

Socialist Workers Party Manifesto

People Before Profit

The Celtic Tiger delivered great benefits to the rich and big business. They have enjoyed record profits and earnings. But working class people were left out of the loop - wages have been held back, housing costs have gone through the roof and the health service has been run into the ground. The Socialist Workers Party wants to seriously challenge this state of affairs. We will put people and the environment before profit.

END THE HOSPITAL CRISIS - A FREE HEALTH SERVICE NOW!

Ireland holds the EU record for closing more acute hospital beds per head of the population. 6,000 hospital beds have been cut since 1980. The result is long waiting lists and patients left on trolleys because of lack of beds. Nurses have been forced to take industrial action in desperation to try to get something done about the chronic under-funding of the health service. This scandal has blown up at a time when the Irish economy has been experiencing its biggest boom ever. Yet ALL the parties that have been in government over the past decade have been involved in giving tax breaks for big business instead of funding hospitals, doctors and nurses. Next year taxes on big business will fall to just 12.5 percent, less than half the figure of ten years ago. This refusal to get big business and the rich to pay more than a tiny fraction of their huge profits in tax is directly responsible for the crisis in the hospitals and other public services.

- *The SWP pledges to fight for a free health service for all. Make big business pay!*
- *Abolish private medicine. A medical card for all - no two tier medical system - health care to be organised according to human need and suffering.*
- *Return the 6,000 hospital beds cuts since 1980.*
- *Increase the number of doctors, nurses, language therapists and occupational therapists and other health workers. and pay them a decent wage. Ireland has the lowest doctor-population ratio in EU.*
- *Clinical services to be run by clinicians - not health managers who work as economists.*
- *An end to involuntary detentions of psychiatric patients - Ireland has the highest rate of detention in Europe. Low cost housing for the mental health services*
- *No waiting list for de-tox units for drug users. Decriminalise drugs - provide proper rehab services.*
Free reproductive health care - sex education, free contraception, non-directive counselling.
Full rights for the disabled - support for care workers who have been forced to strike for decent wage. Carer allowances should not be means tested .

EDUCATION

The Irish education system is under attack from a corporate sector that is determined to narrow the experience of education so that it fits in with the needs of big business. The Socialist Workers Party stands for:

- *End church control of our schools-for local democratic control of the schools.*
- *Pay the teachers a 30 percent rise. No benchmarking-education cannot be measured like car manufacturing.*
- *No return to fees as advocated by the Skilbeck report. End punitive fees for overseas students.*
- *For an end to corporate involvement in research in universities.*
- *For a major expansion of science based learning in primary schools - make religion classes voluntary and after school.*
- *Second chance education for all. Ireland has one of the lowest numbers of mature students attending colleges in the EU. For proper grants and education leave as a right*

for all workers.

TAX BIG BUSINESS - FUND PUBLIC SERVICES!

Our other public services are also near to collapse. There are no properly funded child care facilities. Spending on public transport is appalling. Affordable housing is a bad joke. 140,000 people are on the waiting list for housing. With such a shortage and no rent control, many live in overcrowded conditions or are forced to pay exorbitant rents to greedy landlords. Our public transport system is the least subsidised in Europe. As a result our streets are clogged with cars which makes the daily journey to work a nightmare for thousands. Now the government parties want to turn over many of these services to big business, by contracting out services and privatising under the guise of Public Private Partnerships. Privatisation in Britain has been a disaster. It has wrecked the public transport system, created a two-tier society and destroyed services. Housing, health, education, public transport must be run for need not profit.

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- We will oppose ALL forms of privatisation, particularly the "Public Private Partnership". PPPs mean public subsidy for private greed.
- We demand the publication of the contracts between private firms and the state. No to commercial secrecy!
- Move to a policy of free public transport - the savings from health care and pollution will pay for some of the cost.
- Immediate imposition of rent controls - rent reductions for tenants whose dwellings are owned by property speculators.
- For an emergency local authority house building programme. Reverse the cuts that started in the Haughey years.

