

57. Willie Mooney on behalf of the Dublin Postal Clerks Branch CWU

The Policy Principles for a Progressive Irish Government set out by the Right2Water Campaign are very good and totally supported by the democratically elected committee of the Dublin Postal Clerks Branch of the Communications Workers Union.

However we wish to add that there is very little media coverage of the fact that Irish employers pay up to one third less in PRSI than their equivalents in the European Union as highlighted recently by the Nevin Economic Research Institute (NERI). This is a major reason that public services in Ireland are underfunded and lacking in resources compared to other countries in the EU. Employees pay equal tax as other citizens in the EU plus high levels of Value Added Tax (VAT) on goods and services also. This issue has not been highlighted in the Irish media. Our committee wish to have this issue debated at the next R2W conference on Saturday 13th June 2105.

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58. Owen McCormack

The Right2Housing section of the proposed platform for a progressive Government contains the clause stating “People should also be offered the opportunity to own their homes through limited equity ownership or non-speculative housing.” This is neither a progressive nor a radical clause and should be removed from the proposed policies.

The current crisis in housing has a number of underlining factors beside the catastrophic speculative bubble that arose during the boom. Chief among these is the wholesale commodification of housing and the overwhelming emphasis on home ownership that has been a feature of the state since its foundation. This emphasis on home ownership is in contrast to many other European housing systems where a mix of tenures and a strengthening of tenancy rights pervade.

This emphasis was a political and conscious decision of various Governments and benefitted wealthier and middle class sections of the population to the detriment of the majority and working populations. It resulted in the “residualisation” of social housing to the minority of socially disenfranchised and disadvantaged sections of citizens, policy’s such as surrender grants and first time buyers grants insured social housing estates became socially stigmatised while the prioritising of private property rights meant Landlord rights were prioritised over tenants with no security of tenure or standards making renting the “tenure of last resort” Aligned with this was the conscious running down of Local Authority house building programmes and the ongoing privatisation of the existing stock of social housing via buy out options available to tenants who could afford to purchase their homes at large discounts. This has resulted in a depleted stock of social housing available for those who need it now, and unfortunately the insertion of the clause offering and prioritising home ownership will mean any future house building directly undertaken by the state will meet the same fate.

The Governments current flawed plan will not address this crisis nor result in any actual increase in the stock of social housing. Its emphasis on renting from private landlords and insistence that the Voluntary and Cooperative sectors play greater roles simple dovetails with an anti-statist approach beloved by neoliberals but is one which will also insure continued financialisation of the housing sector and the continued withdrawal by the state from the actual provision of social housing.

A truly progressive movement should start from the simple goal of de-commodifying housing, remove it from the sphere of future speculation and remove fear and insecurity from tenants. The states duty should simply be to undertake a mass programme of social housing, the take-over of vacant lands in cities and towns which have been kept for speculative purposes by private owners with adequate (but not developmental level of) compensation. Local authorities should be mandated and financed to build, maintain and retain in public ownership such housing with guarantee's for those who live there and their children if they require housing. Such guarantee's should not and need not include a buyout clause which will inevitably lead us back to where we are now; little social housing stock and vast inequalities in housing access. Social housing should not be the choice only of poorer sections of society, it should be a basic right across all society, any truly progressive movement would enshrine this right and not follow the flawed philosophy of private ownership which has lead us to the present crisis.

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59. Eamon Butler

First off, many thanks for the opportunity to add my contribution.

If there is to be a policy regarding Climate Change, I would like to see a strong stance against what has developed in to one of the most corrupt areas in modern times. I have watched the science become heavily politicised over the past thirty years under the cover of so called "Green, Environment friendly" policies. First point to make is that Co2 (carbon dioxide) is NOT a pollutant. The finger of blame was pointed at it at a time when it showed brief coupling with rising temperatures. However, there has been no significant warming in the past 18 years, despite a very notable increase in Co2. To this day, there is no scientific peer reviewed paper quantifying Anthropogenic Co2 and its impact on temperatures. So establishing policies that are, detrimental to our economy and ultimately having the worst effect on the most vulnerable in society, is not conducive with an inclusive, equal, fair and caring society. There should be a very strong stance against the so called "Green energies," particularly Wind turbines. These are NOT efficient, cheap or environmentally friendly. Indeed they have increased our energy costs while at the same time they are less than useless for contributing to the national grid for various technical reasons. Obviously there is a lot more to say and elaborate on the subject but I'm aware of trying to keep this brief. I would be happy to furnish you with any further information or answer any questions you may have on the subject. BTW, I'm not a fan or in any way associated with the fossil fuel industries. I wish you well with this venture, and I congratulate you for it.

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60. James Moore (part of CWU Youth submissions)

With two thirds of people on the planet expected to have difficulty accessing safe drinking water by 2025 the issue of safe clean and accessible water promises to be an issue that will affect social change for many years to come, as it has done throughout other parts of the world over the past number of decades. This impending shortage is an ideal opportunity for big business to take control of a commodity that is a necessity for life itself.

Ireland has a limited amount of natural spring water that can be drawn straight from the ground. Currently the Food & safety authority has listed four companies as allowed to draw this water for sale to the public.

The Companies listed are as follows.

Ballygowan, Ballygowan SpringCastle Demense, Newcastle West Co. Limerick

Glenpatrick, Glenpatrick Spring Cashel Road, Clonmel, County Tipperary

Kerry Spring, Kerry Spring Ballyferriter, County Kerry

Tipperary, Tipperary SpringPallas Street, Borrisoleigh, County Tipperary

After many FOI requests to the Department of Environment and the various Co Councils that these Companies are based in, it is apparent that there is no charge / payment to the state whatsoever for these Companies to bottle the water and sell back to the public. There is also very little regulation in regards to the amount of water drawn for commercial sale , with one company alone taking on average one and a half million litters per day for commercial sale.

Ireland is also yet to conform to Article 11(3) of the Water Framework Directive that states Ireland must implement a control system for the abstraction of fresh ground and surface waters by the year 2015.

My Proposal on Natural spring water is;

- Amounts of water abstracted per day are regulated so to ensure wells remain sustainable and reduce impact on surrounding lands.
- That any Company drawing natural spring water for commercial sale must pay per Litre for water Drawn.
- Companies selling Natural Spring water conduct regular surveys on ground water levels and implement procedures such as regulating the amount of water taken to ensure sustainability of Natural springs.

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61. Patrick Dunne

I have a submission for your consideration.

- Eradicate homelessness from our society. Everybody should have a place to call home.
- Stop people in Irish business operating from other countries to avoid paying tax. Bring in a law that makes them pay up. Close the loopholes.
- Give young people a choice of work, training or education. No person under the age of 30 should be hanging around doing nothing.
- Reduce children's allowance for people with more than two children. The system encourages young people to have kids like rabbits.

- Maternity leave should be shortened to 3 months. If you want to have a lot of children you should be able to finance long term leave yourself. Example if you have 4 children you get 2 years maternity leave and this costs a lot of money.
- Ministers' wages should be reduced to 1,000 euros per week as anything over this is not justified for the work they do.
- Senior Ministers should have a maximum wage of 1500 euros as the money they are currently on is way over the top.
- Private renting needs to be overhauled and stop greedy landlords cashing in when times are good. Fixed rent in good, bad or ugly areas is required.
- Abolish water charges as we already pay for this service. If money is needed then raise it by the cuts mentioned above.
- Government should be more transparent about all that is being done for this great country we live in. Too much going on behind closed doors. Nobody trusts politicians.

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62. ESC Rights Initiative

The ESC Rights Initiative is a coalition of civil society organisations that support the strengthening of economic, social and cultural rights protection in the Irish Constitution. The ESC Rights Initiative successfully campaigned for the inclusion of economic, social and cultural rights as an agenda item of the Constitutional Convention. Following a comprehensive examination, the Convention recommended a strengthened constitutional framework in its 2014 report to government. This recommendation has yet to be responded to or acted upon by government.

Human Rights are Economic, Social, Cultural, Civil and Political Rights

For the reasons outlined below the ESC Rights Initiative believe that the adoption of justiciable ESC rights in the Constitution should be a priority of a democratic and progressive government and call for this principle to be adopted by all political parties and affiliates.

The ESC Rights Initiative believes that the constitutional strengthening of ESC Rights would bring balance to existing civil and political rights protection in the Constitution, which is justiciable, thus achieving the intended indivisibility between civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights. Economic, social and cultural (ESC) rights are fundamental human rights. They belong to everyone in Ireland. The Irish Government committed to uphold them when it ratified the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 1989. The protection of these rights is necessary to ensure a life of dignity.

Why are Economic, Social and Cultural Rights important?

Economic, social and cultural rights play a fundamental role in the creation of a more just, inclusive and socially sustainable society. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) gives substance to rights outlined in the 1948 Universal Declaration on Human Rights. These international instruments are an expression of universal values that respect the dignity and human rights of all people. ESC Rights thus underpin and complement principles of social justice and democracy.

How can economic, social and cultural rights be strengthened?

In Ireland, civil and political rights cannot be withdrawn because they are expressed as justiciable rights in the Constitution and can be vindicated through the Courts. In contrast, economic, social and cultural rights are constitutionally expressed as directive principles rather than a right that can be vindicated through the courts. The ESC Rights Initiative believes that economic, social and cultural rights should be given equivalent justiciable expression in the Constitution.

How would constitutionalised contribute to social justice and equality for all?

A robust ESC rights regime puts in place a social floor that protects citizens from poverty, guarantees accommodation, facilitates access to education and health and elevates the position of minorities experiencing inequalities. A constitutional regime that includes ESC Rights would ensure a strong social inclusion/equality dimension to policy making, a fairer allocation of resources and an accessible and affordable judicial process of redress for citizens.

Economic, social and cultural rights assume a particular importance in times of austerity and cut-backs in health and welfare services. Signatories of the human rights covenants are expected to progressively realise these rights. Under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights the reversal of progressive realisation is prohibited unless a state proves that any retrogressive measures have only been introduced after the most careful consideration of alternatives. This provides a safeguard for less well-off and marginalised people who tend to be disproportionately affected by economic downturns.

