



## On May 6th the most important things **WON'T** be:

a Border Poll, the Protocol, Flags, Culture Wars or who the First Minister is

The morning after polling day the *REAL* issues facing working class people across Northern Ireland will be:

**THE COST OF LIVING, THE NHS, HOUSING, EDUCATION, LOW PAY & THE ENVIRONMENT**

What difference will it make to a family facing a daily dilemma of heat or eat, who the First Minister is?

What difference will it make to people living in chronic poverty, poor housing, or even no housing?

What difference will it make to young mothers desperately wanting to work but not being able to find or afford child care?

What difference will a Border Poll make - win, lose or draw - to a young student unable to go to university, a teenager unable to secure an apprenticeship or a family with no heat and little food?

**Absolutely none.**

## The Assembly

For devolution to continue there needs to be a root and branch reform of the Assembly structures.

At a minimum we need to move on from mandatory coalition, abolish community designation requirements and reform the Petition of Concern ensuring that it can never be used to veto social or equality issues.

Many of the outstanding requirements of the Good Friday Agreement which have been deliberately set aside must be introduced if devolved government is to continue to function.

These include a Bill of Rights, Integrated Education, an Anti-Poverty Strategy, a viable Economic Plan and a Job Creation Strategy.

# Beyond bluster, flags and tribalism

During this election campaign, the main Assembly parties will trade on sectarian fears and tribal instincts to maximise their votes and to distract attention from their economic loyalties.

They will attempt to mask it with feigned concerns about bread and butter issues, but scratching the surface will reveal the cheerleaders for the private, free market economy and the seasoned purveyors of tribal politics.

Today, in Northern Ireland, more than **20% of the population** lives in poverty:

**10,000 children**  
**220,000 working-age adults, and**  
**40,000 pensioners**

22 % of households are in **Fuel Poverty**, and these are figures compiled before the Covid Pandemic.

At least 15,000 people here are officially **homeless**.

There is a **crisis** in education, in health and in social care.

There are **cutbacks** to social welfare.

More people, particularly women, are dependant on **insecure**, parttime employment, and often zero hours contracts.

More people than ever, who are in employment, need benefits to top up the money they earn in Northern Ireland's **low wage economy**.

Workers Rights are **eroded** and **undermined**. Workers who kept the economy and our society functioning throughout the pandemic face real time cuts in their take home pay with **below inflation** pay offers.

**Poverty** is not a natural phenomenon. It is the result of a social and economic system that is driven by the relentless pursuit of profit, at any cost and, that uses people as expendable commodities.

Poverty is the child of capitalism - the economic and social system that the Stormont Executive, the Big Five parties, and others, support, secure and sustain .

Poverty is caused by a lack of wealth and a lack of resources.

Tackling poverty means creating jobs. Secure well-paid jobs.

It means making sure that everyone has the resources they need to feel part of, and contribute to, society.

Amongst other things that means **access to broadband** for all.

Overcoming poverty will involve a **complete overhaul** of the current benefits system and the scrapping of Universal Credit.

Benefits should be a **safety net** for those who need it and an **anchor** when difficulties arise.

It must be a system which works to **peoples benefit**, not to their detriment.



## The importance of this election

Working class people - employed, unemployed, young people and pensioners - have never been more marginalised from the major issues which effect all our lives.

Income differences between top earners and those on the lowest wages are now higher than at any time since records began.

Thousands of people - many of them with jobs- are living on or below the poverty line.

Low-pay and precarious employment, the dismantling of work-place rights, the privatisation of public assets and restrictions on trade union freedom, compound and intensify those problems.

Children go hungry, homes go unheated.

The other parties want this election to be a sectarian headcount. They want it to be about the Protocol and a Border Poll.

Of course they do, because it shifts attention away from what really matters in our lives

In this election the Workers Party is prioritising, unapologetically, these issues and presenting the socialist alternative to misery, poverty, social exclusion and second class citizenship.





# The Cost of Living

**'Heat or Eat'** isn't a slogan, it's the grim and stark reality facing thousands of local families,

We are facing one of the worst cost of living crisis in recent memory, one that will have long term and very serious implications for health and wellbeing.

