

REAL CHANGE

NOT SPARE CHANGE



Challenging wealth inequality

The government claims that this election is a choice between stability and chaos and that it should be re-elected in order to maintain its much trumpeted “recovery”. This message has failed to hit home with those lower and middle income earners who feel little stability or economic recovery in their lives.

Where is the stability for those who have seen their rent sky rocket since 2011? Where is the recovery for the 130,000 families on housing waiting lists or those still burdened with enormous mortgage debt?

While corporate Ireland made profits of €51 billion in 2014, scandalously 20% of the workforce in this state earns less than the living wage of €11.45 an hour. Many of the new jobs that are being created in the economy are low paid and temporary and many young people are being forced into super-exploitative free labour internships such as JobBridge and Gateway.

Our health service remains in permanent crisis with 500 lying on trolleys in January and 93,000 on waiting lists. Childcare costs remain the highest in Europe.

In the period from 2009 to 2015 over €50 billion in cuts was made to spending on public services and yet all the four main parties, including unfortunately Sinn Féin, believe we can only increase public expenditure by an additional €8.6-€10 billion, the so-called “fiscal space”.

Fundamentally they are unwilling to pursue the vast wealth that is owned and controlled by a small minority in this country. They fundamentally accept working within the framework of neo-liberal capitalism and are unwilling to countenance any alternative to this system.

Where is the wealth?

- Apple is sitting on cash piles of \$178 billion. However the government is fighting the EU Commission so that it doesn't have to pay up to €17 billion in unpaid taxes to the Irish state.
- Credit Suisse estimates the total wealth in Ireland to be €690 billion. 27% of this wealth is owned by the super-rich 1% of the population.
- In the austerity years from 2010 to 2015 Ireland's richest 300 increased their personal wealth by €34 billion from €50 billion to €84 billion.
- The richest 13 people in Ireland are billionaires with a wealth of €38 billion between them. These include tax exiles like Denis O'Brien.

A Political Revolution

The last two years have seen two major movements that reflect the desire for radical and social change in Ireland. Hundreds of thousands have taken to the streets to protest against the introduction of water charges and 50% are currently boycotting this hated tax. In May 2015, 62% voted to affirm the rights of the LGBTQ community by voting yes to Marriage Equality.

Globally this same desire for a radical alternative is being felt. In the US, millions have responded to Bernie Sanders' call for a "political revolution against the billionaire class". The election of Jeremy Corbyn as leader of the Labour Party in Britain shows a clear rejection of policies of austerity. This mood for real change must be harnessed into the building of a new left movement for working class people which fights for a left government.

A left government is one that is based on organising the economy for people's needs not for the profits of big business and the super-rich. This means introducing a minimum wage of €12 an hour immediately as a step to €14 an hour by 2018, it means vastly increasing public expenditure on infrastructure and public services, creating a national health service free at the point of use, investing in quality public childcare and abolishing regressive taxes such as the water charges and property tax.

We need to increase corporation tax and get rid of the sweetheart deals for big business. A wealth tax on the super-rich should be introduced and the tax breaks for the wealthy must be abolished. A left government would introduce real progressive change in Ireland. This means ending all forms of discrimination against migrants, Travellers, LGBTQ people and women. It means a referendum to repeal the 8th amendment and legislating for a woman's right to choose.

The AAA wants to parties that have presided over austerity, namely Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and Labour to be cleared out of power. We will discuss with any party or individuals who are serious about forming a left government that breaks with the logic of neo-liberalism and capitalism.

"The day has passed for patching up the capitalist system: it must go" – James Connolly

Austerity, the housing crisis and the chronic underfunding of our public services as well the obscene rise in economic inequality are not features unique to Ireland. Ultimately they reflect the nature of the capitalist system where the economy is organised in the interests of private profit and has proven itself incapable of meeting our needs.