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63. Sean Healy TD on behalf of Workers and Unemployed Action

Workers and Unemployed Action is a nationally registered political party. Seamus Healy TD will be contesting the next General Election on behalf of WUA.

A small extract from our constitution and rules encapsulates the political position of the party:

- “1. With James Connolly, Workers and Unemployed Action is committed to achieving Irish Unity, Independence and Socialism. It is opposed to any intrusion on the sovereignty of the Irish people.
2. WUA supports and defends Irish military neutrality
3. WUA supports the struggles of workers, unemployed and oppressed people all over the world.
4. It is dedicated to advancing the political reorganisation of the working class on an All-Ireland basis in a united all-Ireland party of workers.
5. It is opposed to coalition or collaboration with conservative parties in Government or other public authorities as a matter of principle.” (This means that WUA will not be participating in a coalition government with FF, FG, Renua)

WATER CHARGES

WUA is strongly in favour of the abolition of domestic charges and the recognition of access to free domestic water as a human right. We participated in the previous campaign which succeeded in abolishing water charges and also in campaigns against bin taxes and local property tax.

We therefore welcome the initiative of the Right2Water unions in attempting to use the next election as one means of bringing about abolition of the charges.

Campaigns for non-payment by those in a position not to pay and mass protests against government policy and the installation of water meters in residential areas must continue in parallel with this electoral initiative.

We have no difficulty endorsing the content of the 5-union policy document though WUA has strongly held additional political positions and principles.

In addition to WUA, there will be several political parties and individuals including individual Dail deputies and senators, committing themselves to abolition of domestic water charges in the general election.

Inevitably these will have differences on fundamental issues including participation or non-participation in government with other parties.

But we think it important that all candidates endorsed by Right2Water regard abolition of domestic water charges as a red line issue for participation in government or remaining in government. Otherwise, should candidates endorsed by Right2Water fail to win an overall majority in the General Election, the elected deputies would have no further obligation to campaigners against the charges. They could participate in or support a government which continued the charges WITHOUT BREAKING THE PLEDGE if there are not additions to the current 5-union document ON WATER CHARGES. This would be grossly unfair to activists who campaigned for such candidates or who recommended votes for them.

‘Irish Water PLC’ and domestic water charges will be abolished within the first 100 days of a Government endorsing this policy.”----Right2Water Unions Document

WUA endorses this pledge.

However, since the fundamental duty of a Right2Water campaign is to ensure, as far as possible, the abolition of the charges we think that the following should be added to the above:

Suggested Water Charges Pledge to Be Presented for Signature to Candidates in the coming General Election who seek endorsement by Right2Water Campaign

I am unconditionally in favour of the abolition of domestic Water Charges and I will vote for such abolition in Dáil Eireann at the first opportunity.

I shall not participate in or support the formation of any government which is not formally committed in its programme for government to the abolition of domestic water charges within 100 days of taking office.

I shall not remain in or continue to support any government which fails to fully abolish domestic water charges within 100 days of taking office.

In signing this pledge I am fully aware that the current FG-Lab government has surrendered the Irish Exemption from The EU Water Framework Directive (article 9.4) which legally absolved Ireland and Ireland alone from the requirement to charge for domestic water.

Conclusion

UNITY TO REMOVE WATER CHARGES!

It is important that opportunist candidates be prevented from climbing on an anti-water charges band wagon in order to gain election only to betray later. The enhanced pledge above minimises the chances of this occurrence and maximises the chances that water charges will be abolished. WUA strongly recommends the enhanced pledge above.

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64. Scrap Water Charges Kildare (Newbridge-Kildare group)

Education: Separate church and state in the education system and introduce a fully secular education system. Make third level education fully accessible to all without discrimination.

Health: Abolish private health insurance to ensure everyone has equal access to healthcare regardless of income. Serious investment into our health system to ensure adequate healthcare for everyone living in the country.

Social Welfare: Increase pension in line with cost of living. Reverse cutting child allowances at 7 years. Increase social welfare in line with cost of living.

Tax: Introduce a wealth tax for over €100,000, financial transaction tax to be introduced, apply the corporate tax rate with a view to increasing it over time. Tighten the capital acquisitions tax regime to stop transfer of assets. Stop Ireland's role as an international tax haven.

Debt: Write off the remainder of the Anglo debt/promissory notes, this is odious debt. Option to leave the Euro should be on the table.

Work: Abolition of Jobbridge, Gateway and other employment 'activation' schemes, any employment of last resort offered by the state must be at least at a living wage rate. Legislate against 'zero hour contracts', introduce collective bargaining legislation that is cast iron and applies to multinationals. Introduce social welfare for the self-employed.

Social: Affordable community-based childcare to be introduced for all, with particular emphasis to be placed on single-parents looking to get back into training/work. Repeal of the 8th amendment. Sign and ratify the Istanbul convention to protect women from domestic violence.

Water: Covered in R2W document.

Natural Resources: All natural resources and heritage, including wind, should be publicly owned and the government should be responsible for the protection management and maintenance of these assets. This should be constitutionally protected.

Democratic reform: Repeal the County Managers Act 1940 as a basis for reform of local government. Total opposition to the introduction of TTIP and any similar schemes.

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65. Submission from United Left, Dublin South Central.

A new vision for the European Union.

The problems facing working people in Ireland, massive inequality, deprivation and poverty, low pay, precarious employment, decimation of the already low provision of public services, have to be viewed in the context of the neo-liberal assault by the capitalist elite on labour across the EU. Austerity is not an economic necessity, but a political weapon chosen by the elite to boost profits by attacking the wages, working conditions and social wage of working people.

The Social Democratic parties have not only abandoned social democracy, but have adopted the neo-liberal agenda. They are in government in over half of the EU 27 states and with the exception of Syriza are delivering austerity for working people. New, mass, radical movements need to be built.

At this point, the task is to defend the gains of the European post war social contract through mass struggle on the political, trade union and community level. Out of these struggles it will be possible at some point for these movements to go from the defensive to the offensive in the struggle for a new, socialist Europe embracing equality, solidarity and real democracy.

A radical mass movement in Ireland has to link up with similar movements in Europe, such as Syriza in Greece and Podemos in Spain. Notwithstanding the difficulties facing the Syriza government, completely isolated within the existing EU political structures, the objective of an EU debt conference to achieve a write down of sovereign debt should be maintained and be a key demand of a radical movement in Ireland.

Hand in hand with that should be a demand for a state led, EU wide, infrastructural investment programme to provide social housing, modern subsidised public transport in both urban and rural areas, to deliver clean water, to defend the environment, combat climate change, develop the green economy and in the process tackle the scandal of mass unemployment.

Building a radical left movement in Ireland.

The campaign against water charges is the most significant development in Ireland in decades. It is in fact one of the more significant movements against austerity in Europe since the onset of the economic crisis. It has the potential to be the key factor in the development of a new and mass radical left movement. In our view this will not be achieved before the next general election. It will take a period of time, with discussion, trial and error, and the various forces involved working together. There are both positive and unfortunately negative experiences in previous attempts to build such movements in Ireland and other countries which need to be openly and honestly discussed.

A movement which aims to achieve real change will have to be prepared to challenge the political and big business establishment. It cannot do this if it is in coalition government with any of the establishment political parties. We believe a new left should repudiate any coalition with the pro austerity parties, Fianna Fail, Fine Gael and Labour.

Dealing with the legacy of austerity.

Austerity has not gone away. Governments are now tied to very limited borrowing under the recent fiscal treaty. This poses huge problems in dealing with urgent infrastructural issues like social housing and water services. There is also a devastating legacy of the cuts in health, education and community services. We must outline a programme for the reversal of these cuts. We should advocate raising, over a period of three to four years, employers PRSI to the EU average. This would bring in an extra €8 billion a year when fully realised. PRSI contributions would then almost fully cover the present yearly budget for the Dept. of Social Protection, releasing extra funding for health, education and community services. Our aim should be for single tier public health service, free to all. In education we need to shift the emphasis to primary and second level to reduce inequality.

The claim by Labour that it has protected core welfare payments is completely false. Taking into account the cuts in 2009 and 2010, along with the effect of inflation on the freeze since 2011, an increase of €40 a week for a couple and €27 for an individual would be needed at today's prices to return core payments to the 2009 level. The government expects to have €1.5 billion to play with in October's budget, with which they intend to try and buy the general election through tax cuts. We should advocate a third of this, €500 million next year, and each year after that, to restore core payments and to reverse all other cuts in benefits.

Wage increases, not tax cuts.

The answer to low pay and poverty while working lies in wage increases, better legal protection for workers and trade union organisation. Workers in both the public and private sectors deserve wage increases. We should advocate raising the minimum wage by €1 a year to reach the level of a Living wage as advocated by trade unions. Zero and low hours contracts should be outlawed. Precarious employment and bogus self-employment should be strictly regulated. The right to full union recognition needs to be recognised in law. (This may require constitutional change which is dealt with further on)

Tax the greedy, not the needy.

The only tax cuts which should be supported are abolition of the water charges, the LPT and USC for workers on or under the average industrial wage. The cost of abolishing the water charges and the LPT would be covered by the money the government have to play with in the October budget. We don't have an estimate for abolishing the USC for workers on or under the average wage (€37,000?) This measure may have to be introduced over a number of years.

There is huge scope for raising extra taxes from wealth and big business. The LPT should be replaced by a wealth tax at 1 or 2%. Corporation Profit Tax could raise an extra €4 billion a year if 12.5% were an effective as opposed to a nominal rate. We should support a financial transaction tax.

In 2007 TASC estimated the value of tax breaks at €7 billion a year. These breaks inordinately benefit the wealthy. A reduction in these tax breaks would again raise billions.

Housing. Beyond the Crisis.

