

Election 2011

Manifesto of

The

Workers' Party

Launched:
Sunday 13th February 2011

Introduction

This election is the most important election the people of this state have ever faced.

It is so because the issues at stake will determine the future of this country for years to come.

The election takes place in the midst of an economic crisis the like of which we have never seen before.

Unemployment stands at over 400,000 and is rising. 1,000 people are leaving the country each week because there are no jobs and no prospects for them here.

Emigration has returned and will be the only choice the majority of our youth will have.
That is unless things change.

We require fundamental change about how we run this country. It is not about simply changing the faces around the cabinet table.

We require a change, not just of government but of policies and direction.

The right wing Parties of Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael and the centrist consensus they have fostered have failed the people of this country, the working class in particular, who they now expect to burden the cost of bailing out the banks and financial institutions.

Not only have the right wing parties bankrupted the country but they have ceded our national and economic sovereignty to The European Union and the International Monetary Fund.

This has happened not because of simply a bad government but because the economic system itself, capitalism, is the cause of the present crisis. The right wing parties give blind allegiance to the market, deregulation and a total reliance on private enterprise.

Profit, not the public good, is what drives the private sector. The pursuit of profit alone is what has destroyed standards in our public services particularly in health and education.

The abandonment of a central role for the state in shaping our economy has left us exposed to the whims of multi national companies who have no interest other than profit in locating to Ireland. The taxation system is framed to ensure that large corporations and wealthy individuals pay as little tax as possible or none at all, and the tax burden has fallen heavily on low and middle income earners through not only punitive levels of direct tax but a whole series of indirect taxes the latest being the Universal Social Charge.

That is what Capitalism and the Free Market have delivered.

The Workers Party believe Socialism to be the only alternative to the present failed system.

We do not accept that a programme of cuts, which makes the poor pay for the folly of the rich, is the only way forward.

There is wealth in this country and we do have the means to address the budget deficit It can be done if we go in a new and different direction. The Workers Party Programme for National Recovery and Political Change offers real hope that a better future is possible.

The Workers Party programme provides for:

- (a) a central role for the state in developing and shaping our economy in the public good and not the interests of a wealthy few:
- (b) public ownership and control of the banks and other financial institutions;
- (c) a fair and equitable taxation system;
- (d) public ownership of our vast natural resources particularly our oil and gas reserves;
- (e) a complete review of the political system which has allowed corruption, croynism and economic ruin to flourish.

That is the choice The Workers Party is offering voters in this election.

This election is an opportunity to change the face of Irish politics. The futility of civil war politics has never been more obvious than in the present economic circumstances.

That there are no real differences between FF and FG is now also clear. Both are committed to the pursuit of a right wing economic and political agenda. This election is an opportunity for the left to grow as a real force in Irish politics.

The Left in this election

If the left is to take advantage of the current opportunity to make this truly a turning point, if we are to carve out for the left a permanently larger presence in political life and within civil society, then this election must only be the beginning. The imperatives for The Workers Party and the rest of the left at this time are firstly opposing the programme of cuts endorsed by both Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael.

Secondly the articulation of the Socialist Alternative, which focuses on protecting and developing our public services, job creation and economic development through deploying the immense economic power of the state.

Thirdly, the deepening of cooperation across the left in both the short and the long term.

The Workers Party will not participate in or support any government led by Fianna Fáil or Fine Gael.

We want to see the election to the next Dáil of a majority of deputies who are committed to socialist policies in principle and practice.

It is only through such fundamental change that life will improve for the working class of this country.

Completely change the political system which has allowed corruption, cronyism and economic ruin to flourish.

Cronyism and corruption flourish because we have a bad political system. The Workers Party is committed to deepening democracy and real participation by citizens in shaping our lives.

In the long term the Workers Party reiterates its view, outlined on many previous occasions, that this state needs a completely new constitution. The 1937 constitution, based as it is on Victorian property values, catholic morality, and vatican corporatist principles, is no longer fit for purpose.

Pending that new secular constitution we believe that there are certain steps which can be immediately taken.

- * Ban corporate donations: For 40 years we have seen the spectacle of political parties, and Fianna Fáil in particular dancing to the tune of their paymasters - whether the paymasters were developers; bankers; oil companies. This corruption of democracy must be ended.
- * Democratically restructure the Seanad: The present Seanad electoral system is a farce. if there is going to be a bicameral system, which we believe there should, it must be elected by democratic universal franchise.
- * Ministers' and TDs' pensions to be treated the same as other workers.
- * Curb the power of County Managers and other unelected individuals and bodies.
- * Ensure one day per week in the Oireachtas is spent on scrutiny of proposed EU legislation and EU legislation being transposed into Irish law.
- * Increase the number of Dáil sitting days and reform the archaic Dáil procedures so that the immediate questions of the day may be debated.
- * Provide for the democratic accountability of TDs to the electorate and to examine the principle of the recall of TDs.

