the Leveller
Dec 2014
Issue 17 Free
Published by Belfast Local Solidarity Federation - International Workers Association belfastsolfed@gmail.com

AUSTERITY? THIS IS CLASS WAR

Executioner for the rich, George Osborne, has challenged 'our' local parties to fully implement welfare reform measures that will see even greater hardship, poverty and homelessness heaped upon poor and vulnerable working class people across the north.

In exchange the power to reduce corporation tax will be devolved. Despite the Sinn Fein "Stop Tory Cuts" all the parties in the Assembly are committed to imposing 'austerity' measures on us. The draft budget has exposed Sinn Fein's 'campaign' as cynical bullshit, lies and attempted manipulation of those who still fall for their 'socialism'.

The DUP and Sinn Fein, with no opposition from other parties at Stormont, are launching cuts of over £640 million in April 2015. At least 6,000 public sector jobs will be axed, 2,500 in education, more pay cuts are coming and this will mean less money to spend and resultant job losses in the private sector.

Despite having been forced to defer water charges water meters are being installed across the north. The Green Party are in favour of this charge!

Already there are announcements of job losses and the loss of services that working class communities depend on. Isolation and increased poverty will be the lot of many as local bus services are threatened.

Money is being taken out of our public services and, through privatisation, into the pockets of the wealthy. Decreasing corporation tax is part of the same process. This would take another £400 million out of public services. Driving us further into the dirt while the bosses pocket the money.

They aren't alone. Politicians have had their hands in our pockets for as long as there have been politicians.

Fraudulent expenses claims totalling hundreds of thousands are being investigated at Stormont. Meanwhile the Lords are crying about cheaper champers!

Across the wee north we already suffer the lowest wages in the UK, if you are one of those 'lucky' enough to have a job, we have the highest claimant count with 21% of working age households workless in April-June 2014! In working class areas there are increased numbers dependent on welfare, suicide rates have doubled and the life expectancy of men has dropped! The so-called recovery is clearly only for the wealthy few.

So what in fact is austerity? Simply put it is an intensification of class warfare by the rich against the poor. The motivation - increased profit without any concern for the people and environment fucked over in the process.

We need to organise, to protest, to strike. Our methods - workers control of our struggles and direct action. The rich are getting richer while we get poorer. Its time to stand up, organise and tell the rich and their lackeys to get to fuck. This escalation in class warfare can only be met in kind.



WE MUST DEVASTATE THE AVENUES WHERE THE WEALTHY LIVE

Lucy Parsons 1853 - 1942

The Whole System is Guilty



Protests are sweeping the United States as outrage at racist police killings continues to spill out onto the streets. Gas, rubber bullets and concussion grenades have been used against protestors.

It is clear that the police can kill black men with impunity. Cop Daniel Pantaleo is not to be indicted for the murder of father of six Eric Garner. This followed the announcement that cop Darren Wilson would not face trial for killing 18 year old Michael Brown. Unarmed Akai Gurley was shot dead in a stairway in a housing project in Brooklyn while 12 year old Tamir Rice was shot for playing with a toy gun in a park in Cleveland.

The US police have been heavily militarised by a government concerned with protecting the wealthy and demonising the poor. While hundreds of whites and Latinos are also killed by cops in the US each year poor black communities, particularly young black men, have been criminalised.

The Washington Post estimates that there are as many as 1,000 police killings a year in the United States. 96% of those killed are black. Racism, murder with impunity and the on-going war on the poor can be opposed. Protestors across the US have made a start in opposing it but this war will not be over until the working class and the poor get the cops, politicians and bosses off our back - globally.