The Anti-Austerity Alliances believes that if we are to deliver real change in our society we must decisively break with the system of capitalism. The tragic failure of the Syriza government in Greece to do so ultimately led them to betray the hopes and aspirations of Greek working class people who voted them in. Instead of breaking with the profit system they were broken by it.

We need to take the wealth and resources out of the hands of the 1% and bring them into democratic public ownership so we can deliver real change not the spare change offered by the establishment parties. On this basis the wealth of society can be productively invested and utilised so that the needs of the 99% can be met.

Support Workers' Rights

The average wage of an Irish worker in 2014 was €2,000 a year lower than was the case in 2007. The strike by Dunnes Stores workers last spring highlighted the scandal of workers having no certainty over when and for how long they work on a week to week basis.

The capitalist establishment are determined to consolidate this situation during the recovery rather than tackle it. The government have increased the minimum wage by a pathetic 50c to €9.15 an hour, significantly less than the living wage recommended by the Living Wage Technical Group.

None of the main parties are in favour of a substantial increase in the minimum wage. Sinn Féin has proposed only to increase it to €9.65 an hour despite being nominally in favour of the introduction of a living wage.

Public sector wage cuts are far from fully reversed and those who lost their jobs in the recession now finding employment more often than not discover that their hourly wage is significantly less than in their last job.

These attacks affect all workers, oftentimes falling most heavily on the shoulders of women, immigrants and the young.

The AAA stands for:

- For an immediate increase in the minimum wage to €12 an hour, as a step towards a minimum wage of €14 an hour by 2018.
- Ban "zero hour" and "if and when" contracts. Give workers guaranteed minimum hours.
- Reversal of all public sector pay cuts.
- For the right to a job with decent pay and conditions. Abolish free labour schemes such as JobBridge and Gateway.
- End yellow pack wage rates for women, migrant and young people- equal pay for work of equal value.

Affordable homes for all

Rents in Dublin are now at the same rates as they were in 2007 at the height of the property bubble, while incomes have declined by 20% since then. There are now 88,000 households who are renting homes from landlords on a long term basis.

There is now a homelessness epidemic or "tsunami" in the words of Peter McVerry. The homeless charity, Focus Ireland, estimates that there are 5,000 homeless people at any one time in Ireland. On top of this there are 100,000 owner occupiers who are in mortgage arrears. The Central Bank is pushing for repossessions and 50,000 orders for repossessions have begun.

The government is relying on the private market to resolve this crisis which is a failed strategy. In the first nine months of this year only 8,914 homes were built across the state compared to 66,470 homes in the first nine months of 2006.

In the whole of 2006, 96,000 housing units were built when big developers and the banks had access to vast sums of cheap credit from German and French banks. They were able to use this credit to build houses that were priced at exorbitant levels and are now unwilling to do so because they are less likely to make profits on a short term basis.

Last year only 200 council homes were built, a pathetically low figure given that there are 130,000 households on housing waiting lists. In the mid-1970s one third of new homes that were built were council homes.

Traveller accommodation was cut from €70 million to €3 million per annum in the period from 2007 to 2013. It is an outrage that Travellers are forced to live in gravely sub-substandard accommodation as a result of the absence of properly funded and equipped halting sites.

The AAA stands for:

- Stop economic evictions. Anyone threatened with homelessness by landlords or banks should refuse to move.
- End the reliance on the private sector to provide homes. Invest €10 billion between now and 2018 to build 100,000 council homes at cost price.
- Introduce rent controls and bring rents down to 2011 levels to make them affordable.
- Mortgages from the property bubble should be written down to pre-Celtic Tiger levels. Bring the banks into genuine democratic public ownership where they are run for need not profit.
- Bring the construction industry, and companies that produce construction materials into democratic public ownership so that homes can be built at cost price and profiteering can be eliminated.
- For investment in properly resourced halting sites. Reverse the cuts to Traveller accommodation.

A health service for need not profit

More people die every year in this country from social inequality than died in Northern Ireland in all the years of the Troubles. Male professionals live on average more than 6 years longer than male unskilled workers.

