role appears greater and their number is increased from 11 to 14. In typical fashion, the previous council was

dominated by (right-wing, obviously) economists like John Fitzgerald, a famous 'soft landing' monger in 2008 and something of a fossil fuel contrarian. The three new additions mean the council is no longer without a climate scientist, but we now.

can't rely on the experts to save the day; the new chairperson has a background in energy, but with a 30-year career with the European Commission, it looks just like another establishment voice.

#### No solutions under capitalism

So, how likely is it that this plan will succeed and will they meet their targets? No, they will not. We can't expect capitalist parties to stand up to capitalists. If they wouldn't stand up to a notorious, tax-averse meat processor billionaire like Larry Goodman and his ilk for seeding multiple Covid outbreaks and showing contempt for his workers' lives, they're not going to impose the slightest sanction.

We need to urgently move towards a zero carbon economy within the next decade on a global scale in order to tackle the crisis of climate catastrophe. Therefore, we simply cannot rely on the present Irish, or any other capitalist government for that matter, to deal with it with paltry measures that refuse to challenge the profiteering of capitalism. Working-class and young people need to build a socialist, anti-capitalist movement that ends its rule. The clock is ticking on climate change and we must act now.

## Banking on Climate Chaos: A system intent on destruction for profit

Catherine Finnegan

**T**HE RECENTLY published "Banking on Climate Chaos" report has shown that the world's 60 largest banks have pumped \$3.8 trillion into the fossil fuel industry in the five years since the Paris Agreement, completely at odds with the urgent need for action to combat the climate crisis that puts us all at risk. JPMorgan was the worst offender, investing \$317 million since 2015 and overall, a minority of twelve banks funded the fossil fuel industry to the tune of over \$2 trillion.

The report details several case studies which illustrate the disproportionate impact that the fossil fuel industry has on indigenous peoples' lands and communities in the global south. For example, the Arctic Refuge is home to nearly 200 wildlife species, and the Gwich'in people who consider the coastal plain to be sacred. The area has been protected for over 50 years but was opened to fossil fuel drilling in 2017, endangering both the people who live there and the wildlife the area supports.

The report is a scathing indictment of the financial industry's practices but for socialists, the content is hardly surprising.

#### Profiting from crisis

The capitalist system is fundamentally incapable of prioritising anything above profit and this includes



Banks continue to invest in fossil fuels

climate action, which this report exposes. While fossil fuels and other climate damaging industries are profitable, banks and other businesses will continue to invest in them, no matter the cost to our planet.

The UN Climate Change Conference is due to take place in Glasgow in November 2021 and this is a key event to organise struggles around, demanding action from those in power and accountability for companies who are intent on destroying the planet for profit.

## North: Greens back "progressive" water charges



By Daniel Waldron

**I**N THE North, Green Party leader Clare Bailey has restated her party's support for "progressive" domestic water charges.

The bulk of waste in our water system does not take place in people's homes but in the antiquated infrastructure which has been starved of investment for decades. Responsibility for that lies with the politicians, not ordinary people.

Households should not have to ration water usage for fear of the bill. Like all essential utilities, the water service should be publicly owned, democratically controlled and funded through genuinely progressive taxation.

Water charges have always been a precursor to privatisation, leading to skyrocketing bills and a poorer service, as seen in England. Any attempt to introduce domestic water charges should be resisted by a campaign of mass non-payment, the key tactic which defeated the charges in the South.

Many people in the North have voted for the Greens because they want an anti-sectarian and left alternative. Unfortunately, this - and their role in government in the South - shows the weakness of the Greens' approach, which ultimately accepts the limitations and false logic of capitalism.

## SPECIAL FEATURE: NATIONAL QUESTION

THE SOCIALIST

# Centenary of partition: Tragic consequence of missed opportunity for socialist change

By Amy Ferguson

**S**OME SAY that the partition of Ireland a century ago was inevitable, a 'natural' reflection of the sectarian division on the island. Others argue that an independent, united - and capitalist - Ireland was within reach, if only individuals like Michael Collins had stayed the course. Neither of these narratives is accurate.

The Communist Manifesto states, "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles." What this argues is that class struggle has been the ultimate determining factor for all major events since the dawn of class society - this is also true in the case of partition.

In the early 1900s, class struggle was rapidly accelerating across the globe. This was the case in Ireland too. In 1906, there were strike waves of women workers for a pay rise across Ireland. There was the Dublin lockout of 1913, land seizures, 'soviet' established in various areas, and workers' occupations up and down the country.

