



## New Year Message from Workers Party President, Michael Donnelly

As the old year closes and a new one dawns it is time to reflect upon what the old represented and the new might hold.

It was a year that held no great cheer for the hundreds of thousands of workers and their families who struggled with low-wage, precarious employment as well as struggling to find proper or adequate accommodation.

A year that held no joys either for those thousands of people, many with very young children, that didn't even have a place to call a home and were and forced to rely upon homeless charities that simply couldn't cope with the scale of the crisis.

It held no great cheer either for the hundreds of thousands who are still waiting for a first hospital appointment, or the many that had to spend days on trollies in A&E Departments right across the country. And all the time the Government in the Republic did little beyond shrugging its shoulders and giving tax breaks to its many already wealthy friends and supporters in business and finance as well as the land and property speculators. Indeed, the Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, even went as far as to hail the vicious vulture fund operators now operating as being more efficient and 'effective' than the banks when it comes to dealing with people in debt.

### **Private profit first**

Sometimes the public mask of 'caring' slips and the true, nasty and vicious features of a regime are revealed. Although, in truth, Varadkar could easily have been speaking for all the parties who support the system, both in Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland, as well as their politicians in saying what he did. For them too 'market-forces' must rule. Even if that means more homelessness and more precarious workers then so be it.

For that is the world that they preside over, the world they live in and the very world they welcome, support and work for. It is a world that rests on the principle of private profits first; all other things a poor second. It is this system that they insist shall prevail that is the primary cause of all our social ills and problems. This exaltation of private profit ensures that there will be poverty, that there will be low wages and that there will be homelessness.

### **Northern Ireland**

In Northern Ireland, things are little different. Despite there being no elected government for the past two years the same policies of favouring the rich and heaping further misery on the working poor still prevails - much as it did, to be sure, under the old Sinn Fein/ DUP regime as well.

We should not forget that it was their collective commitment to a sectarian carve-up of power and squabbling over the perks of office as much as anything else that has condemned the people of Northern Ireland to two years of uncertainty and a fear of sliding back into the deadly grasp of violent ethno-nationalism.

And when the uncertainty of the UK's future relationship with the EU is added to the equation, there is the very real danger that the political vacuum will be exploited by sinister forces who, callously indifferent to the interests and needs of the ordinary working people in both communities, will seize upon any opportunity to ruthlessly use them as cannon fodder to further their own sectarian interests.

This must be resisted and the fight to raise class consciousness and unity, the only real and meaningful means of challenging the sectarian hatred that can so easily turn violent, must be intensified.

### **A united working class**

At this critical juncture in Northern Ireland's history, then, it is well worth remembering that it was our Party back in the early 1960's which recognised that for socialism to be established on the island of Ireland there first had to be a united working class. That was and remains the central drive of the Party, both north and south.

Without a united working class there will only be a suffocating and deadly divisive ethnic and sectarian political climate in which workers and their families will continue to suffer. Whether green or orange, a capitalist ruler is still a capitalist ruler!

### **Sean Garland**

In that context it is appropriate now to reflect also upon the great sadness that fell on the Party just a few short weeks ago when our former President and life-long revolutionary, Comrade Sean Garland died.

In the days that followed his death much was said of Sean's enormous contribution to the Party and to the fact that without his vision and foresight the Party as we know it would most probably not exist as it does, as a Party dedicated to revolutionary change, built upon the ideology of Marx and Lenin, of Tone and Connolly.

It is timely, then, at this juncture to recall a crucial speech that he made at Bodenstown in June of 1968, right on the eve of an intensified civil rights campaign that he knew was coming, when he stated that the critical role of the Party from that time was;

*'...in agitating for better working, living and social conditions, in agitating for land, showing them [the people] in all these fights that their enemies are their landlords, their bosses and their gombeen exploiters and finally get them to understand that all these opposing forces are banded together in an organisation called the establishment'.*

Some fifty years later that task remains for us to engage with and achieve. And as we face into a new year, we must endeavour to ensure that whatever that year holds, whatever uncertainties may lie ahead that we face them on both parts of the island with the same relentless determination and foresight showed by Sean some fifty years ago, and throughout his life.

The struggle continues to build the Workers' Party into a political force capable of establishing a democratic, secular, socialist, unitary state on the island of Ireland - a Socialist Republic.