More than 600 people on a given day in January day can be found lying on trolleys in our hospitals, many of them elderly people having to suffer this indignity after a lifetime of work.

These are symptoms of a two-tier society and a two-tier health service. The right-wing parties want, however, to deepen this inequality, not to end it. This is the agenda served by health cuts and privatisation.

We need to end our two tier health service and establish a National Health Service modelled on the NHS when it was founded in 1948. This should be funded by a central progressive taxation.

The AAA stands for:

- For a publicly-owned National Health Service free at the point of access with services provided from the cradle to the grave.
- Increase investment in mental health services.
- Reversal of all health cuts and privatisation measures.

Education is a right

The AAA believes that education that should be freely accessible as a right for everyone within our society. We believe that all the cuts to education should be reversed, including cuts to SNAs. More resources are needed for disadvantaged and Traveller students. Class sizes should be reduced to a ratio of 20 pupils for every teacher.

Instead of young children being educated in pre-fabricated buildings across the state we need investment in the state of the art, fully equipped schools. We need to end church control over our primary and secondary schools as they only guarantee of ending discrimination in admissions of children on religious ground.

The right to education at the third level has been undermined by this government and thousands excluded by four figure "student contributions" merely to get into college. All fees for third level education should be scrapped.

The AAA stands for:

- Reverse all cuts in education. Invest in school building programme to provide top quality schools with decent facilities for all pupils.
- Reduce class sizes at primary level to a ratio of 20 pupils for every teacher as a step toward 15.
- Reverse teaching cuts in second level.
- End the two-tier pay levels in the public sector.
- End church control over education.
- Free education for all – scrap "student contributions" and provide living grants for students.

Abolish Water Charges

The particular context in which water, the Household and Property Taxes were imposed was as an unfair response to the economic collapse caused by the greed of the bankers and bondholders. In reality these taxes are bondholders' taxes.

Wherever possible, the most effect way of fighting unjust taxes or charges is to refuse to pay them. If people pay such charges, even though they may oppose them, their opposition will not be registered. Instead the establishment parties will deem payment as acceptance and will not be under pressure to get rid of them.

Non-payment is the best way of maximising the opposition to water charges and of building the pressure for their abolition.

The explosion of the mass movement against water charges, including the By-Election victory of Paul Murphy in October 2014, forced the government to make some changes to the water charges, including the reduction in the level of the charges.

Labour and Fine Gael only made these changes to try to sneak the charge in. It is clearly still the plan that water charges would rise to beyond €500 per household over time.

People understand the establishment of a charge for water is not about getting necessary investment but is a step to the privatisation of water. Handing over a natural resource and asset to Irish or international vulture capitalists to profiteer from and to hold us all to ransom will never be accepted. Everyone must have a right to water, clean and safe and free at the point of use.

The AAA stands for:

- Defend and extend non-payment of the water charges.
- Abolish Irish Water and the water charges.
- Access to clean and safe water is a human right and must be free at the point of use.
- Proper investment in water infrastructure to ensure maximum conservation and secure supply into the future.
- Fund our water infrastructure through the central taxation system.
- No commercialisation or privatisation of water.

Pro-choice, pro-women's equality

Labour and Fine Gael austerity has disproportionately hit women. Poverty and inequality have increased:

- 40,000 lone parents (90% women) lose the One Family Payment when their youngest child turns 7.
- Ireland's child-care costs are the highest in the EU – 35% of annual family income. (EU average is 12%) (OECD).
- 60% of low paid workers are women. (NERI).
- Women are more likely to have part-time, insecure jobs, with 50% earning €20,000 or less.
- Pay gap widens. Women now earn 14.4% less than men.
- Over 10 women from Ireland are still forced to travel every day to access a safe and legal abortion abroad.

Savita Halappanavar died due to the ban on abortion, under Labour's watch. Despite this Labour did nothing about the 8th amendment. This and their slavish implementation of austerity are Labour's version of equality!