The current crisis in social housing provision is as a direct result of this and previous Governments' policy of effective privatisation of the sector whereby responsibility of housing of those in need of social housing has been transferred to private landlords subsidised by the state. Given that the private market responds to supply and demand now in a housing undersupply situation vulnerable individuals and families are increasingly being made homeless. Meanwhile the social housing list nationally exceeds 100,000.

We propose to revert to the policy whereby the state supplied social housing by direct provision. This requires an immediate plan to provide a minimum of 10,000 units of accommodation per year for the next 10 years.

In the short term increased regulation on the private rented sector should include enhanced security of tenure; currently the Residential Tenancy Act of 2004 only secures tenancies for a period of four years. This should be increased to a minimum of 10 years and most importantly the right of a landlord to terminate a tenancy on the basis that the property is to be sold should be changed to simply give a right to the landlord to sell the property with the tenant in situ.

Disgracefully, local authorities which have massive waiting lists cannot raise capital to build social housing in their own right. As local authority loans are considered an on balance sheet liability for the purpose of borrowing limitations under the fiscal rules this policy needs to be immediately changed to allow local authorities to build social housing. One way of doing this may be to allow local authorities to become housing associations.

We also propose that rent caps in the short term be introduced. If this requires an amendment to the constitution then that should be put forward to the people.

This government have consistently put the interests of banks before that of distressed mortgage holders. The measures announced recently to end the banks' veto in insolvency arrangements and to raise the valuation cap on the Mortgage to Rent scheme (MTR) are to be welcomed but come way too late for those who have lost their homes. The MTR should be made compulsory on all lenders and a moratorium on repossessions should be put in place until it is seen how effective the new measures are when they come into being.

Developing a balanced economy.

The reliance on foreign direct investment (FDI) has led to a very unbalanced economy. Over 90% of enterprises are small to medium. With one or two rare exceptions, Irish capitalism has been unable to develop large scale industry .it is very difficult to accurately estimate the level of real economic activity due to role the multi-national sector plays with contract manufacturing and profit shifting to avail of low taxes. In the financial services sector huge amounts flow in and out which have nothing to do with actual economy. We need to organise a prosperous indigenous enterprise sector through the creation of new and expansion of existing public enterprises; a new framework for local government enterprises and new business models based on co-determination between public,

private and civil society ownership; and a new contract for enterprise support based on investment and labour rights.

The campaigns over our oil and gas reserves, woodlands, clean seas, heritage sites, and community life point to another key aspect of our indigenous sector - 'resource democracy'. If the people of Ireland have a right to the natural resources of Ireland then those resources must be entrusted to public and transparent control, providing the right of people to direct and benefit from sustainable developments.

Banking-No return to business as usual.

And let us never ever forget the fundamental lesson of the crisis - we cannot rely on private banking based on short-term shareholder interests to serve the needs of the productive economy. We need a public banking system for households and businesses – one with a mission statement that makes the bank partners in people's living standards and enterprise success.

AIB should be fully nationalized and democratically run as a public bank.

Political reform. A constitution for the 21st century.

The 1937 Constitution is not fit for purpose. It was drawn up at a time of a deeply conservative society dominated by the Catholic Church. It emphasizes the rights of the Catholic Church, the state and private property. The fact that we now have at least one and more often two referendums to change it every year shows there is something wrong.

We need a democratically constituted convention to draw up a new constitution to reflect the values of a democratic, secular republic in the 21st century. A new constitution should be based on the economic, social and cultural rights of citizens. In our view this is the best way to deal with issues like the 8th Amendment, legalizing the right to union recognition and other important issues.

Local Government. A new beginning.

We need a massive reform of local government to put people power into operation at local level. One practical step would be to introduce "participatory budgeting", through which a significant proportion of each local authority's spending could be decided by a process involving the people living and working in that local area. Participatory budgeting has been introduced in many places around the world now, but it is often just tokenistic. The example to follow may be Porto Alegre in Brazil. We know that in Porto Alegre the process has given real power to people and in particular the poorest and those who are usually excluded from decision making. There are other places like Seville in Spain that would be worth investigating.

This would require a real commitment from TDs, councillors and officials. It will be critical to give more power to elected Councils and to hugely decrease the power of unelected officials and to set up a proper system for funding local government. In turn, Councillors will have to give up much power to local people – participatory budgeting, local plebiscites and "call back" mechanisms are examples of ways in which this can be done.

Neutrality.

The successive position of Irish Governments as it relates to Ireland's neutrality is untenable. The state's sly and implicit support for imperialist wars cannot continue. If neutrality is to mean anything in the context of the Irish state we must oppose the use of Shannon Airport by the US military – an estimated 2.7m troops have passed through it - and a full independent investigation should be carried out into what those flights were used for, including investigating if people were transported on extraordinary rendition flights. We must also oppose any calls to engage in any future EU or NATO military operations. A recent poll carried out by PANA showed support for neutrality to be at 73%.

However two recent votes in Dáil Éireann opposed fully locking in the concept of neutrality on the Irish Statue book. Any future progressive government should support such calls and pass such legislation.

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66. Mick Byrne on behalf of Housing Action Now

Housing bubble. Not enough supply. Not enough credit. We hear so much about the housing market, but for the majority of us the reality is an ongoing housing crisis.

At the heart of this crisis is the government's failure to create a housing policy that guarantees everyone's access to a home. The market-based policies of debt-fuelled home ownership have not only failed – they have undermined the right to housing for hundreds of thousands across Ireland. The current crisis for mortgage holders, private rented tenants and those on the social housing waiting list is causing six people to be made homeless every day. The reality is that today a rent increase, a letter from the bank or a period of ill-health can trigger homelessness. This housing crisis will continue unless we act to effect a lasting change.

The time for this change is now.

The aim of this manifesto is simple: to provide a snapshot of the housing crisis and to provide a set of solutions to combat it. We hope this manifesto will bring together all of us who believe that a home is something none of us should have to live without.

Banking on a Home: Background to the Current Crisis

Housing policy in Ireland is dictated by the profit-seeking strategies of the Irish financial system. This approach to finance does not create wealth; it extracts wealth from the rest of society. Banks and developers profit from our need for housing, while at the same time availing of tax breaks and government bailouts. This is by its very nature destructive and unsustainable.

The Irish financial system dominates housing through the private mortgage system.

Due to government policies of selling off and neglecting social housing and the failure to regulate the private rented sector, mortgages have become the only way to access a home. The need for a home has been replaced by the need for a mortgage. The government wants a nation of owner-occupiers without developing a jobs and wages strategy that makes it possible for working people to afford to

buy a home. This can only lead to lifelong, unsustainable debt for the majority. It reflects the interest of the financial system rather than the right to housing.

This is not just an Irish problem. The European Union continues to prioritise the financial system over all else. Housing Action Now is part of the European Action

Coalition for the Right to Housing and the City, working with people across Europe who are stopping evictions, challenging unfair policies and developing solutions which deliver the right to housing.

End Chaos in the Private Rented Sector

The private rented sector has increased its share of housing in Dublin from 19% in 2006 to 32% in 2011, with similar increases in other cities. Rents are soaring.

Landlords are refusing to accept rent supplement. Discrimination and sub-standard accommodation are rife. Homeless services have recently reported that families are increasingly being made homeless due to rent increases and the cap on rent supplement. We can't let the current chaos continue. Stronger regulations and enforcement are urgently required.

- Rent control and long-term leases are key to realising our right to a home
- Increase rent supplement to reflect the reality of the cost of rent
- End landlord's refusal to accept rent supplement
- Implement third party deposit scheme. Deposits should be handed over to a third-party rather than the landlord to prevent illegal deposit retention.

Zero Evictions: End the Mortgage Crisis

There are over 100,000 households in mortgage arrears. 70,000 households are in arrears of 180 days or more. Legislation introduced last year will mean that more and more evictions take place. Developers benefited from debt forgiveness, yet families who were encouraged by the banks and the government to take out unsustainable mortgages have been abandoned. A home is more important than a debt.

- Moratorium on evictions from principle family residence
- Debt should be restructured in the interest of those in mortgage arrears, not in the interest of banks

Provide Social Housing

The government's Housing Policy claims that "A society can be judged by how it treats its most vulnerable". Yet the number of households in need of social housing has grown from 50,000 in 2008 to 90,000 today. There are many people who cannot afford to buy their own homes or pay rent – they need social housing.

The underlying problem is the state's failure to play a critical role in the provision of housing. We need a state that strongly commits itself to providing for the housing needs of its citizens, and that will play a decisive and proactive role in the provision and organisation of public housing.

We need a state that invests in the construction of new housing and one which commits itself to maintaining its existing housing stock to the highest standards.

This will create employment. It will also provide a balanced housing system in which genuine options exist.

- Provide quality social housing at reasonable rents
- The state to build new social housing
- Regenerate existing housing estates to the highest standards
- Identify vacant housing to be used as social or cooperative housing – including property held by NAMA

Traveller-Specific Accommodation

11% of Travellers are officially homeless. And yet, the budget for Traveller accommodation has been slashed by over 90% in the last ten years. Between 2007 and 2012 local authorities failed to spend over €50 million of funds available for Traveller accommodation. This comes on the back of decades during which Travellers' right to culturally appropriate accommodation has been ignored.

- Invest in appropriate accommodation
- Clamp down on local authorities' refusal to support Traveller accommodation

End the homelessness crisis

HOUSING FOR ALL

We did not create this housing crisis. We did not vote to increase homelessness.

We did not ratify a treaty that allowed private investors and speculators to push us out of our homes. We did not give our consent to evictions. We did not choose to throw families out onto the streets. We did not make a collective call to be ruled by debt. We made no rallying cry to introduce chaos and fear into our housing market.

We participated in no movement that sought to repress the accommodation rights of oppressed minorities.

We did none of this. And yet we are being pushed out of our homes; we are being pushed out of our cities and we are being pushed out of our country. And this makes us ask: does this country belong to speculators and developers whose only concern is their pockets? Does this country belong to an apathetic government who refuse to protect the unprotected majority, but instead chooses to protect those who profit off our fear? Or does this country belong to the public?