NO TO WAR - NO TO MILITARISM

The horror of September 11th has been cynically used by George Bush as an excuse to launch attacks on any country he chooses. Bush's so called war on terror means killing innocent civilians in poor countries and it will do nothing to end conflict in the world. Taking his cue from the US president, Israel's Ariel Sharon launched a brutal assault on refugee camps in the Occupied Territories, resulting in the cruel deaths of many hundreds of civilians, women and children.

- *The SWP condemns Bertie Ahern's support to US military plans to bomb Iraq and offer of the use of Shannon by US troops*
- *The SWP will oppose pressure on Ireland to accept the Nice Treaty.*
- *We say use the billions now spent on arms to end third world poverty*
- *Justice for the Palestinians - for a boycott of Israeli goods until they end their illegal occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.*
- *Close Sellafield - for large scale mobilisations to pressurise the British government.*

AXE THE BIN TAX - PROPER RE-CYCLING FACILITIES.

Millions of tonnes of waste are pouring into landfill sites creating pollution and illness. Households produce only a small proportion of waste - most comes from big business. It is they who need to clean up their act. Much waste could be eliminated if industry was geared to re-use and re-cycling, elimination of excessive packaging and the use of materials that are environmentally friendly. Instead, the Government wants to build privately-run incinerators. These represent a serious health risk to those living nearby. They produce deadly dioxins and other poisons. In most of Europe incinerators are now being phased out because of these hazards. Throughout the country councils have introduced refuse charges. These are not "environmental charges" to help clean up the waste crisis, but are instead a double taxation on PAYE workers.

- The SWP calls for mass non-payment of these unjust Bin Charges

- We fight the building of incinerators

JAIL THE CORRUPT POLITICIANS We say zero-tolerance to corrupt politicians and businessmen. Ireland's super-rich used the Ansbacher account to bribe top politicians. More than £50 million has been spent on tribunals but only one politician was jailed - and then only briefly. Working class people get sent to jail for petty theft while politicians and businessmen who swindled millions get away scot-free.

- *The SWP will fight to break the cover-up of the corruption scandal. • Publish the names of the Ansbacher frauds!*
- *The Criminal Assets Bureau should seize the assets of businessmen engaged in bribery and tax dodging*
- *Use the facilities of elite clubs like the K Club for working class children.*

FOR FREE CHILD CARE FACILITIES - LEGISLATE FOR A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO CHOOSE!

Working parents face a childcare nightmare. Although children at the age of four get free schooling crèche places for younger children are extremely scarce and expensive. We fight for well-run, free, state run crèche places available for ALL those who require them. Every year some 7,000 Irish women are forced to travel to Britain for an abortion just to suit hypocrisy at home.

- *The people have spoken: Legislate now on the basis of the X Case for a woman's right to choose an abortion here in Ireland .*

OPPOSE RACISM-DON'T LET THE RICH SCAPEGOAT REFUGEES.

Refugees and asylum-seekers are being scapegoated by the government and press. They are not responsible for the fact that so little affordable housing is being built or that hospitals are so under resourced that people face long waits. Each immigrant that arrives here is not only a mouth to feed but also a pair of hands to help make the things we all need. Divisions between immigrants and native Irish are played up by the government, the rich and the press in order to divert attention from the failure of the government to provide and to divide working class people. Whipping up this anti-immigrant atmosphere results in the horrible racist attacks on immigrants in the recent past. We oppose the discriminatory system of "direct provision". Refugees should be given the right to work and contribute to society in their adopted home.

- *It's class not race that divides us*
- *We say No to Racism, Houses and Jobs for All!*

FIGHTING SECTARIANISM IN NORTHERN IRELAND.

The SWP believes that the Northern state was constructed on a sectarianism basis. Catholics were excluded from power for decades and a blatantly biased security force brought considerable hardship. The Belfast agreement institutionalised sectarianism. Political representation is organised on a communal basis. The whole ethos of the society is based on economic competition between Catholics and Protestants for scarce resources.

The SWP stands for Connolly's vision of a 32 county workers' republic. We want to unite Catholic and Protestant worker through a fight for a better life for all.

All the main parties from Sinn Fein to the DUP are united in promoting privatisation. We ask how can Sinn Fein pose as radicals in the South while their ministers in the North hands over schools and hospitals to private firms.