Objectification of women's bodies feeds into the prevalence of male violence against women. 1 in 5 women will suffer domestic abuse in Ireland and 42% of women have experienced some form of sexual abuse.

Despite Niamh Ni Dhomhnaill's ex-partner pleading guilty to raping her, he was not sentenced to a single day in prison. This exposes a culture of victim-blaming and trivialising of rape in the legal system, which must be challenged.

€4.5 million was cut from women's refuges and domestic violence services and a 25% from rape crisis centres since 2008 – austerity is literally killing women.

The tsunami of homelessness is compounding the dangers, as leaving violent partners can mean homelessness for women and their children.

The AAA stands for:

- Repeal the 8th amendment and legislate for a woman's right to choose.
- Massive investment into quality, state childcare, which must be affordable or free.
- Proper funding for domestic violence and rape crisis services.
- A Left Government to separate church and state – end Catholic Church influence in hospitals and schools.
- An active movement to fight all forms of sexism and to end violence against women.

Full equality for LGBTQ people

The magnificent 62% vote for marriage equality in May this year showed the mood to end discrimination within our society.

Despite the claims of some in the establishment, the marriage equality vote does not deliver full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender people in this state.

Apart altogether from the continuing scandal of homophobic bullying there are still legislative obstacles to full equality in the form of Section 37 of the Equality Act which allows schools and hospitals to sack gay workers in order to maintain the religious "ethos" of the institution and the state ban on donating blood for gay and bisexual men.

The AAA stands for:

- End all forms of homophobia and transphobia.
- Introduce programmes in schools to tackle homophobic and transphobic bullying. Young people in our schools who identify as LGBTQ should be supported. End Catholic Church influence over state schools. Roll out a programme of progressive, anti-sexist and non-heteronormative, age appropriate sex education available to all.
- Abolish all legislative blocks on equality – Abolish and Section 37 of the Equality Act and the ban on gay and bisexual men donating blood.

Invest in renewables

Climate change threatens life on earth with catastrophe. Despite the need for a 50% cut in CO2 emissions in the developed world by 2020, emissions in reality continue to grow. The devastating impact of the floods in December and January brought home to many the consequences of climate change.

Dealing with the environmental crisis is a must be a priority for a left movement and a left government. The pursuit of profit by big business, particularly the oil and gas industry, is the key driver of climate change and other forms of environmental disaster. 90 companies are responsible for 63% of carbon emissions since 1751.

These industries possess 2 trillion in fossil fuel assets, still to be transmitted into the atmosphere. The fossil fuel industry spends only 1% of its resources on renewable energy. Private control of natural resources and the energy industry means that profit, and not people or the environment will always be the main concern.

The Paris climate agreement in December agreed minimal targets to reduce carbon emissions. This illustrates the inability of the capitalist establishment to deal with this grave threat to humanity. Governments acting in deference to these industries have failed to take any serious action on the issue of climate change. Speaking at the COP21 conference in Paris, Enda Kenny declared that 'climate change is not our priority'.

The AAA stands for:

- A state-led programme of investment in renewable energy production and research. As well as being essential to dealing with the environmental crisis, this could be a vehicle for major job creation.
- Support for communities opposing fracking and other environmentally destructive projects in

their local area.

- Opposition to regressive 'Carbon Taxes' and other measures which attempt to place the burden of environmental crisis on to working class people.
- For democratic public ownership of natural resources, and the energy industry. For democratic economic planning to reduce carbon emissions, develop alternative sources of energy and expand public transport.

Oppose Racism & Islamophobia

The Anti-Austerity Alliance opposes all forms of racism and Islamophobia. The wars waged by imperialism in the Middle East and North Africa have helped to create a horrific humanitarian catastrophe with many being forced to flee from their homes.

The AAA opposes the policies of Fortress Europe and the implementation of racist immigration laws that deny people the right to seek sanctuary from war, poverty and persecution. We oppose the racist scapegoating of refugees and migrants for the absence of jobs, homes and resources that result from the policies of austerity and neo-liberalism.