Yet, against that background comes the news that the six big energy companies made a combined profit of more than £600 million and that was *before* the recent increases in bills

**Any economic system that imposes crippling and unbearable financial burdens on ordinary working-class people and uncaringly sees them go to the wall while pricing basic necessities beyond their reach must be challenged and overturned**

We have to ask ourselves why we tolerate this. Why do we meekly accept our lot as if it was inevitable and unavoidable?

**All the main political parties support and perpetuate this 'free market' free for all. They have no intention of facing up to the multi-national energy companies because they play an important role on their behalf.**

We are constantly drip fed the myth that these are 'international matters' that no one has any control over - they just happen and, while its regrettable, we can't do anything about it. Wrong. We can.

**If we are to break free of this economic stranglehold, and all the misery, hardship and poverty it imposes, then the answers lie in bringing energy resources from private ownership into public control and the establishment of a socialist economy.**

## Flags , identities and bogus debates

Despite the growing cost of living crisis, we are fed a daily, if not hourly, diet of flags and identities, cultures and communities and bogus debates over who will be the First Minister.

The permanent solutions to these problems are longer term and will only be achieved under a socialist system, but immediate steps must, and can, be taken.

To help address the immediate impact of rising prices on working class people

- Workers Party MLAs will support**
- an increase in Universal Credit benefits**
- a Vulnerable Children and Families crisis payment**
- an increase in the real living wage**
- a home energy support payment of at least £300**
- free, flexible and accessible child care**
- an end to zero hours contracts, and**
- transport links, road, rail and ferries, gas, oil and electricity being taken into public ownership**

# Health & Social Care



The principle of NHS services publicly funded and free at the point of use is far from safe and secure.

The break up and sell off of the NHS remains a real and present danger, and it is not only the Tories in Westminster that pose the threat.

## Profiting from ill health

Much closer to home the orange and green Tories at Stormont are equally prepared to facilitate profit taking from peoples' ill health, exclude those who cannot afford to pay and promote the alleged benefits of private medical health insurance.

Under successive Executives, and successive Ministers for Health, health and social care services here have been run down systematically.

## Waiting lists

Waiting lists are the longest on these islands, people medically fit for discharge remain in hospital because there are no care packages to support them at home.

Health and care staff remain underpaid, undervalued and under threat

## The NHS and the Pandemic

If proof were needed of the practical, social and communal benefits of an organisation like the NHS then the Covid pandemic gave it to us in spades.

The commitment, care and compassion of front-line staff was exemplary.

The organisational achievements of the vaccination and booster programme were outstanding... and lifesaving.

Having helped to win the battle, the NHS and its staff must now be supported to win the war for its future.



*“The organisational achievements of the vaccination and booster programme were outstanding... and lifesaving.”*

## Protecting and developing our NHS

The NHS must remain publicly funded and free at the point of delivery

All services must remain available, accessible and safe

All outstanding NHS pay claims must be settled immediately and in full

No fragmentation or sell off of services to the private sector, whether by stealth or otherwise

A comprehensive and radical programme for the development and delivery of Mental Health services, based on international best practice and local needs

No private leasing schemes for NHS buildings, equipment or infrastructure

GPs cease being private contractors and become employees of the NHS

Fully funded, flexible and responsive community care services

Investment in a prevention based approach and addressing the causes of ill health

The right to access dental services on the NHS brought into line with all other NHS services, publicly funded and free at the point of delivery

The adoption of 'the Centres of Excellence' model to clear waiting lists and provide a more responsive, efficacious service

# Public Housing



The Stormont Executive has a responsibility to deliver affordable, publicly owned housing. That must be one of the functions of government.

But, as with much of its responsibilities the Executive has failed, and failed again, through the deliberate and calculated run down of the public housing building programme, the dismantling of the Housing Executive and the handing over of its responsibilities to the private rented sector.

To address the immediate pressures of the housing crisis Workers Party MLAs would support :

- The reinstatement of the NI Housing Executive as the lead housing agency
- A priority programme of high quality, affordable public housing
- Homes built and allocated on objective need.
- Use of government owned land to build
- An end to unacceptably long waiting lists
- An end to the dependency on unscrupulous private landlords

# Education



**There has never been a justification for the apartheid-like education of our children.**

**There is no justification for it now.**

The Workers Party is fully committed to a system of integrated, secular education at all levels.