The answer is clear and the solutions are clear-cut. The time for change is now. We want housing for all.

* * *

67. Noel Martin

Water is a human right, essential for life and for all our human needs. As such, water provision and sanitation should not be subject to the profit motive or the free market and should be made available to all, free at the point of use, and on the basis of need, not means.

'Irish Water PLC' and domestic water charges will be abolished within the first 100 days of a Government endorsing this policy. 'Irish Water PLC' will be replaced with a single national water and sanitation board which will be solely responsible for the provision, transmission, sanitation, management and operation of the public water and sanitation supply in the public interest.

This policy will see a full referendum to enshrine a new Article in Bunreacht Na h'Eireann. The date of this referendum would coincide with the establishment of the new national water board.

Article 28 Section 4:2:1:

"The Government shall be collectively responsible for the protection, management and maintenance of the public water system. The Government shall ensure in the public interest that this resource remains in public ownership and management."

A second amendment should be added to the Irish Constitution which should clearly stipulate that access to clean; drinkable water is a human right.

This policy will provide for an end to water meter installation and ensuing costs. This policy will see conservation measures legislated for including mandatory planning permission requirements, incentivised and subsidised water saving devices, and a public education campaign.

Our water infrastructure is in desperate need of investment in order to upgrade the system and repair leaks. This policy provides for an investment of between €6 and €7 billion to be provided through a progressive taxation model, details of which will be published on June 13th 2015.

Funding our water services through progressive taxation measures will ensure citizens always have access to water based on their needs without the possibility of water shut-offs due to unpaid bills in the future. This policy will ensure Ireland remains with zero water poverty.

It makes no sense whatever that costly purified water should be used to flush toilets. Therefore Local Authorities using trained local labour should carry out the task of retro-fitting dwellings (particularly single storey senior citizens dwellings) with rain-water harvesting paraphernalia (water butts etc.) to be linked into the cisterns of toilets.

Right2Housing

We believe that Housing is a basic human right, that this right should be enshrined in Bunreacht na h'Eireann and that the obligation on the State to adequately house people should be enforceable by the courts.

As a direct result of the State's failure to deal with this issue our country is now living through a homelessness epidemic. Having a home is a social and economic right. A progressive policy will develop a range of housing models to vindicate this right, starting with the ending of homelessness

and the clearing of social housing waiting lists. The current crisis in rents should be addressed through rent controls in the short-term but in the long-term the state needs to intervene in the market to mobilise the investment required to modernise the sector, including the provision of income-related rental accommodation to low and average income earners.

The State also needs to commence a national publicly owned house building project. People should also be offered the opportunity to own their homes through limited equity ownership or non-speculative housing. Housing policy should be based on need and choice, not speculation. Integrated housing policies should be mandatory for large-scale housing projects. Tenants, whether Private or Council tenants should be protected by way of a legal charter of rights and responsibilities, perhaps administered by a National Tenant/Landlord arbitration board.

The local property tax 2013 is patently inequitable, unjust and flies in the face of the principles of progressive legislation. It gives no consideration whatsoever as to the means and ability of the property owner to pay this unjust tax and therefore must be repealed.

Right2Debt Justice

“Blessed are the young for they shall inherit the national debt.” Herbert Hoover, 31st President of the United States

The past recklessness of financial speculation is imposing an intolerable burden on people’s future. Debt justice requires a European Debt Conference to restructure sovereign debt throughout the Eurozone; (delete and replace with)

Debt justice in Ireland, North and South, requires

- A debt audit similar to the 2011 Debt and Development Coalition audit which sought to quantify what exactly was the legitimate Republic of Ireland debt and what could be correctly described as “Odious Debt.” Ecuador also carried out such a debt audit and odious debt was repudiated which brought about a deal which saved the Ecuadorian people hundreds of millions of dollars.
- The Irish banks that were rescued by nationalisation should remain in State (public ownership) and their profits used as an income stream for the Irish exchequer and also to fund a National Development Bank to furnish loans to small and medium businesses.
- Restructuring of money-lending debt which traps people in 100 percent-plus interest loans.
- Build alliances with progressive citizen-led movements in Europe to develop and promote alternative proposals for debt reduction strategies for people across Europe.
- End the Irish government’s inexplicable boycott of the UN Committee on Sovereign Debt Restructuring, and begin to work, led by partners in the Global South, to develop legal mechanisms to protect citizens from the impact of financial speculation and vulture funds.

Right2Jobs & Decent Work.

The right to work with decent pay is meaningless if not accompanied by the right to join a relevant trade union of ones choice without fear of retribution. This requires legislation and should be a priority for an incoming progressive government

* * *

68. Communist Party of Ireland

We submit these ideas as a contribution to what we believe is a necessary debate, one that needs to take place not only within the trade union movement but also within communities throughout our country. We believe that the time has passed for patching up a system that has only offered, and can only offer, poverty, inequality, precarious employment, low wages, and few real rights for workers.

The capitalist economic system prevents the development of a truly just and democratic society—a society in which men and women are equal, a society built on respect for both age and youth, in which our culture and language are respected and encouraged, in which the public good is given priority over markets and profits, in which we have control and influence over all aspects of our lives: in our places of work, in our communities, within our families—an economic system serving the working people.

We believe that socialism—the social ownership of the means of reproducing the material needs of life, to be held and used in common by and for the people—is the only way that a decent society can be built.

A programme for radical change

History shows us that working people made significant advances in their places of work and in their communities largely through independent political actions and united trade union struggles. These struggle brought improvements in pay, pensions, health and safety at work and in communities, public housing, public transport, maternity rights, child benefit, and unemployment benefits, among other gains. Nothing was given to working people: all was won through struggle.

The present strategy of the Irish government, and the majority of governments in the world, is to give priority to the “market” over the people. It is for rolling back the advances made by workers and their trade unions and imposing permanent austerity. These are not just bad policy options but are necessary for the survival of the system itself.

Not alone must the cuts of the austerity years be undone—including budgetary cuts to health and education, restoring public-sector pay and pensions, restoring child benefit and unemployment welfare—but much deeper economic and social change is also needed.

Workers, who produce all the wealth in society, must have control over both its production and how it is distributed. They should decide the economic and social priorities in a truly democratic society—a new Ireland.

Unshackling workers

Trade unions need to develop an alternative view of how society is run and in whose interests it is run. We need a strategy that strengthens the hands and the rights of workers in their place of work and in the communities where they live and that weakens the power of employers and the owners of capital. Otherwise there will never be meaningful lasting change.

Workers have a right to join a trade union under existing law, but this right must be vindicated by enacting legislation to provide for trade union recognition and free collective bargaining. Regressive parts of the Industrial Relations Act (1990) should be repealed to allow workers to support and participate in solidarity strikes and secondary picketing. In the North of Ireland the imposition of the British anti-union laws has also hindered workers from defending and advancing their interests. All these anti-worker laws must be challenged and defeated.

Repudiating the debt

Private and corporate debt was socialised by the state to protect private investors, both Irish and foreign. This debt was unjustly placed on the shoulders of families and communities. Global banks, finance houses and debt speculators need the Irish people to service this debt: to these institutions it is more important that we service this debt—as it is a source of vast, stable profits—than that we ever pay it off.

In addition, the debt has been used by government and employers as a pseudo-justification for the most vicious assault on our rights and services. This debt, and Ireland's position as a debtor, impinge on the state's ability to pursue a sovereign, independent direction, even should it wish to do so.

The debt must be challenged directly and explicitly. It is not our debt, and so it must be repudiated. This is not just a question of economics: it is also a question of democracy.

This brings into question our participation in the euro zone, which is clearly tied to continuing austerity. The repudiation of the debt and the implementation of more comprehensive policies to reduce dependence on international finance capital are fundamental to achieving real change and are the only basis on which a sovereign, democratic republic can be built. This question cannot be ignored.

Taxation: radical surgery required

In the interim, before the complete social ownership of capital can be brought about, there is a need for a major overhaul of the taxation system. The burden of tax has shifted greatly from capital to labour. Workers now bear the brunt of taxation, paying for subsidies to businesses and for substandard services. Comprehensive reforms are needed to change this.

Loopholes and irresponsible incentives for big business must be closed. Corporation tax should be raised, and a financial transaction tax (and controls on capital flows in and out of the state), a wealth tax on the rich and a higher bracket for those paid more than €100,000 a year should be introduced. Regressive charges for public services must be abolished and incorporated in a reformed progressive income tax structure.

For a democratic economy

At present, publicly owned companies are not always run in a way that serves the people but are sometimes distorted to meet the needs of private economic vested interests. We have valuable natural resources, including oil, gas, wind and wave power, and fisheries. These need to be nationalised and run as income-generating but responsive state enterprises—just as the ESB has been—to provide income to the state and quality, affordable services to the public.

By better using renewable sources we can create far greater sustainability and at last reduce our dependence not only on environmentally damaging fuels but also on the monopoly transnational energy-owners.

Publicly owned companies should act as supports for social and economic development while being protected from falsely contrived “competition” (as in the case of the ESB being forced to increase its prices to make it profitable for private enterprise to compete), and public monopolies should be protected. These publicly owned companies not only provide quality jobs and services: they have also trained and educated thousands of workers, and they can provide the skilled work force needed for building an alternative society.

No to privatisation

The privatisation of crucial state infrastructure (water, banking, energy, public transport and the national airline) should be stopped and reversed; but significant reform may be required to get the best out of these public assets.

A National Development Corporation, with a diverse and elected Board structure, whose remit would be the development of public enterprises in the interests of the people, is necessary to plan and oversee all this. The only guarantee of the people’s needs is the full social ownership of these resources and, ultimately, of all the economy.

An independent and neutral foreign and military policy

We must end the use of Shannon Airport and Irish air space by the US and EU war machines. Ireland should withdraw from all involvement in the EU’s military structures and programmes and the PFP—NATO’s so-called “Partnership for Peace” project—thus making a clear statement of independence. Irish neutrality must be enhanced, protected and guaranteed by a constitutional amendment.