Reject the IMF/EU deal which has no democratic mandate

The Fianna Fáil / Green Party coalition had no mandate to negotiate the EU/IMF deal. The EU, the ECB and the IMF imposed a deal on Ireland in order to support the Euro and to protect major banks in France and Germany who had lent billions to the Irish banks during the past decade.

It is a disastrous deal for the Irish people. It will impose at least five years of budget misery on the country with even more vicious attacks on the old, the vulnerable, health and education as well as the fire-sale of all our national assets.

The Workers Party proposes a constitutional amendment so as to place the Common Good above the rights of private profit. We should follow the example of Iceland (a country with less than 500,000 citizens) who – by holding a democratic referendum - forced the international banking system to offer completely new terms.

Reform the Banking Sector

Abolish the bonus system and culture in banks.

Prioritise the people over the “bond holders”.

Remove from office directors who presided over failed lending practices.

As the people now own 95% of Irish banks we would create three new banking entities:

- a) A National Investment Bank to facilitate family businesses and smaller companies.
- b) A specialised Domestic Mortgage lender.
- c) A normal high street Commercial bank.

We have always opposed the NAMA project as it places an unfair burden on the taxpayer without any prospect of a return on that investment.

Place a moratorium on the repossession of family homes and a process to renegotiate mortgages.

Reform the tax system

Ireland has, and for years has had, one of the most unfair and unbalanced taxation systems in Europe.

While pensioners and those on poverty wages are struggling with the new Universal Social Charge we have the situation that in 2009 Ryanair made €3 billion profit and paid no tax.

We propose a number of very simple steps to overhaul the tax system.

- (a) Abolish all the tax loopholes and tax shelters that allow wealthy companies and individuals to avoid tax.
- (b) Introduce a third tax band of 50% for any income above a threshold of €100,000.
- (c) All income earned in Ireland – wages, fees, dividends, profits or other – to be taxed in Ireland and all income treated on the same basis.
- (d) End the legal fiction that allows up to 6,000 of the most wealthy people in Ireland claim “tax exile” status and avoid their duty as citizens.
- (e) Introduce a 1% wealth tax on all income over €1 million, which would raise a minimum of €1 billion per annum.

Develop our vast oil and gas resources in the national interest - not private profit.

It is a remarkable fact that the Norwegian government, as owners of Statoil, will make more money from the Corrib gas field than the Irish government?

Ireland has vast resources of oil and gas. The Corrib field is well known. A further huge find has been located off the Cork-Waterford coast, and licences are presently being issued for exploration off the Clare / Kerry coast.

The Corrib field alone is valued at €540 billion. Yet not one cent will come to the Irish people. Fianna Fáil, through corruption and incompetence, handed over this entire gas field to Shell and its allies for free.

This is economic treason and must be reversed immediately.

Control of our oil and gas resources would ensure:

- * Fuel security for Ireland for the next generation.
- * A massive improvement in our balance of payments situation.
- * A huge boost for our tax revenue
- * The possibility of developing a petro-chemical industry with huge numbers of modern high-skilled jobs.

Revamp our state and semi state companies, under democratic control and accountability, as the engine of economic growth and recovery.

The Workers Party believes the key to job creation lies in the development and strengthening of our publicly owned companies, the commercial semi-state sector. On a national basis some of the largest indigenous companies are publicly owned. The performance of these companies has, over the last two decades, been remarkably consistent.

Our commercial publicly-owned companies employ 40,000 in secure, productive jobs.

All these companies make a profit - which they give to the state in the form of a dividend.

In eight years the ESB gave the state €800 million.

These companies have the capacity to expand - and to double their workforce to 80,000 staff.

These companies (eg Bord na Móna in 2009) can go to the international banks for money for expansion.

* Create a State Energy Company with the ESB, Bord Gáis, and Bord na Móna.

* Use this company to exploit our oil and gas and to expand into every modern energy sector.

* Link Coillte, Bord na Móna and Teagasc for Wind Energy, food production and tourism.

* Guarantee apprenticeships for school-leavers in these companies.

We oppose completely the many calls from different right-wing parties and pressure groups, as well as from the ideologically driven ECB/IMF for the sale of our commercial state companies.

Scrap the undemocratic 2011 Budget and Finance Act

Immediately reverse the cuts to Social Welfare, pensions, provision for children, carers' allowances.

Abolish the unfair Universal Social Charge

Public Good over Private Greed

Reverse the privatisation within the health service.

Immediately stop the building of for-profit private hospitals on the grounds of our public hospitals.

End the casualisation of staffing in health care.

End the hidden tax subsidy to private medicine.

Reverse the cuts in education - especially those that affect most severely those with the greatest social and /or educational needs.

End the massive €100 million subsidy to the elitist private fee-paying schools

Issued by

The Workers Party

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The Workers Party
48 North Great George's Street,
Dublin 1.
www.workerspartyireland.net
wpi@indigo.ie
01 - 8733 916