Moreover, the ITGWU (the union of Connolly and Larkin) grew from 5,000 members in 1916, to over 120,000 in 1921.

#### Workers' unity in the north

In the north, there were significant examples of workers' unity and militancy which sent shivers up the

spine of the capitalist class. The 1907 Belfast dockers' and carters' strike saw the Protestant and Catholic working class unite to fight for better working conditions. The strike itself involved about 1,000 workers but, at its peak, 100,000 from across the sectarian divide marched to City Hall.

Then, in 1919, there was a battle for a 44-hour work week. Again, this struggle brought Catholics and Protestants together in their common class interests - the bosses' divide-and-rule narrative was pushed back.

For instance, at the beginning of the dispute, there were a few sectarian incidents, but the workers reacted quickly and set up a body of 2,000 to patrol the city and keep it free of intimidation.

The lasting legacy of these battles demonstrates, firstly, that sectarianism is not a constant theme in our history and secondly, that capitalists fear nothing more than workers' unity.

#### Divide and rule

All these things combined, north and south, represented a movement with revolutionary potential. This was the actual state of Ireland when the British ruling class decided to play the card of partition. They were terrified for the future of their exploitative system and Empire.

If workers were so determined, how did the British ruling class end up successful in their game of divide-and-rule? Often, the missing ingredient in class battles that prevents workers from achieving that final goal of ending exploitation for good is the question of leadership.

**Labour must wait**

As well as organising industrially, workers increasingly looked to Labour for a political voice. However, the reformist heads of the movement failed to provide leadership which could bring together the working class around a common programme for both national and social liberation. Instead, they bent the knee to Sinn Féin, following de Valera's demand that "Labour must wait" - that the so-called 'concerns of the nation' had to come before



Labour Representation Committee at Ormeau Park, Belfast, 1906

those of any class within it, or - more accurately - that the interests of the working-class must be quashed in favour of the 'needs' of the wealthy business and landowners.

The pro-capitalist and ultimately sectarian nationalism of Sinn Féin could have no appeal for Protestant workers in the north, who feared the economic impact of independence on a capitalist basis, but also the potential to become an isolated and oppressed minority. This allowed the British establishment and sectarian forces to reassess control and drive a wedge between workers, in order to save their system, ultimately leading to partition and the establishment of two oppressive

and sectarian states on the island.

#### Lessons for today

Partition was not inevitable. The dominant trend had been towards working-class unity, militancy and support for socialist change. The capitalists wanted to divide workers in an effort to save their system. This was made possible due to the treacherous approach of the labour leaders, who ignored the demands of the working class and instead effectively propped up capitalism. We still live with the legacy of that defeat today. We must learn the lessons of the missed opportunity posed in this period, in order to inform the struggle for socialism today.

## No going back! Fight for workers' unity!

Orange and Green politics has failed - we need common struggle against common misery

**A**S WE go to press, days of rioting in Protestant working-class areas across Northern Ireland - escalating into clashes at interface areas - have shown that there is a real danger of a significant increase in sectarian violence in the coming months. Workers and working-class communities will suffer as a result of these developments. The blame for the rioting lies not just with those engaged in and orchestrating the violence, but also with politicians who have whipped up tensions in recent months, in particular the DUP and Sinn Féin.

While there is undoubtedly a level of coordination by loyalist paramilitaries, these riots also reflect genuine anger - particularly over the imposition of a border in the Irish sea, something of which the Socialist Party warned and opposed - and a sense of disenfranchisement. The riots are a product of the failure and inability of the Orange and Green politicians to overcome the sectarian division in which they have a vested interest. While politics is reduced to a sectarian



The rioting is a reflection of the 'bad peace' which has existed here over the last quarter of a century

6pm until their safety is guaranteed. This is an important example of the lead the trade union movement should give, bringing workers together in opposition to attacks and intimidation, but also challenging the social conditions in which the rioting is rooted.

A bus driver and photographer have already been attacked during the rioting. Subsequently, bus drivers in Belfast walked out in protest and have refused to enter affected areas after

scars of the past. It is a warning of things to come if the sectarian forces in both communities - from the 'respectable' political parties to the paramilitaries - are left unchallenged by a genuinely cross-community, working-class alternative.

Common struggle against the common misery that both communities face is essential, not just to challenge these conditions, but also to challenge sectarianism. United struggle of the working class - Protestant, Catholic and neither - can raise people's sights towards the potential for fundamental change: for a break with the capitalist system which sows division, and for a socialist future in which working-class people have a real say over the running of all aspects of society.