Priority should be given to building an alternative form of international relations based on mutual respect for sovereignty and support for peoples struggling for sovereignty and independence.

A real people’s democracy

Voting every few years to elect an institution with limited power does not meet the needs of working people. Leaders such as Connolly and Pearse had a more substantial vision of democracy and participation by the Irish people than the one imposed on us, which fails to meet the people’s needs and aspirations.

The limited form of democracy that we have is increasingly seen to give very limited expression to the people’s wishes and does not reflect the needs and interests of working people.

We need a much deeper democratic transformation of society, one that gives everyone the right to active and direct participation in the formation and implementation of political and economic policy.

All local and national budgets should be published as draft budgets and subject to an extensive citizens’ debate every year; and all elected representatives should be recallable by petition or referendum. A sovereign people will be fully engaged in all decision-making in society: political, economic, social, and cultural.

The essential elements for building a new, sovereign and democratic republic

A sovereign democratic republic is needed to provide a decent and fulfilling life for all citizens. This can only be achieved by deep, fundamental radical changes, to bring about a new republic and a new state—a democratic society in which women and men are equal, with equal opportunity to fulfil their aspirations, a society that can overcome the effects of the long history of the oppression of women, a democratic society that is non-sexist, non-racist, and secular. A new constitution is needed to guarantee these changes and to make them lasting, to embed them in the very structures of a new democratic, sovereign republic.

Democracy and the European Union

The European Union by its very nature is anti-democratic, as it is designed to serve the interests of big business and to prevent the people from exercising control over their lives. Inevitably, the implementation of this Democratic Programme would bring us into conflict with membership of the euro zone, with the proposed Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, with the World Trade Organisation, with the International Monetary Fund, and, more fundamentally, with the European Union itself.

This is because of the real and deep contradictions that exist between the EU's plans for the Irish people, which prevent real democratic control, and the struggle to build a meaningful and lasting alternative that shifts the balance of power to working people and away from the EU.

All-Ireland social and economic integration

All-Ireland social and economic initiatives can strengthen co-operation and go some way towards countering divisions; but ultimately a new democratic independent state based on the unity of our people is the way forward.

The two entities undemocratically imposed on our people under the threat of war, in alliance with sections of the nationalist and unionist capitalists, have failed and have in fact created the conditions for strengthening the divisions and antagonisms among our people that had been carefully nurtured by the British state for centuries.

The external domination of the two parts of our country has taken different forms, but the effect has been much the same: stunted development, poverty, emigration, clerical domination and religious bigotry. In the present situation, similar austerity programmes are being imposed by the EU in the South and by the British government in the North, and are being implemented by Irish politicians.

The people in the South have little real say in the policies dictated by Brussels, while the people in the North are triply marginalised: they have little or no influence in London, in Brussels, or in Dublin.

The active pursuit of an all-Ireland economic and social development strategy can bring great benefits to our people, can weaken division and heal the wounds and deep hurt induced by external forces.

The people need real independence and a proper participative democracy. Real and lasting change can be brought about only by the conscious actions and struggles of the people, working together.

* * *

69. Donal O'Brolchain

I make submissions on two items of your programme

1. Right2Housing

I propose that the first step is to implement the 1974 Report of the Committee on the Price of Building Land in full.

2. Right2DemocraticReform

I support that citizens have the means of exercising directly their power to initiate proposals for change to the Constitution, including a complete revision of the Constitution and ordinary legislation, as is done in Switzerland at national and local levels.

I set out my reasons for supporting these below.

1. Right2Housing

I propose that the first step is to implement the 1974 Report of the Committee on the Price of Building Land in full.

i. On 23rd April last, the following exchange, with Joe Higgins TD, took place when Dermot Gleeson, (formerly of AIB) appeared before the Oireachtas Banking Enquiry

<https://inquiries.oireachtas.ie/banking/hearings/dermot-gleeson-former-chairman-aib/>

Deputy Joe Higgins: Each year, requiring young working people to have mortgages extended from 20 years' duration to 40 years, into their retirement, and at unsustainable levels. Now, can I ask you, in your view, is it moral or ethical, do you think, that inordinate profiteering and speculation in building land and in housing by banks, developers and bondholders should enslave a generation of young working people to that extent, with all the suffering and the horror that has ensued after for them? Do you think that is ethical or moral?

Mr. Dermot Gleeson: Well, I'm not in favour of immorality or slavery or suffering. So far as your question relates to the issue of the price of building land, I think that there is a serious political and social issue as to how that should be controlled, and the price of building land, and you probably know that building land becomes the object of speculation, and you probably also know that 40 years ago, this very issue was addressed after an increase of 500% in the cost of building land in Dublin between 1963 and 1971. This is a social resource, it should have some element of, in my view, State control. You can't increase the number of building land ... amount of building land around Dublin. And that issue – that very issue – was put to an expert committee in 1973 ... 1971, reporting in 1973, under the chairmanship of Mr. Justice Kenny.

Chairman: Wrap up now Mr. Gleeson, very quickly to answer the question.

Mr. Dermot Gleeson: I have been asked the question and I am going to ... and I'll try and finish within 30 seconds.

Chairman: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Dermot Gleeson: Mr. Justice Kenny reported. If you look at that report, it's lain on the shelves for 42 years. He proposed ten solutions. One ... the first was nationalisation of building land.

Deputy Joe Higgins: Yes ... and I'm—

Mr. Dermot Gleeson: Eventually he proposed—

Chairman: Not a new question now, Deputy Higgins.

Mr. Dermot Gleeson: I want to finish my ... can I finish my answer? I simply say, the legal intellectual spade work in relation to the price of building land has been done. That's all.

ii. On the 4th October 2008 – within 4 days of the Government banking guarantee, I had a letter published in the Irish Independent and Irish Examiner on this same issue – see attached.

2. Right2DemocraticReform

I support that citizens have the means of exercising directly their power to initiate proposals for change to the Constitution, including a complete revision of the Constitution and ordinary legislation, as is done in Switzerland at national and local levels.

We, the people, own all political power in this Republic. . Article 6.1 of our Constitution states that:

"All powers of government, legislative, executive and judicial, derive, under God, from the people, whose right it is to designate all the rulers of the State and, in the final appeal, to decide all questions of national policy, according to the requirements of the common good".

We delegate this power to our elected representatives with the result that between elections we temporarily lose our political power. We have no method to intervene if those to whom we have delegated our power do not use it as we would wish.

Introducing this into our constitution needs three principal major changes to our Constitution starting with clear statement that the people, as the source of legitimate power of the State, have the right to exercise that power directly on their own initiative, to propose a referendum to revise the Constitution or any law. This could be done by adding a new section to Article 6 of the Constitution, as follows

Art. 6.3. The people may initiate proposals for changes to, or complete replacement of, this Constitution and ordinary legislation.

Other changes would be needed to other articles in our 1937 Constitution e.g. Articles 27, 47

In support of this I set out the links to

1. My three submissions to the Constitutional Convention

a. Direct Participation in Politics

i. Summary: <https://www.constitution.ie/SubmissionDetails.aspx?sid=3f93c884-cf71-e211-a5a0-005056a32ee4>

ii. Full submission (8 pages) :
<https://www.constitution.ie/AttachmentDownload.ashx?aid=4193c884-cf71-e211-a5a0-005056a32ee4>

b. Rebalance out political power with direct democracy – originally published in theJournal.ie 6 Feb2013 <http://jrnl.ie/784031>

i. Summary here: <https://www.constitution.ie/SubmissionDetails.aspx?sid=bbae73f5-2acd-e211-a5a0-005056a32ee4>

ii. Full submission (5 pages) :
<https://www.constitution.ie/AttachmentDownload.ashx?aid=bdae73f5-2acd-e211-a5a0-005056a32ee4>

c. Mutual Education of the Democratic Process – a case for citizens’ initiatives and direct democracy

i. Summary here : <https://www.constitution.ie/SubmissionDetails.aspx?sid=c1ae73f5-2acd-e211-a5a0-005056a32ee4>

ii. Full submission (13 pages) :
<https://www.constitution.ie/AttachmentDownload.ashx?aid=c3ae73f5-2acd-e211-a5a0-005056a32ee4>

2. Constitutional Convention on direct democracy and Government Response

a. Results of votes on review of Dáil electoral system (which included 83% vote in favour of direct democracy)

Result 9 June 2013 (2 pages) :
<https://www.constitution.ie/AttachmentDownload.ashx?mid=a1e7a1cc-0bd1-e211-a5a0-005056a32ee4>

Full report (78 pages) : <https://www.constitution.ie/AttachmentDownload.ashx?mid=fdf70670-030f-e311-a203-005056a32ee4>

b. Government Response

i. Dáil 18 Dec 2014
<http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie/debates%20authoring/debateswebpack.nsf/takes/dail2014-21800046?opendocument#TT01000>

ii. Taoiseach's response to Dáil Question 21 April 2015

<http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie/debates%20authoring/debateswebpack.nsf/%28indexlookupdail%29/20150421~WRD?opendocument#WRD00900>

3. Note (8 pages) published by Democracy International ev November 2013

Direct Political Participation in the Republic of Ireland Citizen-initiated referendums on the horizon?

http://www.democracy-international.org/sites/democracy-international.org/files/PDF/Publications/2013-11-25_direct_political_participation_in_the_rofireland.pdf

4. Presentation by Dr. A. Gross at the European Parliament hearings 18 September 2012 on Method for direct participation of citizens in EU Member States - model for a more democratic Europe AFCO/7/10121 (agenda for day attached)

See this ~ 23minute presentation in English <http://www.2nd-republic.ie/site/our-campaigns/citizen-initiated-referendums>

I attach the 9 slides that Dr. Gross used.

The complete hearings are available here

Morning session (09.12 – 12.35) <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-live/en/committees/video?event=20120918-0900-COMMITTEE-AFCO>

Afternoon session (14.03 – 17.01) <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-live/en/committees/video?event=20120918-1400-COMMITTEE-AFCO>

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70. Colin Walsh

My submission has two main strands; they are broad ranging and open to discussion.