- *For a return to class politics - not flag waving.*

NO COALITION WITH THE RIGHT - BUILD A REAL MOVEMENT FOR CHANGE

When thousands of voters turned to Labour in disgust at Fianna Fail, the PDs and Fine Gael, Labour dashed their hopes by joining right wing parties in coalition. Sinn Fein too is looking to enter a coalition government. The Socialist Workers Party gives an absolute commitment: We will do NO deals with parties like Fianna Fail, Fine Gael and the PD's whose policies favour the rich. Any of our candidates elected will only accept an average industrial wage. The rest of the TD's salary will go into grassroots campaigning.

- *The Socialist Workers Party stands for People Power and believes that real change comes through working class people organising themselves.*
- *If elected we will promote, encourage and help to organise every genuine form of resistance against the political establishment. . .*

SHARE THE WEALTH - BREAK THE POWER OF BIG BUSINESS

Many of Ireland's wealthy elite pretend to live as 'tax exiles' in Bermuda or elsewhere. They have used their vast sums to buy politicians and push through policies which suit their interests. They understand that political democracy is limited if they can use their money to bend society to their wishes. The Socialist Workers Party is determined to break the economic power of this tiny minority.

- *Take the banks and major firms into public ownership.*
- *Open the accounts of the banks to government scrutiny*
- *Workers' control of industry to increase efficiency and democracy.*

Who are the Socialist Workers Party

Three billionaires own more than the total population of sub-Saharan Africa. Giant multi-national firms like General Motors, which are worth twice as much as the Irish economy, dominate our lives. This is the picture of global capitalism today. But now a huge opposition movement is growing. The anti-capitalist movement was born during protests in Seattle. Ever since then it has put pressure on global leaders - forcing them to provide cheaper drugs for HIV sufferers in Africa, exposing their heartless policies for collecting Third World debt and offering an alternative to politics which reduce everything to the market. The Socialist Workers Party has been central in building up Globalise Resistance, the anti-capitalist movement in Ireland. Our aim is to galvanise the anti-capitalist movement by relating to the concerns of working people here. Ireland is more divided on class lines than ever before. It is run by a wealthy elite who uses bribery and corruption to keep their privileged positions. Between 1987 and 1997, the share of the national economy going to profits and other unearned income has risen by 10 percent. The share going to workers has declined by 10 percent. Basic social services are under funded. Our streets are gridlocked because there is an inadequate public transport system. Children collect bar codes so that supermarket will supply their schools with computers - because the government has not invested enough in education. Irish parents pay one of the highest childcare costs in Europe because the government does not fund crèches.

How did all this come about? Why did the elected government not look after the people who put them into office?

The reality is that modern capitalism is run by a business class who operate behind the scenes to make sure all policies suit their interests. Recent revelations at the corruption tribunals give some idea of how it works. Top business people established a secret Ansbacher account to pay Charles Haughey a monthly bribe of £20,000. Haughey in turn looked after their interests by slashing taxes

on profits. Even when brown envelopes are not handed over, money dictates how important decisions are made behind the scenes. Wealthy business people blackmail governments by claiming that if they do not get a good enough profit they will move their companies elsewhere. They form close networks with the top politicians so that what is seen as good for business is good for the country. The power of money means that democracy is undermined. Parliaments no longer hold the real power in this society. Most of the decisions which affect our daily lives are made in the boardrooms of big business. Real change will not come just by electing people to parliament. Big business can only be challenged when huge numbers of workers take action to challenge its rule. The Socialist Workers Party always points to the power of workers to bring change from below. Our fundamental belief is that socialism must come from the self-emancipation of workers. It cannot be handed down from on high - it must be taken by a movement that starts at the bottom.

WHAT IS SOCIALISM?

