

Editorial

This second issue of Irish Marxist Review is both improved in presentation and larger in content. It also now has a website www.irishmarxistreview.net where our first issue can be found. Many thanks to all those whose hard work has made this possible.

For the best part of four years Irish politics has been dominated by the impact of the international crisis of capitalism that erupted in 2008. From the standpoint of the Irish ruling class, like ruling classes everywhere, the main task has been to ensure that the burden of paying for the crisis is shouldered firmly by the mass of working people and the poor. So far, it has to be said, they have made a good job of this.

For the left the central question has been how to mobilize working class resistance to the relentless austerity being imposed by successive governments. At the start of the crisis there was a mass working class response to demonstrations called by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions but the union leaders refused to build on this in any way and in the course of 2010 the level of protest declined. 2011 began with 'a riot at the ballot box' which saw Fianna Fail crushed and five United Left Alliance TDs elected, but struggle on the streets and in the workplaces remained low, despite the fact that internationally things seemed to be 'kicking off everywhere' from Tunisia to Oakland.

But in 2012 the mood has started to shift. Through the combination of mass non-registration for the Household Tax, large scale opposition in rural Ireland to the septic tank charges, some sizeable and vigorous demonstrations, and several small but important workplace occupations, a fightback has begun. Our lead article by Kieran Allen analyses and assesses these

developments. As we go to press, however, we are faced with the results of the referendum on the Austerity Treaty and it is clear that fear has trumped anger with a substantial overall majority for the Yes side, despite big No votes in many manual working class areas. Had the treaty been rejected the government would have been thrown into crisis; what now remains to be seen is if this setback has a dampening affect on the resistance.

One thing, of course, is certain: that the assault on working people will continue. Peadar O'Grady and Marnie Holborow provide detailed examinations of how this impacts on two important aspects of our society, health and higher education. The state of the Irish health service is horrible to behold - O'Grady shows why. The Holborow article also brings out the deeply alienating and reactionary effects of the neoliberal commodification of education. Similarly Brian Kelly demonstrates how neoliberalism, with the active collaboration of Sinn Fein, is damaging and distorting the project of a 'new Belfast' serving to entrench sectarianism rather than uproot it.

Given its role in government over the last year and a half it might have been hoped that the Labour Party would have the decency to allow James Connolly to rest in peace; hoped but not expected of course - how can you resist a national icon when there's a 100th anniversary to mark. Donal Mac Fhearraigh's contribution not only exposes this hypocrisy but also looks at some problems in Connolly's understanding of reformism and how to combat it, which continue to be relevant today.

Internationally the crisis continues unabated, with even China and India clearly

feeling the affects. Such a situation is a huge challenge to the left everywhere. It can grow dramatically but this is by no means guaranteed. Getting things seriously wrong can lead not just to stagnation but to going backwards as Lorcan Gray's 'Letter from France' shows in relation to the New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA), which looked so promising a couple of years ago, but is now in deep difficulties, eclipsed by Melenchon and the Front de Gauche. In contrast, in Greece the left reformist coalition, Syriza, has made massive gains. But in Greece the crisis is much more severe (and the level of struggle currently much higher) so any left or workers' government will come under the most intense attack from the right and from the state itself. Donal Mac Fhearraigh analyses the factors contributing to Syriza's dramatic rise and examines the prospects for a Syriza led left reformist government. Back in Ireland John Molyneux takes a critical look at the history and politics of the Socialist Party.

How did Marx become a Marxist? One part of the story, the best known part, runs through his relationship with Hegel and Feuerbach, Smith and Ricardo, the utopian socialists and so on. James O'Toole, in his piece on 'Marx and Self-Emancipation', focuses on another, cru-

cial, part of the process: Marx's discovery of the revolutionary role of the working class. This was something that could not be found in Hegel or any other of the philosophers, economists and socialists. O'Toole shows how Marx (and Engels) learnt it from the working class itself.

The bourgeoisie has always used sport for (its) political purposes, while simultaneously saying (our) politics should be kept out of sport. Of no sporting event has this been more true than the Olympic Games. With the 2012 Olympics in London this summer Gareth Edwards critical review of the real history and spirit of the Olympics is very timely.

Bourgeois culture has always trivialised and caricatured the development and early history of humanity ('neanderthals', 'cavemen', The Flintstones etc) but actually the issue of the origins of humanity is of great importance to socialists as Engels understood and Dave O'Farrell shows in his review of Chris Stringer's *The Origin of Our Species*. Memet Uludag, no mean social media adept himself, nevertheless debunks the claim of Paul Mason in *Why is it Kicking Off Everywhere?* that Facebook and Twitter are now the key drivers of revolt, and Cathy Bergin welcomes another new book from the prolific Terry Eagleton.