This can provide a basis for workers and young people to find genuine and democratic solutions to the questions which currently divide our communities, in a spirit of solidarity, compromise and mutual respect.

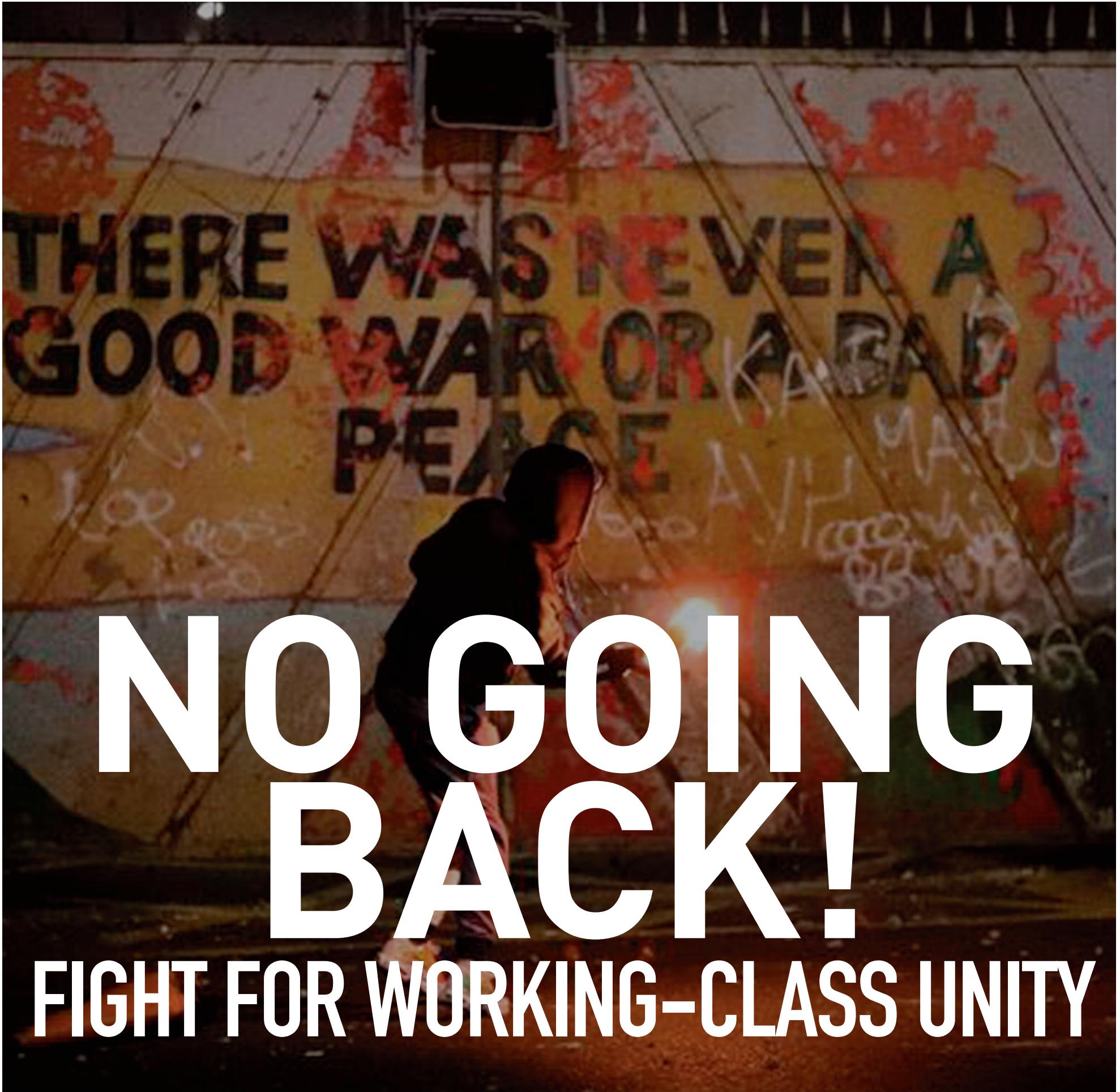
**This is an abridged version of a longer statement available at [www.socialist-party.org](http://www.socialist-party.org)**

# thesocialist

PAPER OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY

ISSUE 137

APRIL 2021



**NO GOING  
BACK!  
FIGHT FOR WORKING-CLASS UNITY**

JOIN THE SOCIALIST PARTY!

Text 'JOIN' to 0873141986 / 07709276057