The AAA opposes the horrendous discriminations faced by the Travelling community in Ireland and supports their right to be recognised as an ethnic group.

The AAA stands for:

- Oppose racism and Islamophobic prejudice.
- Oppose state racism – end direct provision. Oppose all deportations and racist immigration laws and controls.
- Oppose the racist policies of "Fortress Europe". Defend the right to asylum.
- For a united struggle for jobs, decent housing, decent pay, against water charges etc to unite all ordinary people regardless of their race, ethnicity or nationality.
- End discrimination against the Travelling community. Recognise Travellers as an ethnic group.

Global Solidarity

The AAA stands in solidarity with working class and oppressed people across our planet fighting to oppose economic exploitation, injustice and oppression. None of the problems facing humanity such as war, poverty and injustice will end as long as we live under capitalist system run in the blind pursuit of private profit for a small minority.

We oppose capitalist institutions such as the EU, IMF and World Bank that implement policies at the behest of big business, bankers and the super-rich as well trade deals such as TTIP and CETA which will further attacks on workers rights' and our environment.

We oppose wars and military interventions waged by the imperialist powers such as those of the US, Europe and Russia in the Middle East and North Africa in the last decade and a half. We demand an end to the use of Shannon Airport being by the US military.

The AAA stands for:

- No a Europe run in the interests of big business and the bankers. For a Europe for the millions not the millionaires.
- Full solidarity with working class people globally fighting austerity, job losses and privatisation.

- No to TTIP, CETA and other anti-worker and environment free trade deals.
- Oppose all imperialist wars and intervention. US military out of Shannon.
- End the siege of Gaza, end the occupation of Palestine. Support a mass struggle of the Palestinian people for the creation of a truly independent and viable Palestinian state.
- For international solidarity to fight a capitalist system run in the interests of the 1%.

Taxation Justice

Working people were loaded with many new taxes when the crisis hit. More than €4 billion a year is taken by the Universal Social Charge. Revenue was used to bulldoze the Property Tax through and it's set to rise after the General Election. Flat VAT rates hit the poor disproportionately.

Credit Suisse estimated that €226.37 billion is concentrated in the hands of 90,000 millionaire households, who make up the richest 5%. Allowing a threshold of €1 million for each millionaire would mean that €138 billion would be subject to wealth tax. This could mean €1.38 billion raised for each 1% in taxation.

The AAA stands for:

- Abolition of the Property Tax and USC.
- Introduce a new equivalent tax on all income in excess of €100,000 to ensure the benefit of USC abolition does not go largely to very high earners.
- End the sweetheart deals that see companies like Apple avoid paying €17 billion in tax.
- Increase the corporation tax rate- €2 billion a year could be raised if multinationals actually paid the 12.5% rate. An additional €2.7 billion could be raised by raising the effective corporation rate to 17.9%, the EU-27 average.
- The introduction of an emergency millionaire's tax as part of a progressive tax system. A 2% emergency millionaires tax could raise €2.8 billion.
- For Financial Transaction Taxes on transactions in bonds, shares and derivatives. Introducing such a tax at a rate of 0.1% on transactions in bonds and shares and 0.01% on transactions in derivatives would raise at least €1 billion.
- Increase the effective tax take from those earning over €110,000 (the top 10% of earners) by 10% which would raise €2.7 billion.

For a Left Government

The AAA stands for the election of a left government that based on human need not the profits of big business and bondholders. This means, alongside a movement of working class people, fighting to end the system of capitalism. Such a government would:

- Repudiate the debt created by the property crash.
- Reverse all the cuts and austerity taxes.
- Instead of privatising the banks, put them under the democratic control of working class people and direct credit for need not profit.
- End the use of abuse of the wealth created by working class people by the capitalist establishment. Invest in infrastructure and manufacturing base within the economy.
- End the rule of the 1%. Bring the key wealth producing sectors and natural resources into democratic public ownership.