1. Societies, subservience, to Profit Motive.

The profit motive has no part in certain areas of society, the ability of the wealthy to use their economic power to separate themselves from the rest of society leads to a two tier system in which it is easy for them to ignore the plight of ordinary people, if everybody has to use the same services I suspect it won't be long before we see a radical improvement in quality of services provided.

Obviously this will require radical change and involve major conflict with vested interests, but the fight will be worth it because it will have a transformative effect on equality and on people's wellbeing. Areas to be ring fenced and provided by the state or not for profit organisations, there would need to be checks and balances to stop to discourage misuse or abuse of the system possibly low cost charges at the point of use

- Healthcare
- Education

- Housing
- Legal system
- Essential services, water, sewage, waste collection, electricity, telecoms including broadband
- Media, print and broadcast
- Banking/Finance

2. DEMOCRATIC REFORM

The main threat in the developed western world to the Neo-Liberal project is ordinary people becoming informed and then starting to assert control of how society is run through the democratic process. Big capital knows this and is constantly vigilant and ready to subvert this. They have powerful tools at their disposal like ownership of large swathes of print and broadcast media, compliant or complicit politicians, financial markets Etc.

Recently there has been an increase in big businesses efforts to insulate themselves from interference from governments' e.g. an increase in anti-union laws, so called anti-terrorist laws which are so broad they pose a serious threat to civil liberties, trade agreements like TTIP etc. If big capital manages to get the latest round of laws and trade agreements in place I feel they will have all the tools they need to stop the people from legally taking control of their societies, the only option left would be some form of violent revolution. This is why I feel that radical reform of the democratic system is needed, this will involve much higher participation and responsibility from the general population, but the consequences of not taking control of the democratic system while we have the power are truly terrifying .

- All public representatives to be paid the average workers wage.
- Increase powers/responsibilities of county councils with councils being run on the principles of direct democracy. All elected positions open to recall by their electorate (% required for recall to be decided after research/discussion)
- Decrease number of TD to 140 all open to recall by their electorate
- Seanad to be abolished
- Quota system for public representatives , to insure the makeup of public representatives mirrors society in so far as is practical (system to be decided after research/discussion)Quota must consider areas such as Gender, Sexual orientation, Employed/unemployed, Income level, Public /Private sector/Self-employed, Occupation (having high proportions of the Dail coming from a handful of professions is not acceptable)
- Maximum 10 years in office for politicians
- Modernise and reinstate the right of the people to call referendums.

I believe that the importance of true democratic representation, of an informed population, cannot be over stated. Likewise the importance that any movement, which purports to represent the ordinary people, be directly democratic is obvious.

The agenda must be set democratically, all decisions must be taken democratically and participation must be open to all.

Egotist or self-serving personalities driving their own agenda will split and sink the movement before it can pose a viable threat to the establishment.

With this in mind the upmost importance must be given to the June 13th meeting being large and open to all with people being encouraged to participate, contribute and lay the foundation of a new united left wing front.

* * *

71. Cillian Doyle

Public and Private Enterprise Policy

Our rural post office network, which often acts as the hub of the local community, is under serious threat. The government's insidious attempt to decommission our post office network by moving core payments out of the post office and into the bank needs to be opposed. The best way to do this is to reinforce the rural post office network by making it the institution of choice for motor tax, local authority payments and hospital charges. We should also look to establish a State Bank Account through the post office network.

With regard to public education we need to reintroduce the Progression Grant. This grant - scrapped back in 2011- paid for college tuition fees so long as the applicant was progressing up the NFQ (national framework of education) i.e moving from Undergraduate to Masters and from masters to Phd. There should also be state funding provided for those wishing to pursue research in the arts, humanities and social sciences. Currently funding is by and large geared towards engineering and the hard sciences, i.e. those research areas designed to make a quick financial return. The return on research in the humanities and social sciences is not geared towards making a quick buck, but is by no means less valuable.

We should also look to introduce a special grant or reduced fees for international students looking to pursue medicine in our universities. This would be tied to the condition that the qualifying individuals would have to work in an Irish hospital for a number of years at a reduced rate of pay. This would help to introduce more doctors into the health system, which would then help to reduce waiting times whilst concurrently reducing the costs of the healthcare system. Programmes like this are in operation in others countries around the world and have a good track record of success.

With regard to drugs policy we need to move toward the legalisation, regulation and taxation of cannabis - not just some kind of weak decriminalisation. Ming Flanagan's study found that an extra 300 million a year could be raised in taxation, and I have no dispute with those figures. Serious funds could be raised by taking the production and sale of cannabis out of the black economy and moving it into the real economy. We would save a huge amount of money by reducing the need for

Garda/Judicial resources in this area as well as raising extra revenue in taxation - which could be used to better fund our public services. However instead of Ming's policy of state licences for private sellers, I think we should move towards a state run sector in charge of regulation and distribution, for which a new body could be established. Mass production and cultivation could be co-ordinated by Teagasc. This would also provide a new dimension for the tourism industry (See Amsterdam). The fact is a handful US states have already moved to legalise cannabis and allow for its production, while it's set to reach the statute books of another 8 states this year. Eventually this will be the European norm - no sensible person denies that. So why not try steal a march now on most other European nations and reap the tourism rewards?

Wages, Labour Rights, Decent Work and Employment

Whilst I'm sure many good submissions have been made on the need for a living wage, collective bargaining and an end to zero hour contracts, I thought I'd add something that was unlikely to be brought up, but which people of my age/income do feel strongly about. That is the issue of pay scheduling. Workers should have the right to choose whether they wish to be remunerated through weekly, semi-monthly or monthly pay, rather than being straightjacketed by their employer. This is something we could surely legislate for.

People are better at financial planning in the short term rather than the long term. Monthly pay makes budgeting very difficult for those in and around the medium income mark. Often this results in people having to rely on credit, meaning they incur more expenses due to interest on this credit, which can be huge in the case of moneylenders. This can often serve to create a debt spiral. Weekly, bi-weekly or semi-monthly pay is much more manageable from a budgeting perspective and can reduce the likelihood of people having to rely on credit.

Whilst businesses prefer monthly pay as it reduces accountancy related fees, a move to bi-monthly pay would be no great imposition, but would certainly make life easier on workers where financial planning is concerned.

Pension Reform

We're constantly subjected to scaremongering with regard to the pension's time bomb that's supposedly threatening to blow us all to smithereens. But pension reform is something that does need tackling given our aging population coupled with longer life spans.

Now we know that employer/business related contributions to the social insurance fund are pathetically low by European standards. The same goes for the State's contribution which had fallen from roughly 30% in 1985 to less 2% by 1995. So it would seem that here's a good place to start.

We obviously need to raise the employers' contribution significantly (%TBC) but we also need to bring in greater contributions from employees. But rather than increase PRSI for our already overburdened workers we should incentivise voluntary after tax contributions by having the government be a co-contributor to any additional payments. This would help to further incentivise long term financial planning by rewarding those who do save for their retirement. The Australian Superannuation model is one that could be emulated. It is transparent, easy to understand and very efficient.

Political Reform

It's widely acknowledged that we have one of the most centralised political systems in Europe, so we need to start devolving power back to people and communities. I'm sure many submissions have been made on the need for direct democracy, the ability for citizens to call referendums or recall politicians so I would repeat what's been said.

I do however want to raise the issue of the election of the Ceann Comhairle. This has to be taken out of the hands of the government if the Ceann Comhairle is to play the role of a genuine independent adjudicator and not simply and not just another protective bulwark for the government. An independent body should be established to seek nominations for the post and to make the final decision. This body should have representation from as broad a section of society as possible. As far as I know this issue was not dealt with in the constitution convention.

Remove the state funding for political parties. The argument that a lack of state funding encourages private donations which can be anti-democratic is nonsense. Private individuals, lobbyists and companies are going to try influence policy regardless of whether the state is contributing to political parties or not.

Remove the whip system as it forces elected individuals to subordinate themselves to the party and stifles any independent thought/action.

Equality

Remove the angelus from all RTE broadcasts. It's only there to represent those of the Catholic faith, and not people of different faiths and none. The same goes for the bible in electoral polling stations, which could easily be replaced with the constitution if someone was required to affirm. Only in the completely secular state can we have real freedom of religion AND freedom from religion.

Completely remove the Catholic churches influence over the education system. Ruari Quinn's fudged efforts has seen swathes of secular parents having to baptise their children just to get them into schools still nominally run by the likes of the Christian brothers. Instead of teaching religion as a subject for the Junior and Leaving certificates move towards a Comparative Religion and Philosophy/Critical Thinking based subject.

* * *

72. Mark Egan

My submission for the right2water Ireland initiative called by the 5 trades unions involved .

Water Policy: I would agree completely with the proposals from R2W. I am deeply impressed with the proposed amendment of An Bhunracht. As someone that was out many mornings preventing the installation of meters locally and further afield from the get-go when the protests spread to north east Dublin last April I feel that this is the only suitable remedy to the ongoing crisis. A simple amendment in black and white like the proposed Article 28 Section 4:2:1 puts the issue of water privatization and abuse of the water services as a revenue stream firmly off the agenda for future generations to come.