Reclaim the Night - Belfast

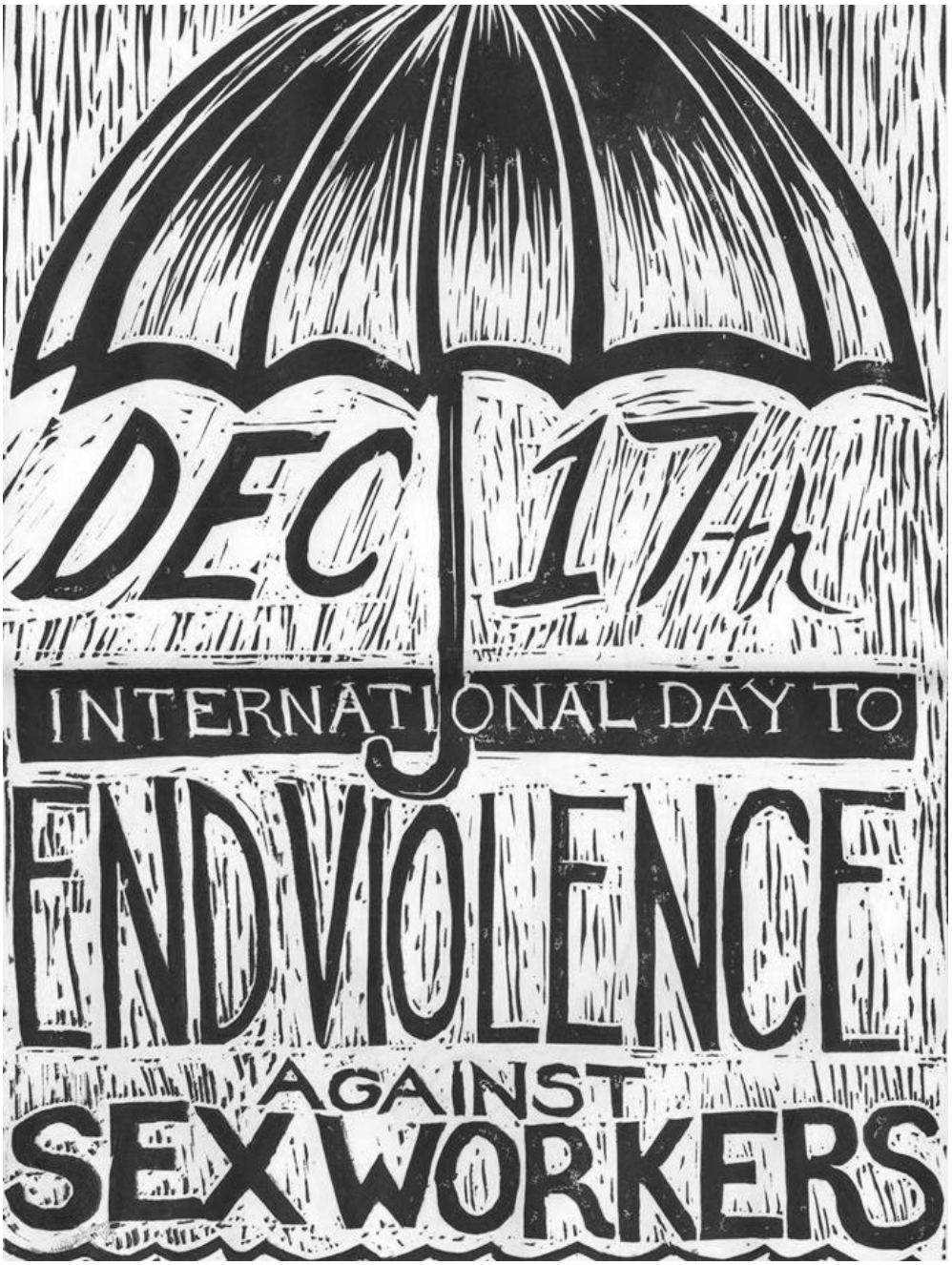


On the evening of 29th November Belfast Solidarity Federation took to the streets of Belfast with over 300 others to reclaim the night.

Set to become an annual event we all marched to demand an end to harassment and violence against women. There were speakers from Hollaback, Sex Workers Alliance Ireland, NUS USI Women's Campaign, the Black and Minority Ethnic Women's Network, Belfast Feminist Network and Gender Jam NI.

Somewhat at odds with the notion of taking direct action on our city centre streets the last speaker welcomed the police presence indicating they were there to "protect us" and without a hint of irony proceeded to announce we were reclaiming the night!

17th December Demo
End Violence Against Sex Workers
Scrap Clause 15



December 17th is International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers. Sex workers and their allies around the world will be taking action in the on-going struggle for empowerment, visibility, and rights for all sex workers.

The Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers was first recognized in 2003 as a memorial and vigil for the victims of the Green River Killer in Seattle Washington. Since 2003, the Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers has empowered people from cities around the world to come together and organise against discrimination and remember victims of violence.

Join us at the front of the city hall at 5.00pm to raise awareness about violence that is commonly committed against sex workers. The assault, battery, rape and murder of sex workers must end. Racism and economic inequality and systems of colonialist, capitalist violence and oppression must end. The stigma and discrimination and criminalisation that makes violence against sex workers acceptable must end. Please join with sex workers around the world and stand against criminalisation and violence committed against our communities.

Clause 15 of the Human Trafficking Bill (formerly known as clause 6) will become law on 1st June 2015. The clause makes the purchase of sex illegal which will drive prostitution further underground placing sex workers here in greater danger from violent assault.

This demo has been called by the Solidarity Federation Belfast Local and the Sex Workers Alliance Ireland.

5.00 pm
In Front of Belfast City Hall

SMASH WATER CHARGES

The mobilisation, anger and direct action of working class people opposing water charges in the south has got the government on the run. Much is made of a brick thrown at Garda and Joan Burton being trapped by a 'mob' in her car during a water charges protest. Little to nothing is said about police violence against protestors or the devastating impact this charge will have on poor working class families. Families already devastated by attack after attack upon them by bosses and government in the name of 'austerity'.

Tens of thousands took to the streets on 10th December. making it clear that they will not pay water charges. They were prevented from reaching the Dail by a government that cowered behind barricades and police. The government, unsurprisingly, has shown itself to be not only completely out of touch with working class people but also extremely callous in regard to their plight. A plight that has gotten worse and worse in the name of 'austerity' as the rich have got richer.

The government and media have, largely without success, resorted to a smear campaign.

On the same day in Belfast a solidarity demo was organised in support of our fellow workers in the Republic of Ireland. We were also showing that resistance to water charges in the north has not gone away.

Around 35,000 water meters have been installed here since 2007. People have mobilised to face down the threat of water charges in the past. The building of mass campaigns of non-payment, such as the We Won't Pay Campaign mobilised working class people from all across Northern Ireland. It was the growing strength of working class resistance, based on mass non-payment and organised street by street, community by community, that forced Stormont to back off then. It will defeat them again.

We need to take a lesson from working class people in the south and our own recent experience. Water charges are unjust, water should not be a commodity, privatised for the rich to make even more money at our expense. A mass campaign based on direct action and non-payment will defeat water charges in the south. Just such a campaign will defeat water charges in the north.

But more than this, more than ever, we need to smash the rotten capitalist system. Stormont, the Dail and Westminster are ruling on behalf of the rich, its time to organise and fight back.



SOLIDARITY FEDERATION (IRELAND)



INTERNATIONAL WORKERS ASSOCIATION

Solidarity Federation are building a new revolutionary union: an organisation of workers which seeks the abolition of capitalism and the state. Capitalism because it exploits, oppresses and kills working people and wrecks the environment for profit worldwide. The state because it can only maintain hierarchy and privilege for those who control and their lackeys; it cannot be used to fight the oppression and exploitation that are the consequences of hierarchy and the source of privilege. In their place we want a society based on workers' self-management, solidarity, mutual aid and libertarian communism.

That society can be achieved by working class organisations based on the same principles - revolutionary unions. These are not trade unions concerned only with "bread and butter" issues like pay and conditions. Revolutionary unions are a means for working people to organise and fight all the issues - both in the workplace and beyond - which arise from our oppression.

As such we are actively opposed to sectarianism, racism, sexism and homophobia and other tendencies used to divide workers and weaken our struggles for our common interests.

Organising in Locals and across industries we aim to support our members and other workers in struggle where we live and work. Our activities are based on direct action - action by workers ourselves, not through intermediaries like politicians and union officials; our decisions are made through participation of the membership.

We are also organised on a regional basis and, in Ireland, we are actively building our union across the island.

We welcome all workers - including the unemployed, retired, stay-home parents and students - who will work within our Aims and Principles and seek to create revolutionary unions to fight the class struggle.

If you are interested in getting involved contact us at:

belfastsolfed@gmail.com