The first five years of a child's life are the most formative, yet we have no comprehensive early years education strategy in place to ensure that every child gets the best start in life.

Academic selection at 11 continues to determine children's futures, despite having been abandoned more than ten years ago

Every teenager should have the unhindered option to pursue third level education at university, college or in a vocational setting.

Education is an investment in all our futures. Tuition fees should be the responsibility of the state - not the individual. Student grants should be available to all. Finance should never be used as a barrier to deny opportunity.

The policy of student loans and thousands of pounds of tuition fees effectively debar many working-class students from entering university.

# Low Pay



**Secure and well paid employment is a fundamental prerequisite in the battle against poverty.**

Capitalist economies depend on a level of unemployment, low wages, zero hours contracts and other types of precarious employment to maximise their profits.

Northern Ireland continues to be marketed to multi national companies as a low wage economy. This kind of economic strategy erodes employment rights, devalue employees and foster uncertainty and insecurity.

Women are particularly vulnerable to low pay, insecure and often part time employment. A situation made worse by the unavailability of accessible, flexible and affordable childcare.

**Scientific evidence about the dangers of climate change have been ignored consistently by governments and multinational companies alike for decades.**

Just 20 global companies are responsible for over 35% of *all* greenhouse gases emitted into the atmosphere in the last six decades. Most are oil or fossil fuel producers.

**For as long as the environment is treated as an expendable commodity it will always be at risk.**

Unless the central and fundamental issue of the role of capitalist production is addressed, challenged and reversed, the problems for the environment will persist and worsen. Unfortunately, many 'greens' and environmentalists fail to understand or accept this.

Only a socialist programme can save the environment by ending the anarchy of capitalist production and the destruction of our natural resources.

Ultimately, only a socialist economy will eradicate low pay and pay gender gaps.

In the interim Workers Party MLAs will campaign for a centrally planned economy

an end to zero hours and precarious employment contracts

the development of an indigenous skills base, a minimum living wage and

**Workers' Rights.**

## Environment

A complete ban on on-shore drilling and fracking for oil and gas

A coherent planned and publicly owned green energy initiative

Taking the energy system into public ownership

Supporting an Environmental Protection Agency

# A Bill of Rights

That we have been waiting for over 50 years for a comprehensive Bill of Rights in Northern Ireland is an affront to its citizens and an indictment of those who continue to oppose and frustrate its adoption.

It must be a priority for the next Assembly.

The purpose of a Bill of Rights should be to establish and guarantee the relationship between citizens and the state.

It must form the basis for democratic rights as the guarantor of the civil liberties of all citizens and of the political rights of all political parties, groups and individuals.

It must also expressly guarantee that everyone in Northern Ireland is equal before the law and has equal rights.

# Votes @ 16

The Workers Party supports the right of 16 year olds to vote

Sixteen year olds in Northern Ireland can leave school, work full-time, leave home, pay taxes, get married and join the armed services: but they can't vote in elections.

If Northern Ireland is to be a fully participative democracy the involvement, and active participation of 16 and 17 year olds is essential to that process.



# Animal Welfare



We support the promotion of the "Five Freedoms" adopted by the World Organisation for Animal Health and national societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals.

We oppose hunting with dogs, trail hunting and all blood sports. We are opposed to the use, possession and sale of snares and to puppy and kitten 'farms'

# Universal Free School Meals



We support the introduction of universal free school meals, bringing Northern Ireland into line with England, Scotland and Wales.

The initiative would make a significant contribution to ensuring all children receive a nutritious meal, destigmatise 'free schools meals', greatly assist with educational development and help low income families.

We also support the extension of the School Holiday Food Grants.

# WORKERS PARTY CANDIDATES ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS 2022



**LILY KERR**  
North Belfast



**PATRICK LYNN**  
South Belfast



**EOIN MacNEILL**  
East Belfast



**PATRICK CROSSAN**  
West Belfast



**HUGH SCULLION**  
Mid Ulster



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**socialist, secular, anti-sectarian**