Socialism means that production is based on human need and is not designed to satisfy the greed of the few. Instead of large factories and offices being run by private individuals whose sole interest is profit, they should be controlled by those who work. The market should not dictate what is produced but the majority of people should be able to debate and plan what is needed for society as a whole. Socialism therefore involves a huge extension of democracy. Under capitalism, you get to vote every four years. During elections we are told we have a "say in running the country". But the next morning when you go past the factory gate or the office door nothing has changed. The boss is still dictating everything. The anti-capitalist movement is not content with a fake political democracy. It wants economic democracy as well. We should have say in how our jobs and colleges are organised. We need workers' control of the factories and offices so that the majority of people make democratic decisions about the issues that directly affect them. When the majority controls production much of the insanity that comes with capitalism can be eliminated. There would be no need for an arms industry or for nuclear power plants, which produce plutonium as a by-product for nuclear power. The multi-nationals would not be allowed to dictate what we eat by producing genetically modified food. The debts of underdeveloped countries in Africa and Asia would be cancelled instead of feeding the greed of the bankers. Socialism also means co-operation rather than endless competition. Today humanity faces huge problems like the spread of AIDs or climate changes that could threaten the planet itself in the future. Instead of different companies hiding their research in the name of 'commercial secrecy' or fighting each other, socialism means that we pool resources to solve problems.

Getting There

We need to be organised to get socialism because those who run this system are highly organised. They use the state machinery to crack down on workers' struggle. They control the media and use it to spread ideas, which divide workers. However their system is anarchic and is subject to booms and slumps. Our rulers are like a band of hostile brothers - as Marx called them - who unite to defend their privileges but who can also turn on each other. All of this means there will always be struggle against the rule of capital. These struggles manifest themselves in all sort of ways. Most directly, it involves workers fighting for better wages and conditions. But it also involves struggles over refuse charges, or resistance to evictions or students looking for decent grants because those who control capital deprive society of valuable resources. The aim of the Socialist Workers Party is to link these struggles into a challenge to capitalism itself.

In practice this means that the SWP organises:

- In The Anti-Capitalist Movement We seek to build up Globalise Resistance as a broad based movement that involves people of different viewpoints. One of the main ideas of the anti-capitalist movement is to 'Think Globally, Act Locally'. We want to connect the wider movement struggles against privatisation or the corporate take over of our environment.
- In the Unions: We argue for solidarity action between workers and oppose the idea of social partnership as a ploy to get workers to accept less than what they deserve in a booming

economy. We press for the election of all union officials and argue they should be paid no more than the members they represent should.

- In local areas The SWP organises branches right across the country. Our branches take up a host of issues that affect people in their area. All the time we argue that people should rely on themselves, that through 'people power' and forging link with organised workers they can win.
- In the Colleges: The SWP is the most active political organisation in many campuses. We hold regular meetings to promote socialist ideas and press for militant action to galvanise students. At all times we stress the need for students to link up with struggles outside the colleges.

STANDING UP AGAINST OPPRESSION

In all of these activities socialists stand out as opponents of oppression. Capitalism tries to convince one group that they are superior to others. So Northern Ireland was supposed to be 'a Protestant state for a Protestant people'. Refugees and asylum seekers are presented as outsiders who 'sponge' off the 'Irish community'. And people are encouraged to believe in traditional 'family values' where the man rules the house Socialists oppose all these forms of oppression because they divide workers and give an impression that one section of workers has a common interest with our rulers. The Socialist Workers Party has been to the fore in organising marches against racism and in saying that 'refugees are welcome here'. We have campaign actively for the right to divorce without huge financial penalties, a woman's right to choose, and for the right of gay people to live without discrimination. In Northern Ireland we argue that there is far more uniting Catholic workers and Protestant workers than dividing them. The all party government that has come out of the Belfast agreement is implementing an economic agenda of closing hospitals and cutting back on public spending and workers should unite to oppose it. But working class unity can only be built permanently if Protestant workers turn their back on loyalist ideas which promote the idea of "superiority" and Catholic workers reject the idea of a "pan-nationalist alliance". We fight for a 32 county socialist Ireland that can only be arise out of a challenge against both Irish states.

HOW WE ORGANISE

The SWP is organised into local branches, which meet regularly. The meetings are practical and pull together activists who want to organise in their area, workplace or college. We also hold regular public meetings that attempt to bring socialist ideas to a larger audience. We also organise evening classes in some areas on the wider ideas of anti-capitalism. Becoming member of the party means joining the fight against exploitation and oppression. It entails taking a few copies of our paper Socialist Worker, participating in the activities of the local branch and paying dues The SWP is open to all no matter how tight their time constraints because of family or work. The main thing is a commitment to advance the cause of socialism in any way one can.