Wages, Labour Rights, Decent Work and Employment: The creation of sustainable permanent decent jobs must be a priority of any government, state internships and zero hour contracts are all good in theory, but in practice they have been a disaster. The feasibility of introducing a viable living wage in Ireland should be examined. The Industrial Relations Act, 1990 needs to be re-examined and amended, seen with my own eyes the insanity of trade union officials hiding behind bushes for fear of being seen during solidarity action taken by communities during a recent lockout. I've seen local politicians and activists arrested under the Public Order act while engaging in acts that were commended by trade unionists around the world, and would be lawful engagements during a dispute in other parts of the EU. Sections 11 & 12 of the IR Act 1990 have to be re-examined and a suitable amendment created as I feel these two sections are extremely anti-worker and hampers efforts of the communities to stand and act in solidarity with those engaged in disputes. There is a complete lack of decent employment accessible to those that are currently unemployed, the embargo with filling state vacancies has to be lifted, both to alleviate the dire employment prospects but to help turn back the tide on cutbacks on public services. JobBridge has to be abolished, and until such a time I would propose a grassroots boycott campaign for companies that abuse workers' rights in this fashion. Legislation to outlaw dubious employment practices such as zero hour contracts must be introduced. I would propose the introduction of a new state employment service, that focuses on designing and the construction of state infrastructural projects,

Banking, Public Debt and Private Debt: It goes without saying, the moral responsibility for the actions of a handful of banks does not lie on the backs of a nation. A full investigation needs to be taken by the DPP into the actions of certain bank board members and cabinet members in the lead up to the night of the Bailout. A renegotiation of the terms of the bailout and bonds needs to be brought to the table, this needs to take place in a technocratic manor, with the best negotiators Ireland has, aided with the best economic advice available, perhaps if the nation left aside partisan differences and focused on the international debt issue we wouldn't collectively be this deep in the red. I would call for a full, open and transparent financial forensics investigation to take place into all financial dealings of successive Irish governments and those regulated by the Central Bank since Ireland joined the EMU III. The self-regulating policies of the PDs clearly have failed us collectively in the banking sector. Nick Leeson who collapsed Barings was brought before a judge in Singapore and found guilty, Irish legislation needs to be reformed and strengthened for financial crimes. I would propose a criminal charge of economic treason be introduced, and make it an extraditable crime for all whom abuse our tax systems and good nature. The saying Not a Red cent was bandied about during the 2011 election, perhaps it should be looked at and enacted upon by the next government.

Public Services: Health, Education, Childcare, Public Transport and Others: The current disposal of Aer Lingus must be opposed on the strongest possible terms, not just for the vital Heathrow slots, but for the staff of Aerlingus and their families all over this island. Healthcare should be one of the main priorities of the next government. Fully implement Transport 21. The proposal to privatize 10% of CIE bus routes should be abandoned. I would propose CIE introduce 24 hour services on popular bus routes, the Dublin - Belfast bus route is 24hour currently, and a handful of NightRider and NiteLink services operate intermittently on the weekends, this is not enough. The development of the night-time economy is being hampered by simple Ministerial oversights such as the lack of public transport after dark. I would call that this conference supports the teachers' trades unions in their current fight to protect education standards and their employment rights.

Austerity has affected both the health and wellbeing of the majority upon this island, the services we vitally need have also been hit badly. There is something seriously wrong when society just cuts out a section from health services. Under current ministerial orders if you are under 26 and claiming social welfare you get means tested on your parents incomes, if you fail that means test it has a knock-on effect on for eligibility for a medical card, or the lesser GP visit card. Myself and many other young people, including pregnant women have been told that we are in too much poverty to qualify for medical care. This has to end. Or if you are blessed to have a medical card and stuck on some waiting list, anecdotally it seems that the young are left waiting longer upon waiting lists for even diagnostic procedures. Something drastic needs to be done to sort out the national disgrace that is the HSE, and taking advice from nurses, GPs and those availing of the services in the likes of the NHS or Scandinavian model would be beneficial, as I feel would having delegations of visiting health staff to even spend a week shadowing HSE staff, and comparing their experience to international standards. Fresh eyes may see the many failings of the HSE that have knock-on effects for patients.

I would propose that front-line services are prioritized in a health budget, not the wages of the army of pen pushers the HSE currently employ while lacking staff with suitable medical training. The MSM bloodbank should be re-examined, the state is sending out the wrong homophobic message by labelling all MSM's blood as toxic waste. Provide for legalization of medical marijuana, and decriminalization of casual consumption of the plant, other Western nations haven't fallen into the abyss by progressively dealing with the problem of drug usage. The criminalization of users and addicts has to end if we are going to sort out the hard drugs crisis that has hitting communities all over this island. Perinatal hospice care in Ireland is seriously lacking at present, I would propose the HSE rolls out services nationally rather than send heartbroken mothers out the back door of large regional hospitals for fear of upsetting someone. The outrageous prescription fee must be abolished.

I would ask that this conference calls on Minister Varadkar for the intimidate restoration of mental health and suicide prevention services and beds to pre-austerity levels as a matter of urgency. Mental health is sadly Ireland's last taboo, and it's also a class of illness that no Irish government have ever taken seriously.

Housing, including Public and Private Housing, Social and Rental: Fully utilize Nama housing stock, transfer needed amounts over to local councils for usage, with a view to eradicating all housing waiting lists, the housing would be bringing in a larger rent revenue stream for councils and more importantly homelessness will be made a thing of the past. Introduce either a rent cap and/or increase in rent allowance payments. Ensure that suitable emergency housing is available 24/7 at a local level, being given a sleeping bag or told to sleep in the reception of a garda barracks is not acceptable.

Equality – Social, Cultural, Political and Economic: Within a generation the unique Irish culture and our way of living is at threat from outside interests. Take a walk down the main road through any main Irish town, switch on any local music radio station, open any periodical produced in Ireland, and you'll find little difference between ourselves and say Britain, culturally. A few initiatives could easily revitalize the Irish music industry, such as the Castlebar Song Contest being reintroduced in

conjunction with Board Failte as a Rose of Tralee for Irish musicians, abolish the loophole that certain music stations utilize by airing Irish artists in the dead of night and early morning slots to reach their Irish broadcast quota and promote up-and-coming Irish artists, singers, producers and DJ's. Reform RTE, starting with its current affairs department, abolish the current system where the Minister ultimately holds the purse strings of RTE and give the Communications committee the powers so there is less chance of political interference, introduce regulations that prevents the private media from being monopolized by one organization or the other. The one privatization I would call for is Irelands continuing participation in the Eurovision, Martin O'Neill wouldn't hear the end of it if he lined up the worst possible team, why should RTE be allowed to continue to send over entries bound to fail, when a win would be a good boost for the economy and a much needed boost to Irelands international image. Reform the Tailteann Games into a national community competition covering all kinds of local sports teams, singers, debaters etc. involving both those in Ireland and our ex pats scattered around the world.

The Irish government have a legal responsibility under the Belfast Agreement and they have a moral responsibility to protect the wellbeing of citizens in the north east of our island. Their actions of late have been lacking, and with Villers and Cameron intent on inflicting even more austerity a strong message must be sent. The effects of austerity doesn't recognize the county lines on this island, neither should any attempt to resist it. Any austere measure issued by Dublin, Stormont, Westminster or Brussels is going to have the same effects on everyone island wide, let them be living up the Shankill or at the back of the Knock grotto, so should our response. The Stormont House Agreement must be reopened for discussion. If Holyrood, Stormont & Senedd members all refused to cooperate with Cameron's brutal austerity measures, backed up by a vocal Dublin government, an energized trade union movement and communities organizing and resisting then austerity could realistically be a thing of the past for both ourselves and those across in Britain. Article 8.1 of An Bhunrucht states that The Irish Language is the official language of the state, hard to believe. Gaeilge has been dying a slow death since the Great Hunger but with the right encouragement and investment Gaeilge could easily grow. Some of the most common sense solutions I've found on the subject of trying to initiate a modern Gaeilge revival

<https://boyinhisboots.wordpress.com/2015/04/24/gaeilge-the-future-in-my-eyes/>

EU and International, Trade and Peace: When it comes to Ireland's current membership of the EU I would class my views as strongly Eurosceptic. I'd be glad of the day when the European Communities Act 1972 is repelled from Irish statute books but the realist in me says at this moment in time Ireland and our political and judicial systems are not prepared for such a strong move, nor would it be wise economically. As seen with the sugar-beet debacle whole counties have had local industry destroyed at the stroke of a Eurocrats pen, this complete capitulation on Irelands behalf to perform even the most basic economic responsibility of a government, to ensure the wellbeing and needs of the Irish people are taken into consideration, has been stripped away. Until such a time, in the near future, where an exits benefits would outweigh the might of European scaremongering, I would propose reforming Seanad Eireann by including scrutiny of all dictats from the European parliament, and Commission that impact on Irish society, in the upper houses remit. The post of Irelands European Commissioner welds too much power with zero accountability; I would propose that in future that post becomes an elected position, the holder elected in a manner similar to a Presidential election. Ireland's longstanding neutrality must remain, and while there currently are doubts regarding Irish

airspace and airports being used by foreign militaries for a dubious nature, perhaps ground support and facilities should be denied to states that abuse the Ceide Mile Failte traditionally extended to all our guests. I would propose that we boost our international & trade relations with member states of the British Commonwealth, we share a common history, system of governance, justice and in many cases language with many of these states, there are many sources of investment and markets that Ireland is missing out on in these countries. I'd like to propose that solidarity greetings are extended to our Welsh and Scottish cousins and their own unique battles against austerity and rights that we as a nation take for granted. Like to wish YesCymru all the best in their campaign for full Welsh financial Home rule from Westminster's austerity measures.

Political Reform, National and Local, People's Power: Lower the voting age to 16. Reform the electoral register by connecting it to PPS numbers which every Irish adult is already upon that system, Make politicians accountable for their voting decisions in Dail and Seanad Eireann. I would propose a system of Constituency Consultations for TD's, compulsory monthly meetings, with say 2 randomly chosen constituents from each LEA in a constituency, and where the TD will be required to explain their voting actions and to be questioned on their previous months work in parliament. Have it covered on Oireachtas TV and local media outlets. An easy way to ensure public accountability. I would propose decentralizing more powers to county and city councils. I would propose that newly elected members of the Oireachtas would be required to spend a month over the summer recess living in economically deprived areas, surviving upon the basic social welfare rate and only then can they understand the true consequences of their voting habits when it comes to austere budgetary measures. Reform the voting system for Seanad Eireann along the lines of the EP constituencies, including seats for expats and those in the north eastern 6 counties, and schedule elections for the upper house at the usual halfway point of a Dail sitting. Amend Article 27 of An Bhunrucht by halving the amount of Oireachtas members needed to sign such a petition, include provision for the office of the President having the power to send a bill to the people without the advice of the government, provide the ability of 6 different councils to initiate referral of a bill to the people. Televisé all meetings of the Council of State and Supreme Court when dealing with Constitutional matters.

Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change: Restore the cutting rights to those whom have suitable turf upon their lands. Ireland should never have to gamble its future economic and social prosperity on the international energy markets, not when we have lush lands going spare. There are countless uninhabited islands dotted around this island that could be utilized for wave, solar and wind energy sources without affecting the daily lives of local residents. There would be a case under Article 43 of An Bhunrucht that our natural resources, such as oil and gas fields could be nationalized in the name of social justice, then a counter argument could be made that it could bankrupt the state by taking such a move. A serious challenge should be mounted in the courts to see where, legally the Irish people stand in regaining control of our resources and full benefits from our bountiful island

Public and Private Enterprise Policy, the Indigenous Sector, National Resources: Indigenous industries in all sectors need to be invested in, either internally or externally. There was a time when you could buy a week's worth of shopping and Guaranteed Irish would have been stamped on every item, including the trolley and weeks' worth of cigarettes, now you'd be lucky to fill a basket with

fully Irish goods. This mentality has to change, if our economic wellbeing as a country is to ever improve. There are countless vacant factories around the island, even more fields going fallow and thousands jobless. Incentives such as a reduced VAT rate on native goods, stronger government campaign to buy Irish goods would be beneficial to any start-up businesses that provide goods, even having our embassies setting up tuckshops out a side window selling Tayto and Rock Shandy would be a good way of spreading awareness and demand of Irish products.

I was introduced to the theory of the Keynesian multiplier while studying economics for the leaving, and have had felt that it would be beneficial when it comes to looking at the Irish indigenous economy ever since, and it's something I feel that successive Irish governments have failed to consider when creating the likes of National Development plans and yearly budgetary measures. What this government has failed to realize with its ways of austerity is that if you take 1€ from the social welfare, or take it out of a pay-packet in tax, it isn't just citizen A that it effects, but from citizens A - Z. Measures should be taken to get money moving again in the national economy, instead of just loading up Aer Lingus jets to pay Troika interest off. I would propose an embargo on any proposals to privatize any more state assets. Measures should be taken to build a strong and prosperous internal economy that is not dependent on foreign conditions, and would propose that measures such as import substitution industrialization in a large scale Irish context would be beneficial to our future economic fortunes, and as a last ditch proposal protectionist policies such as tariffs on non-EU goods etc. should be drafted to show foreign speculators that we are serious about Irish economic sustainability.

Social Protection, Poverty and Deprivation, Pensions: The Dept. of Social Protection in Ireland has become the modern incarnate of Cromwell to those unfortunate enough to turn to them for assistance. The practice where you are no longer seen as a human by some clerical staff of the department, but just another PPS number on the system has to end. And in its place a system of common sense, transparency and reality must take its place. I have seen clothing grant rejection letters being sent to pregnant women, stating that their circumstances haven't changed since she first was granted the allowance, only the physical changes of 4months of pregnancy had occurred in the real world. As I've stated above the means test for those under 26 has to be abolished, the state has no right to enact ageist policies like this, nor the subtle message that such a means test sends to the young that they are lesser beings in the eyes of the state. I would suggest that Department would save its resources, instead of holding compulsory "jobsfairs" where the only jobs on offer are seasonal/temp work on zero hours contracts which leaves young job hunters leaving feeling more disillusioned than ever, perhaps use that money spent on hiring out upper end hotel conference hall on actually employing the people that are sent for to attend these performances.

In this day and age to have any one person in a class of poverty is a disgrace, never mind hundreds of thousands that currently fall into that category in modern Ireland. Any future government has to be tough on poverty and even tougher on the causes of poverty. Poverty is a word that's bandied about with ease these days, to me it's a word associated with the young father appearing in the CCJ facing a charge of shoplifting a loaf of bread and bottle of milk on waiting day to keep his family going, it's the single mother who's using the emergency credit on her electricity meter hoping there's enough to get the children's breakfasts done for school in the morning, it's the OAP that has a pile of bills scattered around them wondering how their pension money will cover the basics never mind the

rates bill. Poverty is the disease that is slowly draining the life's blood out of this nation, and until the day when it has been eradicated from all sections of Irish society it will remain a blemish upon us all. I would call for more transparency in Social Welfare decisions and a new appeals service. A complete overhaul of the current welfare system in Ireland is needed, because there are thousands of people that have been failed by the Department of social "protection".

Abortion: I would propose that this conference takes no position in the abortion debate, and allow all those involved to follow their conscience on the issue. This initiative was started by those whom have had enough of Irish Water and the current politics of austerity that has ravaged this island. As abortion is an extremely divisive issue in Irish society why should we alienate those who have personal views, both Pro-Life and Pro-Choice from the debate by taking a position at conference? When push comes to shove austere measures hit those on both side of the debate and those who are neutral. There are enough initiatives and groups out advocating their positions on this issue, let us focus on austerity and Irish water and let them focus upon abortion. It's not as if we can afford to alienate any person with issues with IW at this stage in the battle.

In conclusion I admit here and now my proposals may run into the billions, and I certainly don't propose that the island runs on empty hoping for the best taking the devil might care come next budget day approach. The last thing Ireland needs is an attempt at recreating Liverpool Council circa the mid80s, putting the islands entire civil service on 3months notice for the want of decent policies and a showdown. Any policies agreed to at conference must be costed, and the costings must be fair and just when it comes to the Irish people paying for a better society that benefits all, from those living in corporation flats up to those living in the grand houses up Dalkey head.

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73. Peadar Hopkins

Rank and file guards should elect there commissioner. This would eliminate political appointees and create a bottom culture of being able to speak out against corruption and injustices.

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74. Karen Collins

I think the document put together is an excellent beginning to something new and evolving.

Education is key imo, all children should be entitled to equal education.

I also think the role of the parent in the home needs to be looked at, whether single or married in this country everyone should be treated equally. Single parents and children in single parent households suffer very badly in the inequality margin. They seem to be hit the hardest every time, there needs to be a proper safety net put in place so that the most vulnerable do not slip through the cracks and are forgotten about.

I also have a serious issue with RTE and all our media being owned by and/or operated for the benefit of corporate/government interests. Monopolies like that in the media should not be allowed.

I also think we should start looking at a hemp industry in Ireland! Detailed research should be done on this!! Hemp is a hardy and renewable resource; in 2012 the US hemp industry was valued at 500 million dollars in annual retail sales and growing for all hemp products. Some estimate that the global market for hemp is more than 25,000 products in 9 submarkets

1. Agriculture
2. Textiles
3. Automotive
4. Recycling
5. Furniture
6. Food/Nutrition/Beverages
7. Paper
8. Construction Materials
9. Personal Care.

Hemp is one of our oldest industries, being used by human beings for thousands of years. Per acre of product grown, hemp produces more pulp than timber. Hemp paper can also be recycled more times than wood based paper. It can be used in an astonishing amount of products and also the environment benefit is extremely impressive, it grows in a variety of soils and climates, it's naturally resistant to most pests and outgrows weeds. It also absorbs more carbon dioxide than any other plant. It has been used as a mop crop to clean contamination from waste water, sewage effluent and other chemicals. It was used in Chernobyl to help clean up contamination, this is a process called phytomediation, clearing radioisotopes and other toxins from soil water and air.

The seed is highly nutritious, high in fatty acids and B vitamins. This plant and its cousin the cannabis plant are deserving of more unbiased medical research.

Hemp as a biomass fuel producer requires very little specialised growing or processing and can be made into a wide range of biomass energy sources such as fuel pellets, liquid fuel and gas. There is room for massive development of this, which would reduce our consumption of fossil fuels.

France is the biggest EU producer of Hemp, using it for speciality pulp for cigarette papers and technical applications. About 15% is used in the automotive sector. Car makers who have started using hemp in their cars are Audi, Mercedes, BMW, Ford, Honda, Iveco, Lotus, Mitsubishi, Porsche, Volkswagen, Volvo!!

Anything that can be made from drilled oil can be made from Hemp, plastics, paints, toiletries, fuel etc....massive potential for factories owned and operated as a co-op to start up in cosmetics, clothes, anything!!

Hemp industry has the potential to create real sustainable jobs in a lot of different sectors, rural agriculture, equipment manufacturing, transport and the products can also be utilised in developing communities, building eco-friendly buildings etc.

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75. Brendan Kelly

- (1) Community groups want the Rio Agreement which was copper fastened by the Aarhus Convention and transposed into Irish Law on 21 June 2012 properly implemented.
- (2) We want the principles of sustainability (especially Principle 3) written into all sustainable Management Plans for all our natural resources and we want our 9.4 exemption written into all management plans for our water.
- (3) We want all community water groups to remain under the control of the communities as... they now are and all town council and county councils to control and manage their own water supplies.
- (4). We want all Radio Active meters removed immediately and the assets of all the directors of the companies that installed them frozen immediately to be unfrozen when they have all the meters uninstalled and their leaks fixed.
- (5) We want a criminal investigation into the October 2. 2014 High court ruling that granted a blanket injunction on every person living in Dublin and the judge and both legal teams suspended pending the outcome of this investigation. And all those arrested, detained and imprisoned on this and other illegal water acts or rulings properly compensated.
- (6) We want all water supplied for human consumption to come directly from ground water sources (aquifers) with no chemicals like fluoride added and provisions made for farmers and other industries to source their water from surface water sources.
- (7) We want the Management Plan for sustainable forest management amended and the submission by the social and environmental stakeholders that was ignored in 2002, calling for a 50/50 Native broadleaf species mix written into it. And we want Principle 3 also written into it because all local communities are Indigenous People.
- (8). Nature gave us water and only Nature should be allowed charge us for water.